

Anchored Between Advents

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Background

1. Chapter 1
 - Paul left Titus in Crete to strengthen the fledgling church.
 - Appointment of elders: their qualities
 - Job of the elders: exhortation and conviction
2. Chapter 2
 - Verses 1-10: instructions for how to behave *within* the body of believers.
 - In contrast, believers are to act differently.
 - “But as for you ...” (Tit. 2:1).
 - Showing a pattern of good works (Tit. 2:7)
 - Living in a way which *adorns* the doctrine of God (Tit. 2:10)
 - Verses 11-15: our passage today explains *why* -- what is the Christian’s motivation for godly living?

Titus 2:11-15

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works. Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you.¹

The Lives Of Believers Are Anchored *Between* Two Immensely Important Historical Events.

1. **The crucifixion of Jesus Christ.**
2. **The glorious return of Jesus for His Church.**
3. **Paul ties our walk in this world to both of these events.**
 - A. **Past tense: “the grace of God . . . *has* appeared”.**
 - B. **Future tense: “looking *for* the . . . appearing of our great God and Savior”.**
 - C. **Either way we look, to the past or to the future, our lives are *anchored* by these events.**
4. **In both of these events, God “tears the fabric,” as it were, of uniformitarianism to step into history in a dramatic way.**

The First Event: The Incarnation Of Jesus, Born Of A Virgin.

1. **History is not a uniform progression.**

- A. **From its very conception, and every moment thereafter, creation remains utterly dependent upon God -- *The First Cause*.**
- B. **In the universal chain of cause and reaction, only God stands alone without antecedent, without beginning.**
- C. **In this sense, “history” is very much *HIS story*.**
- D. **History has a *purpose* which, ultimately reveals the intentions of the One behind history - God.**
- E. **Someone familiar with the Bible can point to numerous events in *HIS story* where the uniformitarian experience of history -- its assumed flow in a linear and gradual development which we experience most of the time -- has been dramatically altered by Divine intervention.**
- F. **During such times, the will of God is emphatically displayed by way of dramatic physical events which ensue.**
 - I. **The creation of the heavens and earth, and apparently of time itself, recorded in Genesis 1.**
 - II. **The global flood of Noah where all but 8 representatives of mankind perished, recorded in Genesis 7.**
 - III. **The global dispersion emanating from Babel at the introduction of languages, recorded in Genesis 11.**
 - IV. **The exodus of Israel from Egyptian bondage, recorded in the book of Exodus.**
- G. **And so it was at the virgin birth and subsequent crucifixion of Jesus Christ.**
 - I. **Enormous mystery surrounds the first advent of Jesus - God in the flesh.**
 - The virgin birth.
 - The full significance, both within the Godhead and the spiritual realm, of Jesus' death on the cross.
 - II. **How enormously significant and revealing that this, *the central event in all of history*, God chose to enact by means so accessible to dismissal and ridicule by skeptics. (Truly salvation requires *faith!*)**

2. God's grace in bringing salvation.

- A. **Paul, writing to Titus, explains that in the incarnation and crucifixion, the grace of God which brings salvation has appeared to all men.²**
- B. **The grace of God *has* (past-tense) been revealed.**
- C. **The incarnate ministry of Jesus, culminating in His death on the cross, is the**

***penultimate* expression of divine grace!**

I. John 1:14-18

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. John bore witness of Him and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me.'" And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.³

II. A mere two chapters later, John pens the most famous sentence ever recorded. A sentence that has been translated into more languages than any other in the history of the universe:

III. John 3:16

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.⁴

IV. *This* is grace (unmerited favor)!

- This love is *infinitely costly* to God.
- This love is *completely unmerited* by Man.
- This love *demonstrates* extreme favor on the part of God. God "put His money where His mouth is," as it were.
- The crucifixion is spelled **G-R-A-C-E**! Unmerited favor as only God can bestow! Complete forgiveness of sins at God's entire expense, all available to any who will simply believe -- accept and trust in what God offers.

The Second Event: The Glorious Appearing Of Jesus Christ.

1. This is none-other than the second advent of Jesus.

- A. **For non-believers, this is the Second Coming, when Jesus returns in power and judgment to overthrow the kingdoms of this world (Rev. 19).**
- B. **For believers: His glorious appearing occurs when Jesus returns for His Church at the Rapture. (Heb. 9:28).**
- C. **The contrast between the appearance of Jesus to these two groups is evident in Malachi 4:1-2.**

"For behold, the day is coming, Burning like an oven, And all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up," Says the LORD of hosts, "That will leave them neither root nor branch. But to you who fear My name The Sun of Righteousness shall arise With healing in His wings; And you shall go out And grow fat like stall-fed calves."⁵

2. Paul is writing to Titus and the Christians of Crete, thus the return of Christ for His

church is in view. Notice also that Paul refers to *our* great God and Savior Jesus Christ.

3. **This passage touches on several important matters, which I'm not going to spend time on today:**

- The matter of the deity of Christ. Notice Paul refers to a single individual, Jesus Christ, as both *God* and *Savior*. This is one of the strongest passages in the Scriptures spelling out the deity of Christ and is upheld by a grammatical construction in the Greek which has come to be described as the [Granville-Sharp Rule](#). Suffice it to say this verse completely undercuts cults such as the Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons who deny the deity of Christ.⁸
- Aspects of the rapture of the Church and its relationship to the Second Coming.

4. **I want to stay focused on what I believe is Paul's focus in this passage: *how our position, "anchored between these two advents" should inform and motivate our living in the present age -- literally, the "now age" of verse 12.***

The Two Advents Are Connected!

1. **The appearance of the grace of God that brought salvation (v. 11) has an intended purpose: to *teach* us.**

A. "Teaching" is [παιδεύουσα](#) [*paideuousa*], and is related to "child" ([παιδίον](#) [*paidion*]) which describes a guardian responsible for *instruction, training, educating* and even *disciplining* the child.

I. Related to the word for "tutor" in Galatians where Paul reveals that the law was a tutor to bring us to Christ (Gal. 3:24).

B. **God's grace is to instruct us, both negatively and positively.**

I. **Negatively: denying ungodliness and worldly lusts.**

a. "Denying" is [ἀρνησάμενοι](#) [*arnēsamenoi*], which can denote renouncing a relationship with, repudiating, refusing to follow.

II. **Positively: living soberly, righteously, and godly right smack dab in the middle of this present age with its worldly lusts which we are to deny.**

III. **It is this tension between *who* we are and *where* we are which provides a witness to the glory of God.**

2. **Looking for the blessed hope and future glorious appearance of Jesus.**

- "Looking for" is [προσδεξόμενοι](#) [*prosdexomenoi*], present tense: "while watching expectantly." Believers are to be expectantly looking ahead to receive what God has promised and predicted.
- "Appearing" is [ἐπιφάνειαν](#) [*epiphaneian*], the word from which we get *epiphany*. Here, it means "a visible manifestation of a divine being *appearance*"⁹. It is only used of Christ in the NT and speaks of the unveiling or revealing of a *full and clear view*.¹⁰

A. **Jesus gave Himself *for a purpose*.**

I. A “purpose clause” introduced by “that” -- “Who gave Himself for us, that...”

- “In order that...”
- “For the following reasons...”
- Gives the motivation for His action.

II. What were His primary motivations which Paul sets forth?

- To purchase
- To purify
- To proclaim

a. To purchase (redeem).

i. “Redeem” is **λυτρώσεται** [*lytrōsētai*], to free someone by paying a ransom price.

ii. Does Paul have salvation to eternal life primarily in view here?

iii. That which we were redeemed from, in bondage to, follows: “every lawless deed”. The emphasis is on the purpose of the purchased freedom, delivering believers from the bondage of sin: *enabling us to live righteously*.

b. To purify.

i. For Himself His own special people.

ii. “Purify” is **καθαρίση** [*katharisē*], alludes to ceremonially cleansing by washing. Again, the *purpose* of Christ was not just to bring us to eternal life, but to *change our lives here and now in regard to sinful behavior*.

c. To proclaim (exhibit, demonstrate) how dominion should be.

i. Produce zealously for Godly living and good works.

ii. “Special people” - those who belong only to Him. By what means is His ownership evident?

iii. Demonstrate God’s intention for man living within the original creation in unfallen dominion. This is not just about fire insurance! It is about God’s intention for creation and man’s part within it.

iv. The “any-moment” arrival of our Great God and Savior provides enormous motivation for holy living!

- Important guest arriving for a visit - what condition is the house in?
- Someone walking in on you at any time no matter where you are or what you are doing

v. **The Advent of Jesus to take up His Church at the Rapture is *imminent*.**

Since we never know exactly when an imminent event will occur, three things are true. First, we cannot count on a certain amount of time transpiring before the imminent event happens; therefore, we should always be prepared for it to happen at any moment. Second, we cannot legitimately set a date for its happening. As soon as we set a date for an imminent event, we destroy the concept of imminency because we thereby say that a certain amount of time must transpire before that event can happen. A specific date for an event is contrary to the concept that the event could happen at any moment. Third, we cannot legitimately say that an imminent event will happen soon. . . . an imminent event *may* take place within a short time, but it does not *have* to do so in order to be imminent. Thus ‘imminent’ is not equal to ‘soon.’¹¹

vi. **No preconditions - unlike the Second Coming in judgment for which there are many preconditions. To mention just a few:**

- The *abomination of desolation* spoken of by Daniel the prophet which Jesus mentions in Matthew 24.
- The rise and global worship of the beast (in Daniel 7 and Revelation 13).
- The ministry and resurrection of the two prophets of Revelation 11.

vii. **The imminent arrive of Jesus for His Church is intended to have an immensely purifying motivation. This is why, by God’s very design, it has *no preconditions*. There is to be *nothing* which distracts us from our focus on His any-moment arrival, least of all watching for the Antichrist!**

viii. **John referred to this same purifying hope (1Jn. 3:1-3)**

Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.¹²

Application

1. God’s grace, demonstrated by the first coming of Jesus to die on the cross, has a purpose which goes far beyond salvation itself. A key purpose of the work of Christ is to “purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.”
2. Those of us who are His, living between His advents, are to be a proclamation or witness -- through our living -- of what Adam’s original dominion was supposed to look like. We are to live “soberly, righteously, and godly” in this *present* age.
3. By continually looking both *backward* to Christ’s work on the cross as well as *forward* to Christ’s glorious return, we are, in a very real sense, to be “anchored between these two advents.” By *consistently, actively, expectantly* watching for Christ we exhibit hope which C. S. Lewis referred to as a “theological virtue”. He wrote: “Hope is one of the theological virtues. This means that a continual looking forward to

the eternal world is not (as some modern people think) a form of escapism or wishful thinking, but one for the things that a Christian is meant to do. It does not mean that we are to leave the present world as it is. If you read history you will find that the Christians who did the most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next.' C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 118, cited by Paul Benware, *Biblical Prophecy: An Essential Element in Living a Genuine and Useful Christian Life*¹³

4. The purifying motivation of prophecy, evident in the Church of Thessalonica, should also be evident in us:

Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything. For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and *how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.*¹⁴

Does Christ own us? Are we one of His “special people?” Is His ownership of us evident in this age? We pray it may be so!

Additional Exegetical Notes

- v11
 - "It has appeared" (Ἐπεφάνη [*Epephanē*]) appears first for emphasis.
 - This "saving grace" (σωτήριος [*sōtērios*]) has appeared to *all men*.
- v14
 - “Zealous” for good works is ζηλωτήν [*zēlōtēn*], which speaks of one who is stirred to action by strong emotion. The good works are sought out.
- v15
 - “Exhort” is παρακάλει [*parakalei*], “rebuke” is ἐλεγχο [*elenchō*]. This refers back to the earlier instructions given to elders where the same words are used and where both were said to be accomplished primarily through the teaching of *sound doctrine* (Tit. 1:9).
 - “Authority” is ἐπιταγῆς [*epitagēs*] which Paul often uses to refer to that which has its origin in oracles or divine commands (Rom. 16:26; 1Cor. 7:6,25; Tit. 1:3).
 - “Despise” is περιφρονέω [*periphroneō*], to disregard or look down upon by considering oneself beyond or above another.

Endnotes:

- [1] NKJV, Tit. 2:11-15
- [2] There is some ambiguity in the Greek here as to the identity of that which Paul says applies to *all men*. Some translators understand it to be the *appearance of the grace of God* (KJV, NKJV), others as *salvation itself* (NASB, ESV, HCSB).
- [3] NKJV, John 1:14-18
- [4] NKJV, John 3:16
- [5] NKJV, Mal. 4:1-2
- [6] Ref-0093, 84
- [7] Ref-0129, 276
- [8] Concerning "God and Savior Jesus Christ," the Granville Sharp Rule applies and indicates that both nouns apply to one individual: Jesus Christ. "This rule states that if you have two nouns, the first with an article before it, the second without, and they are connected by the word 'and,' both nouns are describing the same person. . . . Since this rule was recognized as being valid for the Greek language after the translation of the King James Version, those translators did not follow the rule. . . . it's not that the translation is wrong. It's just not as clear as it could be. One could misconstrue the text to be differentiating between the terms 'God' and 'Savior.' But when Granville Sharp's rule is taken into account, the rendering is much clearer: 'Looking for the blessed hope and the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.'⁶ "It has frequently been alleged that θεος [*theos*] is a proper name and, hence, that Sharp's rule cannot apply to constructions in which it is employed. We have already argued that θεος [*theos*] is not a proper name in Greek."⁷
- [9] Ref-0380, s.v.

[10] It is used even of Christ's first coming (2Ti. 1:10).

[11] Ref-0220, 127

[12] NKJV, 1Jn. 3:1-3

[13] Ref-0785, Vol. 11 No. 32, March 2007, p. 6

[14] NKJV, 1Th. 1:8b-10

Sources:

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Ref-0093 James R. White, *The Roman Catholic Controversy* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1996).

Ref-0129 Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond The Basics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996).

Ref-0220 Renald E. Showers, *Maranatha: Our Lord, Come!* (Bellmawr, NJ: The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, 1995). [www.foigm.org].

Ref-0380 Friberg, T., Friberg, B., & Miller, N. F. *Vol. 4: Analytical lexicon of the Greek New Testament*. Baker's Greek New Testament library. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000).

Ref-0785 *Journal of Dispensational Theology*, Fort Worth, TX: Tyndale Theological Seminary. [www.tyndale.edu].

Links Mentioned Above

a - See <http://www.spiritandtruth.org/id/tg.htm>.