

Experiencing Grace, Part 3 – Glorification/The Rapture

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Titus 2:13

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I'm Jon. I'm one of the pastors here. Thanks for being here today. Grab your Bibles and open to Titus chapter 2 Titus chapter 2. If you got a Bible from an usher, that's page 1100. 1100, Titus chapter 2. Now, as you're turning there, I want to come your heart for a second. I was doing research and I found a pastor who preached 24 sermons on Titus 2:11-15. We're only going to do 4. So, I just wanted to let you know that. You're welcome. Titus chapter two, drop down to verse 11. And if you are there and you are able, please stand for the reading of God's word. Titus 2:11, "For the grace of God has appeared bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ." That's our focus this morning, so let's end there. You may be seated, and as you are, let's pray.

Father, the truths in this text are so important for us. So, I pray that you would help us understand it. I pray that if there is anything that I say that is not biblical, that it'll be something that is forgotten, but that the things that are according to your truth are things that would be seared onto our hearts. And that you would use those truths to change our lives. And I pray the same thing for Trinity Church in Mesa. I pray the same thing for pastor Jared who's probably wrapping up his second service now. I pray that you would bless the word that came from his mouth. I pray that there would be people there who would know your truth better and would live according to your truth more because of their time at Trinity Church. Do that there, please. And do that here, please. I pray, Jesus, for the glory of your wonderful name. Amen.

So do you remember seeing pictures of, I remember seeing this in cartoons, that there were soldiers going off to war and there was a big ocean liner and there were massive crowds underneath and everybody's cheering and waving goodbye and crying and they're waving and handkerchiefs and all that. Do you remember those? Now when those boats would return the wives and the kids, or the girlfriends would go back to the docks and they'd wait for their husbands to return. They weren't just waiting there, there was waiting with anticipation, right? With excitement, ready for their return. Now there are few ideas that non-Christian's think are more weird than that Christians believe that Jesus of Nazareth who died 2000 years ago will return to earth. It's probably only surpassed in weirdness by the idea that Christians also are convinced that this Jesus is God in human flesh.

Well, in our text this morning, we have both the deity of Jesus and the return of Jesus. So this is going to be incredibly weird for some people, talking about these two things. But as Christians, we kind of understand that's just the way it's going to be. This isn't our home. We don't fit in

here. We're weird. Titus 2:13 is mainly about the return of Christ. And it's about how people who've been saved and how people who are growing, because of God's grace in their life, how they will wait with anticipation, how they will wait with excitement as they remain ready for their husband, for Christ, to return at any moment.

Now we have a lot of questions about the return of Jesus. We have a lot of questions about the end of the world, and unfortunately, I'm not going to answer all of them. I'm not going to answer most of them, actually. Now some of you are going to love my answers. You're going to high five me as you leave. Others of you, though you normally walk past me, today you're probably going to walk out some of the other doors. You're thinking like, oh my goodness, I can't believe I've been sitting under this guy's teachings. Like an umpire, I just want you to know balls and strikes and I'm just going to call it like I see it. And that's true for the end time. It's true for every passage I preach. In other words, I can't help but interpret the Bible the way I see the Bible. So what I can promise you is that all the elders agree on what I'm going to teach today. I can promise you that you don't have to be a member here and agree with what I'm going to say. You can be a member here and completely disagree with what I'm saying today. If you can be a member in heaven, you can be a member at Redeemer. Okay? And so that's it. You don't have to agree with every end times question and every end times nuance that I'm going to talk about today. Now, can we all agree that Christians who differ on end times questions will be in heaven together? Okay, good. Because I would just hate for people to see and hear the way we disagree and think, wow, they don't love and respect each other when they disagree. I'm glad to hear that. Because here's the thing, if people who studied the Bible diligently weren't clear about Jesus first coming until he got here, and even after, I think we can expect the same thing about his second coming. Right? So this morning, I'm going to try to answer five questions that every single one of us needs to have answered about end times, whether or not we've experienced God's grace in our lives. If you look at verse 11, everything flows from this idea that grace appeared. Grace saves us from God's good and appropriate punishment for our sins. That's verse 11. Grace transforms us personally so that we'll rid our lives of all known sin and live our lives to please God, that's verse 12. And as we live to please God, we will anticipate a glorious, sinless future with Jesus forever. That's verse 13. Now notice verses 11 and 13. There's this word that is repeated in both verses. It's the word appear. The idea is that Christians live between two appearances. We live between the appearance of grace in our lives when we're saved. And we live between the appearance of glory when Jesus returns to earth.

So let's find out more about that day. Look at verse 13 and let's ask the question. ***Who's waiting for Jesus? Who's waiting for Jesus?*** Who's anticipating his return? Who's ready for a second coming? Now, the answer is easy. Just a cursory reading of the text makes it clear. But the answer to the question is incredibly important. Who's waiting for Jesus to return? Answer is Christians. Notice the hour, in verse 13. Whoever the hour is, they're waiting for Jesus. Notice their Savior, their Christ, their God. Everybody can't say that the answer. Is seen also in the word us. In verse 12, those who've not only experienced God's grace and salvation, but who are experiencing his grace in sanctification, who are growing as they're waiting for Jesus. Philippians

3:20 puts it this way talking about Christians. It says our citizenship is in heaven, and from it, from heaven, we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. So these are Christians, these are saved people waiting for Christ, which means that unsaved people, people who grace is not yet appeared to, they're not waiting for Jesus to appear his second coming. Now, why is that important? Because a truth like that can help you diagnose where you stand with the Lord. Is there a desire in you for Jesus to return? Is there a hope in your heart that you will be with him, rescued from your sin, rescue from this sin cursed world. If that hope isn't in a person, then they're not thinking about the return of Christ. They're certainly not waiting for it. It doesn't matter to them. It rarely crosses their mind, except for maybe, gosh, I hope he doesn't return. That it'd be really bad for me. I'd be in big trouble if he did. See, there may be this sense that, yeah, I think that. So maybe you're an immature Christian who, you didn't even know Jesus is returning. Well, he is, and you may be a Christian who is in sin or is dominated by the world. So you don't think about it much, but listen, if domination by the world, or if sin remains and stays and takes hold of your heart, then listen, that's evidence that you're not a Christian. One of those evidences is, as you see here, grace is training us as we wait, as we anticipate, as we're getting ready for the return of Jesus. No wonder that a person wouldn't look for Christ to return if they're not saved. I mean, think about it. If your husband didn't go to war, you may be happy for all those other wives when their husbands come home, but you're not waiting with any anticipation because you don't have a husband who's gone. Well, if Jesus is not your spiritual husband, if you're not part of his bride, which you are if you're a Christian, then you would have no desire for him to return, and if that's you, then this text is in the Bible to help you diagnose your own heart to say, give your life to him. If this text is exposing a wait, I don't ever think about the return of Jesus, then today's the day to surrender to him. Today's the day to give him your life. Today's the day that you could go from death to life, from lost to found to saved, and this text can help you do that. Titus 2:13 says that part of the normal Christian life is waiting for, expecting, anticipating, looking forward to, being ready for Jesus to return at any moment. So are you? Are you waiting? Are you ready? He could come right now. If you're waiting and anticipating and ready for his return, if you're thinking about standing before him, if you're dreaming about being with him, then listen, that truth, that idea cannot help but drive you to greater devotion to him, and that's what it'll do in your life.

Now let's look at Titus 2:13 and ask a second question. ***What are Christians waiting for? What are Christians anticipating? What are they getting ready for?*** Notice the text. Christians are waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of Jesus Christ. Now this, in the Greek, is clearly one event described from two angles. It is the blessed hope of Christians and the appearing of Jesus. In other words, the hope of Christians is the appearing of Jesus. He's their Savior. He's their God. The hope and the appearing happen at the same time. He appears, their hope is realized. 1 Corinthians 1:7 puts it this way. Christians, "Wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ." Revealing, doesn't mean that people don't know who he is. Doesn't mean they don't have information about him. What that means is that though he is hidden now, he's hidden physically and he's hidden behind unbelief. One day he will appear. This is Titus 2:13, the blessed hope.

The hope that brings blessing. Hope in the New Testament is not I'm buying this lottery ticket, because I hope I win the lottery. Hope in the New Testament is an assured and definite certainty. It is sure but not yet realize the good, the blessing. So it is a certainty because Jesus said it would happen. It is a certainty that when he returns, he will bring with him joy. He will bring with him happiness. He will bring with him blessing. Freedom forever from worry in pain, freedom forever from sin for all who know him as Savior and Lord. Hebrews 9:28 puts it this way, "Jesus will appear a second time not to deal with sin, but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him." That's the Christian. Not forgetfully waiting for him, but eagerly waiting for him. Can't wait to see him. Want to see him as soon as possible. Come Lord Jesus. What are some of the blessings that salvation brings that he will bring with him? Resurrection, transformation, no more sin, no more sinning. Being with Jesus, being with his people forever in a perfect environment. That is what he brings. This appearing will be a sudden and surprising appearing. That's what that word appearing refers to. What was previously concealed will be revealed, and what is concealed now is not just Jesus. What is concealed now is the glory of Jesus. The radiance, the splendor, the visible expression of his majesty, the inapproachable light that surrounds him in heaven right now, all of that will be clear as the divine breaks into the human and faith is no longer faith but faith becomes sight. In that moment, when the world thinks this he is a mystery, his glory will be unmistakable when every Christian sees him and he is truly like Peter. Like Peter did on the Mount of Transfiguration, who he was broke out just a little bit, and it was mind blowing for them. Imagine when it's not breaking through just a little bit, but it is a full expression of his glory. That's what's coming and think about this when he appears and his glory is made obvious, not only will he be vindicated as the way and the truth and the life, but every Christian who's ever been mocked for him, every Christian who's ever been martyred for him will be vindicated as well. The glory that the world ignores, the glory of Jesus that they explain away and trample under their feet will appear in all of its splendor when Jesus appears. The world at that moment will shriek in horror as all the forms of religious relativism melt away at the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ. See, we don't rid our lives of sins so that we can better live for a dead teacher or a dead prophet. Yes, we proclaim Christ crucified, but we proclaim Christ risen and Christ returning at any moment. See if people didn't believe a wife who told them that her husband was a soldier at war, if they scoffed at her thinking that she was lying, if they mocked her for pretending to be a war bride, when they really didn't think she was, all she would need to prove them wrong is what? For him to come home. And in that moment they would be humiliated and she would be vindicated.

Listen, that will happen for the Christian when Jesus appears. These momentary and light afflictions that we face from our own sins and the sins of others, they are not worthy to be compared to the blessed hope, the appearing, of the glory of Christ.

Now let's look at Titus 2:13 again and ask a third question. ***Who exactly will be appearing?*** What does the text say? Every Sunday school child knows the answer, right? Jesus will be appearing. You're like, wow, you went to seminary to see that. Good for you. Notice Jesus will be appearing when he returns but notice what the text says about him. He has described in three

ways. First, he is called the Christ, which means that he's the Messiah promised in the Old Testament, in the king of the Jews, the ruler and judge of the world. Second, he's called the Savior. The one who rescues all who believe in him from all that they deserve for their crimes against God. That's why Jesus, notice, is called here our Savior. The one who saves anybody who will give him their lives. The one who saves anybody who will trust their lives to him, the one who will save anybody who surrendered to him as Lord and God. So what Morris said here about him, who exactly will be returning? Notice what the text says. He is also called our great God. Third, Jesus is called God. Now what I'm not saying by that is that God is Jesus. No, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are equally and eternally and truly and fully God. And yet there is one God, that's the Trinity. So if you just heard that and you're like, oh, not sure about that one. If you're confused about that, please listen to my teaching on this, on our website, or our YouTube pages. Look for them. You'll find them pretty easily. The Trinity is biblical. The Trinity is rational. The Trinity is historical, and it is relevant for each and every one of us.

Now this text is focusing in on the deity of Jesus. And you will be challenged on that if you haven't been already. So I want to equip you for that moment. So the rest of this point is going to feel more like a classroom than a sermon. My wife's like, oh, I love it when you do that. So hopefully you feel the same way. Because you need to be ready when the Jehovah's witnesses or others who challenge Christianity at this point say Jesus is not God. Yes, he is. And I want you to see this. I actually put it in your notes. So you didn't have to take notes on this. You can just follow along. I've given you six points from this text, that show Jesus is God.

The first is the phrase God and savior was an idiom used in the first century to refer to a single person, like a deity or Roman emperor who got this phrase, God and Savior. Second, the early church fathers that were Greek speakers, almost unanimously saw God and savior as referring to Jesus only. And they kind of knew Greek better than we do and so we should probably follow them. Third, the word appearing only ever refers to Jesus in the New Testament. In fact, there's not one text in the entire Bible that says people are to be waiting for the Father to appear. That's not a teaching of the Bible. The Father never appears. Fourth, though the Father is great, the word great is never used for the Father in the New Testament. That word, though, is used of Jesus. Five, the word God is unmistakably used to identify Jesus in Romans 9:5, Hebrews 1:8-9 and 2 Peter 1:1. Because here's what you'll hear the word God is never used for Jesus. Well, that's not true. I've given you five passages now, those four and Titus 2:13 to show you no, actually in fact it is. Now point number six is a Greek nerd point. I bring it up because there are people here who are studying Greek or who have studied Greek. And I don't want to leave them out. But if that's not you, I just want to warn you, I'm going to start sounding like Charlie Brown's teacher for a second. And so I'll be back. Don't worry. Okay?

Number six in Greek, when one article comes before two singular personal nouns in the same case with and in between those two nouns, it is always talking about one person with both of those nouns. Okay. So when the word the, let me try to explain this when the word the, which you can't see in 2:13, because it's hidden behind the word our before the word great but it's there.

When that the comes before both God and Savior with the Greek word and in between God and Savior, that phrase is talking about one person and one person only. And that person is identified at the end of the verse. That person is Jesus Christ. Everywhere else in the New Testament where this construction happens, it's talking about a single person. So I give you four passages there. Romans 15:6, 2 Corinthians 1:3, Galatians 1:4, 1 Peter 1:3, all have the same exact construction, but it says God and Father. Now in those texts, nobody dreams of separating God and Father. But when an anti-Christ being God biased starts to squirt out from people's mouths because they see God and savior really close to the name Jesus like it does in Titus 2:13 and like it does in 2 Peter 1:1, they will try to separate those, but don't let them. 2 Peter 1:1 and Titus 2:13 are the strongest texts in the entire New Testament on the deity of Jesus. If you only had those two texts, you could prove, beyond a shadow of a doubt that Jesus is God. He is our great God and Savior. Every Christian waits for his appearing.

Now I give you this in your notes so that you'll be ready. The next time somebody attacks you on that or to help you teach someone else or to help you teach yourself. If you're like, wait, really Jesus is God? Is that in the Bible? I gave that to you and notice it's a box that's dashed lines, you can cut it out and paste it in your Bible right there. Titus 2:13. You can put it right in there. You could write it in the margin of your Bible, whatever, so that you will never forget how to show someone or to show your own self when you're doubting that Jesus Christ is our great God and Savior.

Now you're like, okay, you just spent that time in the classroom to teach us some interesting point of theology. No, no I didn't. This is important. Jesus put it this way. John 8:24, unless you believe I am, and he quotes the burning bush. He says, unless you believe I am, unless you believe I am Yahweh, unless you believe I am the Lord. He says, you will die in your sins. 1 John 5:5 says, "Who is it that overcomes the world? Who is it that saved? Answer. "The one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God," and Son of God means equal with God. You can see John 5:18 on that. So here's the point, belief that Jesus is God as taught in Titus 2:13 is called an essential truth. It is a truth that is absolutely essential to believe if you're going to be saved. So let's look at Titus 2:13 again, and ask a fourth question. *When will Jesus appear?* What's the timing? Anyone know the day? Anyone know the hour? Anyone want to take a shot at that? Listen, if anyone ever actually tries to answer that question for you, please do this. You ready? Run. Get away as fast as you can and make sure your wallet is with you. Okay? Listen, if Mark 13:32 says that even Jesus himself didn't know the day or the hour of his return, nobody here will ever know it. Ever. Now, if you're wondering when we're going to talk about end times, that time is now. I think Titus 2:13 is talking about the rapture of the church. Now, every end times physician has a rapture. The question isn't will there be a rapture. 1 Thessalonians 5:17 is unmistakable that there will be a rapture. The question everyone disagrees on is when will the rapture happen? Now let's look at the text. Does the text tell us anything about the timing of Jesus' return? Not much. But what we can definitely tell is this, Jesus can come at any moment. Notice the text says Christians are "waiting for the blessed hope." That appearance that we saw on point two will be surprising and sudden. That word waiting, it means to be in an ongoing

posture for the Christian, always waiting, always watching, always ready, notice, for Jesus to appear. This is a common teaching in the Bible. 1 Corinthians 16:22 has the word Maranatha's. We know that word, but that word translated means our Lord come. It's a prayer. Come Lord, come back. It doesn't make sense to pray that prayer, if they didn't believe that Jesus could come at any moment. James 5:7-9 says this, "Be patient, therefore brothers, until the coming of the Lord, you also be patient. Establish your hearts." Listen to this. "For the coming of the Lord is at hand. Do not grumble against one another, brother, so that you may not be judged. Behold," listen to this, "The judge is standing at the door." So this phrases Jesus is at hand. The judge Jesus is standing at the door. What else could either of them mean except that Jesus can return at any moment? He's right outside the door. He can step through the door of history from the invisible world, right through to the visible world. At any moment, he's standing at the door waiting. So Jesus' return then is imminent, and what that means is that it's always at hand, it's always hanging over our heads. It's all the time ready to befall a person at any moment. Now, when it comes to an imminent event, a lot of things could happen before then. But the point is nothing has to happen for something to be imminent.

If you have to take out the trash before you come back in the house, coming inside the house is not imminent, you have to do something first. An imminent event is certain to happen, but uncertain as to when it will happen. Like when you were a kid and your mom said, just wait till your dad gets home. It was certain that he was coming home, right? You just didn't know when. The same is true with the return of Jesus. It is certain to happen, but is uncertain as to when it will happen, and because of that, the New Testament over and over again says, we're waiting, we're watching. We're always ready. It's like that game, Concentration. Remember that one? You put all the pieces in the thing and you turn the dial and then it starts ticking away, and what do you know? You know at some point it's going to go off and the pieces are going to fly all over the place. You just don't know what? You just don't know when. It is imminent, because it could happen at any moment. Now, if we're always to be ready, always waiting for Jesus to return, that means nothing else has to happen before he returns or we would be watching for those things instead. There's no reason for Christians to always have a posture of readiness if the truth of his appearance means that well, he can't come back yet because other things have to happen first. So if a bunch of signs and other prophecies need to be fulfilled, then we should be looking for those and waiting for those and watching for those, not for Jesus to appear. But that's not what the Bible teaches. It says for us to be waiting, like it says in verse 13, for the appearing of Jesus. Now, if saying all of that, you haven't figured it out already, I'm going to show my prophecy hand now. All right? So when it comes to prophecy, I believe in a pre-millennial return of Christ to the earth. To set up a literal kingdom, to reign on the earth for a thousand literal years. And I want you to see why. So, turn to revelation 20. Revelation 20. If you got a Bible from an usher, that is page 1142. 1142. Revelation 20. Revelation 20 starting in verse 1. "Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. And he sees the dragon, that ancient serpent who is the devil in Satan and bound him for a thousand years and threw him into the pit and shut it and sealed it over him so that he might not

deceive the nations any longer until the thousand years are ended. After that, he must be released for a little while." Well, there's an undefined period of time. That's interesting. "Then I saw Thrones and seated on them were those whom the authority of the judge was committed. Also, I saw the souls of those who'd been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God and those who'd not worshiped the beast or its image and then not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection. Behold, blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ. And they will reign with Christ for a thousand years. And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison." So, six times in seven verses, a thousand years, and as you follow the flow of revelation, it's very interesting. It's seven-year tribulation period, chapters 4-18, there's chapter 19, the return of Jesus, there's chapter 20, the millennium and chapters 21 and 22, the new heavens and the new earth. So as you just followed the flow, it's tribulation, return, millennium, those things aren't moved around. It says after these things, after these things, after these things. Almost like there's a chronology there. That's how I read it. So, chapter 19 is before the millennium. The return of Jesus is not after the millennium. It's not during the millennium. There's no mention of a rapture in revelation 19, which I'll point out in a second. Now having just said that, if you track with all these prophecy things, then what you hear in that is that I'm not post-millennial. Meaning I don't believe Jesus will return after the millennium. Also, just saying all of this also means that I'm not amillennial, which is the Roman Catholic view, that there is no thousand years. The six times that John says thousand years are not literal. They just mean a really long time.

And so I've thought about this when I stand before Jesus and he says to me, Jon, a thousand years just means a really long time, and I'd have to apologize to him and say, geez, I'm really sorry for taking you with your word. I just thought you meant what you said. I missed that one. So the Bible will never mean for us what it never meant to the author. So, God never means one thing when the biblical author meant something else. So why do I go through this? And we go back into classroom mode because truth in advertising. I want you to know where I'm coming from when it comes to these things.

Now 27% of the Bible is prophecy, which means that what is that 73% of the Bible is not. That's why you're like, well, we haven't heard these things from you yet. Well, this is only 27% of the Bible, but it is critical for you to know, okay. Here's where I, as well as the other elders are coming from. We don't have special rules for interpreting Bible prophecy. We just have one consistent method for interpreting the Bible, no matter where we are in the Bible, and that is a literal grammatical historical interpretation. So, I approach the Bible in the plain normal everyday common-sense way that we understand all communication with the assumption that God wants to be understood. So nowhere does the Bible say, or even hint that we should ignore the normal meanings of words because they're in prophecy. In fact, much of prophecy tells you this is meant to be taken symbolically. So if we pick and choose what's symbolic and not, instead of letting the text do that, then what will happen is we will end up giving the Bible a meaning

rather than discovering its meaning through the consistent application of those rules for interpretation. This is also going to mean that I'm never going to see the word Israel used for the church. When the Bible uses the word Israel, it means ethnic Jews or the Jewish Messiah. It never means Christians from all over the world. In the history of the church, most of the earliest Christian leaders were pre-millennial, and what happened was allegorical interpretation started to take over the Christian world, and as that happened on amillennialism became popular because it took the promises made to Israel and it allegorized them and made them for the church. So I'm pre-millennial, a literal thousand-year reign of Jesus. So now within that camp, okay, so now we've gone, okay, millennium. Now within the camp of the pre-millennialists, there's still a whole bunch of disagreement, and it's disagreement about when is the rapture going to happen? There are four views and I'm not going to talk about any of them. I'm just going to say this. Let me ask you a question. Do you believe that Jesus is coming to rapture his people to heaven? If you say yes to that, as I can, then my second question is this, do you believe that could happen at any moment? If your answer is yes, then you are most likely a pre-tribulationist like I am. Three and a half to seven years of events do not have to happen before Jesus returns. The pre-trib, I think, makes the best sense of passages that teach Jesus can return at any moment. So we should always be waiting, always be ready, always be watching just like Titus 2:13 says.

Now on your notes, I give you seven reasons for a pre-trib rapture, and luckily for you, I wrote them down. So you don't have to write them. Briefly, I'm going to give those to you. Again, going with the classroom feel number one, there's the place of the church in Revelation. Quickly, Revelation 1-3 and Revelation 22 mentioned the word Ecclesia church, but that word does not appear in chapters four through 18, and those chapters describe the tribulation period, the seven years. They're second, the rapture versus the return. So, I think Jesus' second coming has two phases. The first is the rapture and the second is his return to rule and reign. All I have time to say is this, I've given you the rapture passages and I've given you the return passages, and if you were to read those and compare those to each other, you would see differences. I had a conversation with three students after the last service. I'm like, okay, help us think through this. So my point is this, when you compare these passages together, you will see about a dozen differences between the two. My point is, what's the best explanation for those differences? Some say you wait, it could happen at any moment, and others say, well, Matthew 24 says like this, this and this has to happen first. How do you make sense of that? My point is the thing that makes the most sense is to say the second coming has two phases, the rapture and the return. Third there's the exemption from God's wrath. Now we endure trials and tribulation in this life. John 16:33 says we will. But it doesn't make sense, at least for me, for Christians to endure the tribulation. Especially when 1 Thessalonians 1, 1 Thessalonians 5 and Revelation 3 all say that we will not experience the wrath of God. In fact, the order in 1 Thessalonians is interesting. It's rapture, chapter 4 and then it's wrath, chapter 5. So how can Jesus die and rise to save the church from God's wrath only to have her pass through it when God pours out his wrath on an unbelieving world? Again, that doesn't make sense to me. What makes sense to me is that he would rapture the church out of the world and then punish the world for unbelief. Fourth, there's

a time gap between the rapture and the return there's that seven years, and I think that seven years is helpful because there are some events described in Bible prophecy that are going to take place, but it's hard to fit where they would go until you fit them between the rapture and the return. Like all Christians being judged, the judgment seat of Christ, the preparation for the marriage to Jesus, the non-glorified, mortal humans that populate the earth after Jesus returns, and after the millennium being described at the end of Revelation 20, when there's a war to end all wars and the Gentile nations are judged. How is all that happened? That makes sense if there's a gap between the two. Five, there's the removal of the restrainer. 2 Thessalonians 2 talks about something or someone that's holding the antichrist back from appearing on the world stage. Well, what is that? There's like a dozen different ideas. I think the best explanation is the restrainer is the Holy Spirit who is working through the church. See when the church is removed, the Spirits restraining evil will also be removed. So if you think it's bad now, just wait. His saving work is going to continue in the tribulation, but his restraining of evil, that work, I think will come to an end. Six is the imminence of Jesus' return. I've already talked about that. So, I'll just say the rapture is living in California. Not that you want to be raptured out of it, that's not what I'm saying. In California, you know an earthquake is going to happen, right? You're certain of it. You just don't know what? When it's going to happen. It could happen at any time. It might be tomorrow, might be a decade from now. You are certain it's going to happen. You are uncertain as to when. And that's the same thing with the rapture.

And then second, the rapture's called the blessed hope. I've met people who are terrified about the rapture, probably because of some crazy movies 30 years ago. I've also met people who are like, you're an idiot for believing the rapture. Only wackos and weirdos believe the rapture. Well, I don't determine my theology by the group of people that I associate with when I believe something. I determine it by what I'm convinced the Bible teaches and what the Bible teaches is that the rapture is a blessed hope. It's a hope that brings blessing. That's what John 14 says. That's what 1 Thessalonians 4 says. That's what Titus 2:13 says. It's blessing and it's comfort and it's encouraging. The rapture was meant to comfort hearts that were troubled. It was meant to motivate hearts that were being dominated by the world like we're seeing in Titus 2. Now the other rapture views say that you've got to go through some or all of the tribulation before the rapture. So let me ask you, if that's true, then what encouragement really is the rapture? I mean, would it be comforting to know that you had to go through three and a half to seven years of God's wrath before the rapture could happen? I don't think so. The rapture is the blessed hope. The hope that brings blessing, the blessing being Christ coming to take his people to heaven, where he's prepared a place for them to enjoy while God's wrath is poured out on the earth.

So if you notice, all seven points, spell the acronym, pre-trib. You see that on there? That's to help you remember those seven points. Now I don't want you to think that's unique to me. It's not. I just stole that from a book called *The End* by Mark Hitchcock. So you can see it on the back. It's an awesome book. I'd highly recommend it.

So now let's look at Titus 2:13 one last time and ask our fifth and final question. ***How should we then live?*** If Jesus could come at any moment, if he could come before this day is over, how should we live? Should that fact impact our lives at all? Absolutely. Someone who wakes up every day believing Jesus could return today will live a drastically different life than a person who does not believe that, and this truth was not something that's meant to be debated at a, I don't know, at a coffee shop or fought back and forth in a classroom. All end times teachings had a goal to motivate godly living. Listen to 1 Timothy 6:14, Paul charges Timothy saying, "Keep the commandment unstained and free from approach until the appearing of our Lord." Jesus appearing was a motivator for obedience. The same is true in 1 John 3:2-3, where again, talking about Jesus' return, John says, "Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears, we shall be like him because we shall see him as he is." So there's this, here he is. There's the appearing. Then John says, "And everyone who has this hope in him, purifies himself, just as Jesus is pure." So, the returning of Christ as a motivator to get sin out of our lives, to rid ourselves of all known sin so that we could live to please him. Well, that's the idea that if Jesus could come at any moment, that's the motivator to get the sin out of our lives. That's what 2 Peter 3:14 says. Listen to how Peter puts it. "Since you're waiting for these things, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish and at peace." So the idea is when he returns, you will be found by him, and what do you want him seeing you doing when he finds you? He says no spot or blemish and at peace. In other words, remove the sin, remove the conflict from your life because Jesus could step through the door of history at any moment. When he arrives, Philippians 3:21 says Jesus will, "Transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body." Meaning at the rapture, we will be glorified, no more sin, no more struggle, no more pain. Our souls will be perfected. Our bodies will be instantly transformed into these spiritual, heavenly, glorious, immortal, unable to die, fit for eternity bodies, and some of your like Amen of that.

So, if salvation takes care of the penalty of sin and sanctification is addressing the power of sin then glorification is addressing the presence of sin and it'll be gone. Since all of this is true, since this is the assured future for all who are in Christ, whether we are glorified at death or the rapture, let's not be people who are overcome by this world so much that we're not ready for Jesus to return. Remember the one who died in disgrace before a mocking world will return in triumph and glory to a church that loves and longs for his appearing. So let's be people who are glad and eagerly anticipate the return of our king, sure that he's going to return, convinced he's going to return. Why? Because he said it and that's enough for us. Let's be people who are looking for this, desiring it with our whole hearts, longing for the enjoyment and the wonder and the awe that we will experience the moment that he appears. Yet at the same time, let that truth encourage patience as we endure the trials that beset our lives here. Let's be people who are waiting and watching like Jesus could return right now, or now, or now. Could happen at any moment. The only thing holding him back is God's plan. I just picture him like a lion and he's right inside the gate, and he's just waiting for the doors to burst open. You think Jesus is just going to saunter through those doors? He's going to burst through those doors, and when he does,

we will see his glory. We will be amazed. We'll say, why wasn't I thinking about this more? As soon as that happens, the world as we know, it will end. The tribulation unlike the world is ever experienced, will break out and last for seven years, and I'm convinced we're not going to be here for that.

We will return with Jesus at the end of that, when he will defeat Israel's enemies, fulfill all of God's promises to Israel, set up his kingdom and reign for a thousand years. Now, when wives would get word that their husbands were coming home from the war, again, they would do what? They'd go down to the docks. They didn't know the time that they'd arrive, they just knew that they were coming home. So the wives waited and waited until they appeared, and the ship sails into the harbor and the husbands are seeing their wives and there's joy and there's tears and they're coming off the boat and they're embracing and there's joy and there's wonder and there's satisfaction. There's a story told about how that's happening, except for one guy. He's looking and he's waiting and he's not seeing his wife anywhere. So eventually everybody leaves and he's there by himself. So he walks home. He walks home and he finds his wife and she's surprised to see him. He asked her, why weren't you waiting for me at the docks? She said, I was here waiting. I've been waiting for you every day to come home, to which he replied. Yes, dear. You were waiting, but you weren't watching. Titus 2:13 wants us waiting and watching, always ready. Because at any moment, our great God and Savior Jesus Christ could appear and take us home. Let's pray.