

***“Paul’s Letter to the Colossians, Introduction —  
The Seven Dimensions of the Mystery, Part 4”***

***Review: “The Seven Dimensions of the Mystery, The Blessed Hope”***

***Col. 1:26-27***

***26 Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:***

***27 To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:***

- ***We see here that great secret, kept hidden in God from before the foundation of the world, that for Gentiles, apart from the covenants and promises given to Israel, God’s “chosen people”, God had planned and prepared a great salvation indeed, and all though the riches of grace made sure for us by the completed and perfect sacrifice of his own beloved Son, Christ Jesus. This is most wonderful and blessed and is at the heart of Paul’s doctrine. This blessing is part of the whole realm of blessings, under grace, which he describes here at the beginning as “given to me for you (or “for your benefit”). This teaching is contained in seven (or more) parts and I have called them here the various Dimensions of the Mystery”, The Seven-Fold Dimensions of the Mystery Dispensation of the Grace of God (Eph. 3:1-9):***

- 1. A Better Gospel, Given for the Faith of Sinners (1 Cor. 15:1-8)***
- 2. Every Benefit of Christ’s Work on Calvary, Fully Provided (Eph. 1:3; Rom. 8:28-30)***
- 3. An Abundant and Eternal Life, Offered Freely, Based on Christ’s Righteousness (Rom. 5:17), and The Indwelling of the Triune God, Providing Constant Resources in Living (Col. 1:26-27; Rom. 8:8-10)***
- 4. The Church Which Is One Body, Given for Our Mutual Blessing (Eph. 4:4; 5:32)***
- 5. The Blessed Hope & Expectation. Assured by Almighty God (Tit. 2:11-14; 1 Cor. 15:51; 1 Thess. 4:15-18; 5:9-11; 2:1-3; 2:13-17)***
- 6. The Mature Life of the Believer Under Grace, Endowed in Every Way to His Glory (Gal. 5)***
- 7. A Heavenly Warfare, Demanding Our Constant Engagement (2 Thess. 2:6-13; Eph. 6:10-12; 2 Tim. 4:1-4 )***

***This brings us to our lesson for today, the conclusion of our study on The Blessed Hope, or the Rapture of the Church. As I have said so many times, this teaching concerning the Pre-Tribulational Rapture or Catching Up of the members of Christ Heavenly Body into Glory is one of the most wonderful and transforming teachings of all. In Titus the apostle calls it by a different name, that of the Blessed Hope of the believer today under grace. Sadly, we live today in a time when this teaching, one of the Seven Dimensions of the Sacred Secret given to Paul, is demeaned and distorted and so often denied as even true and authentic. This teaching of scripture had been lost under the dominance of the Roman Church's dogma and was not recovered by the reformers either until late in the 19th century. Many, however, in the 20th century believed this teaching and the dispensational teachings of scripture but sadly and so often no longer do.***

***But this is our Blessed Hope and so much of our faith and our lives depend on a proper understanding of it:***

***Review: The Blessed Hope & Expectation. Assured by Almighty God (Tit 2:11-14; 1 Cor. 15:51; 1 Thess. 4:15-18; 5:9-11; 2:1-3; 2 Thess. 2:13-17)***

- ***The Privilege of Grace - The Blessed Hope Teaches That Which Was Previously Kept Secret (1 Cor. 15:50-54)***
- ***The Prospect of Grace -The Blessed Hope Is the Source of Our Comfort (1 Thess. 4:15-18, 5:4-11; 2 Thess. 2:3)***
  - ***The scripture here draws several sharp contrasts that reveal great differences between prophecy and the sacred secret revealed through Paul:***
    - ***The fact of the coming transformation for all***
    - ***Flesh and blood bodies and spiritual bodies or the corruptible verses the incorruptible, the mortal vs the immortal (or subject to dying versus not subject to death). What is revealed here if we would receive it is that all will enter into this promised full inheritance with transformed bodies.***

***The teaching to Israel, on the other hand, was that many would enter that promised realm in their natural bodies and that would be the normal result for those alive when the Lord returned. The difference has to do with a Heavenly Inheritance on the one hand, and with an Earthly Inheritance on the other.***

***For Israel, only those that had died first (like Job, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, David and so many other saints according to Hebrews 11 would receive a resurrection body at that time. The rest would receive their inheritance when Christ welcomed them into his earthly and millennial kingdom. But for us under grace it is so different. Our inheritance and only be entered with a resurrection or transformed body for it is a truly heavenly inheritance indeed! Amen.***

- ***The Prospect of Grace -The Blessed Hope Is the Source of Our Comfort (1 Thess. 4:15-18, 5:4-11)***
  - ***The Thessalonian believers were troubled in their spirits because of false teachers that had come to Thessalonica after Paul had founded the church, taught the believers, and then left for the next part of his missionary journey. Paul's primary teaching on the Rapture to refute that of the false teachers is found in the Thessalonian letters:***

***1 Thess. 4:15-18***

***15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent [Gr. "precede"] them which are asleep.***

***16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:***

***17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.***

***18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words.***

- ***So the teaching here is that those that die before the Lord's calling into glory will not miss the joy of his coming and the full benefits of that heavenly inheritance together with us, for they will be raised first!***

***Apparently Paul's teaching was so powerful that the expectation, the hope, of his coming had transformed their mental and emotional lives to such a degree that everything else was to little account. But the false teachers were so successful with their satanic lies that many saints had left the teaching of the Blessed Hope behind. Then, when some in the fellowship, probably family members, had***

*died [and were perhaps even martyred], they thought that their beloved ones had missed out on the blessing of being caught up together to meet the Lord in the air as Paul had so faithfully and correctly taught them. The next verses in this letter bring home another point, with a focus on the fear of future events.*

*This teaching is so important today when so many are using fear to control our thoughts and actions, but Paul gives the antidote to that false teaching here:*

**[READ ] 1 Thess. 5:1-3**

**1 But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you [because I already have taught you that that teaching was not for you but was for Israel]**

**2 For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.**

**3 For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.**

- *Paul here uses those same words as a contrast to the teaching he will now give regarding the Lord's plan for the Body of Christ. It is so important to see that. He makes that clear that contrast using the distinctive wording, even the pronouns, "they" as opposed to "ye", "you", "we" and "us". Thereby he is characterizing different persons living in very different times.*

*We, Paul writes here, however, are living with the current expectation of Christ's possible soon return, his imminent return, as it were, while they, those living in the Tribulation period, are looking for the signs of the times and are preparing for that event, they might not be caught unawares.*

*What God was planning for believers living in Paul's day (and in ours as well) was so very different, for it was their blessing, not their trial and the greatest testing ever to come upon this earth:*

**[READ ] 1 Thess. 5:4-11**

**4 But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.**

**5 Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.**

**6 Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.**

7 For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night.

8 But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.

9 For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,

10 Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.

11 Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.

- *Here Paul contrasts (and this is key) the false teaching that had so disturbed the believers in Thessalonica with the true teachings as the apostle had previously given it. In drawing that contrast, he begins by using the phrase “of the times and the seasons”. That expression was used regarding prophecy regarding Israel and their promised earthly Kingdom still yet to come.*

- *We see the same language here that is found in the Lord’s teaching recorded for us in Matt. 24 & 25, Mk. 13, Lk. 21, and Acts 1:7. For example:*

**Matt. 24:42** Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.

**Matt. 24:43** But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up.

**Matt. 25:13** Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.

- *As we saw last time, there are several words used here that must be understood well or we can never understand this teaching regarding the blessed hope of the Body Church. For it may seem that Paul is comparing believers that are still living at the return of the Lord versus those that have died. But the key to understanding this is seen in the underlying Greek words translated in KJV as “wake [or watch]” and “sleep [or to be distracted or unaware]” [See the references in Strong’s Concordance]:*

- *“Wake”: γρηγορεύω (grēgoreúō | gray-gor-yoo'-o)*

**Strong's: to keep awake, i.e. watch (literally or figuratively)**

- **“Sleep”: καθεύδω (katheúdō | kath-yoo'-do)**

**Strong's: to lie down to rest, i.e. (by implication) to fall asleep (literally or figuratively)**

- ***But these words are never used of living versus dying in scripture. On the other hand, in 1 Thess. 4:13, a passage that addresses believers who have died and others that are still alive, a different word altogether is found, one that often is used of those that have died: κοιμάω.***
- ***So we conclude that the intention of the apostle Paul here is that rather than contrasting in chapter 5 between those that are living and those that are dead as he had already done in chapter 4, the apostle is stating the contrary teaching to what the Lord had asserted regarding the coming Tribulation and the requirements for entering into the Millennial Kingdom.***
- ***So, to translate without the ambiguous words “wake” or “sleep”, the verses would read like this: “For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us, that, whether we are alert [or watching] or distracted [and unaware], we should live together with him.” This is quite contrary to the principle that will be in effect during the Tribulation Period, where the applicable principle is rather as the gospel accounts make so clear.***

**Today, Part 2 of the Rapture Teaching Regarding Our Blessed Hope:**

- ***The Presence of Grace - The Blessed Hope Delivers Us From Fear (2 Thess. 2:1-3)***
- ***The Power of Grace - The Blessed Hope Protects Us From License (Tit. 2:11-14)***

**I. The Presence of Grace - The Blessed Hope Delivers Us From Fear (2 Thess. 2:1-3)**

- ***Our Heavenly Hope Is So Profoundly Different From the Prophetical Hope - the Sequence of Events Is Key Though the Timing Is NOT Revealed in Scripture.***

**[READ ] 2 Thess. 2:1-3**

**1** Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and *by* our gathering together unto him,

**2** That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.

**3** Let no man deceive you by any means: for *that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first*, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;

- *Here Paul makes the contrasts so clear, for according to the prophecies given in the Old Testament and in the teaching of Lord himself, believers were commanded to prepare for the end times where there would be great suffering before the glory was revealed at the return of the Lord. They were not told to rest and be comforted. Instead they were to watch and prepare. For example:*

**Matt. 24:6-8, 11-14**

**6** And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all *these things* must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

**7** For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.

**8** All these *are* the beginning of sorrows.

...

**11** And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.

**12** And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.

**13** But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

**14** And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

- *It is so clear here that the “end” is the time when all is made right, for it will be theme of the Lord’s return. Until the Lord returns, according to this teaching, the believers living though that period will endure great tribulations:*

**Matt. 24:21-22, 29-30**

**21** For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

**22** And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

...

**29** Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:

**30 And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.**

- *This is so different than what Paul writes. Though the translations generally miss the point here, Paul's language in verse 3 in fact pinpoints the beginning of the Tribulation period as the next event following the Rapture itself, which he here calls "a falling away". The Greek here though would be better translated quite literally as: "the standing apart"!! And what a dramatic event that will be. Amen and amen. Do we yearn for that day?*
- *We should have no fear of future events that are part of prophecy. Many today who are false teachers use fear of those events of prophecy as part of their mechanism to control the believers. Generally they use the prophecies given to Israel suitably misinterpreted as food for their satanic lies.*
- *But, instead of all of that to look forward to, Paul simply writes this at the end of chapter 2 of 2 Thessalonians:*

**2 Thess. 2:13-14, 16-17**

**13 But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:**

**14 Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

**...**

**16 Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace,**

**17 Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.**

- *Paul therefore teaches not the timing of the Rapture or Catching Up, but the Sequence in reference to the return to the Prophetic Program revealed for Israel and the Time of Jacob's Trouble. The Rapture is BEFORE the Tribulation period begins. Period.*



**II. The Power of Grace - The Blessed Hope Protects Us From License  
(Tit. 2:11-14):**

- *Its Hidden Blessing - deliverance from the power of sin*

**[READ ] Tit. 2:11-14**

**11 For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,  
12 Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;**

**13 Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;**

**14 Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.**

- *This is a very important aspect of the Rapture Teaching, that it in its very essence is a tool in the Lord's hand to draw believers who have this teaching and this conviction to holy living. Fruit bearing is the order of the day therefore for believers that have THIS HOPE.*
- *It is also of value to consider what IS NOT stated here, the the Law is the TEACHER of holy living. Many do teach this today and as a result legalism among believers continues to flourish. Perhaps one reason for this is found in a misunderstanding of one of Paul's statements in Galatians:*

**[READ ] Gal. 3:22-26**

**22 But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.**

**23 But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed.**

**24 Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.**

**25 But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.**

**26 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.**

- *But verses 25 & 26 show that interpretation to be in error, where his argument in this chapter is completed, namely, that the Law was not given to bring righteousness but rather to convict of sinfulness. The nature is fallen and the Law powerfully revealed that to the Jews. That Law was not given to the Gentiles and the Jews were the ones*

*referred to here as is made so clear earlier in the chapter. So, verse 24 properly should be interpreted in context in this way:*

- **Verses 23-24**
  - *The Greek “schoolmaster” ruled his students with a rule of iron in total subjection. Paul compared the Law to this as there were similarities in the effect of that legal system to that of a schoolmaster. In each case the one subjected wanted liberty. In the case of the schoolmaster that was gained at the age of maturity. But in the case of believers living at that time, liberty from the rule of Moses Law came through Christ’s finished work and glorious resurrection. It was through the faith in him that the reign of the Law was broken.*
- **Verses 25-26:** *Note that the words “to bring us” in verse 24 are italicized. That means that there are no corresponding words in the Greek text. Those words were supplied by the translators. Unfortunately they conform to the translators’s anti-dispensational view while they conflict with Paul’s intent here. He is making a dispensational statement, not a statement about the process of becoming a believer. For it is not about while living under the Law as children, we learn that we cannot be delivered though works as many have taught (and the Reformers were caught up in this misunderstanding) and are then willing as it were to be saved by our faith. No, Paul is saying that the Law was a burden placed on the Jews due to their obstinance. That is the clear meaning of verse 23: “we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed.” ...*
  - *“Kept under ...”: Kept down or under by the Law*
  - *“Shut up unto ...”: Prevented from opening to this faith in the Lord Jesus Christ*
  - *“the faith which should afterwards be revealed”:*
- **So Paul is making a statement about the Dispensational change from Law to Grace that had occurred. Since the false teachers had refused to accept that change, they still compelled submission to that law, even for the new Gentile**

*believers. But that teaching so corrupted the grace teaching of Paul, that it cut it off at the roots, as it were. So the teaching of grace regarding the Christian life is so different that what is so often heard and Tit. 2 states it so clearly, that it is not the Law or any legal system of works that brings godliness in living, but the teaching regarding unlimited grace. Amen and amen.*

**HOW IMPORTANT THEREFORE IS PAUL'S TEACHING OF THE SACRED SECRET?**

***Tit. 2:11-12***

**11 For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,  
12 Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;**

***Hymn: "Christ Liveth in Me" by D. W. Whittle***

**1 Once far from God and dead in sin,  
No light my heart could see;  
But in God's Word the light I found,  
Now Christ liveth in me.**

**Refrain:**

**Christ liveth in me,  
Christ liveth in me,  
Oh! what a salvation this,  
That Christ liveth in me.**

**2 As rays of light from yonder sun,  
The flow'rs of earth set free,  
So life and light and love came forth  
From Christ living in me. [Refrain]**

**3 As lives the flow'r within the seed,  
As in the cone the tree,  
So, praise the God of truth and grace,  
His Spirit dwelleth in me. [Refrain]**

**4 With longing all my heart is filled,  
That like Him I may be,  
As on the wondrous thought I dwell  
That Christ liveth in me. [Refrain]**

**NEXT TIMES:**

- ***The Mature Life of the Believer Under Grace, Endowed in Every Way to His Glory (Gal. 5)***
- ***A Heavenly Warfare, Demanding Our Constant Engagement (2 Thess. 2:6-13; Eph. 6:10-12; 2 Tim. 4:1-4)***