

Bible Basics Conference 2015: The church

Part 13

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[00:00:01] Okay, before we start, before I start showing you these slides, there are three things I want to say. As this is the last of the main sessions, it seems a good opportunity to say thank you. Thank you to those who convened this weekend. I've enjoyed it, I hope everybody else has.

I think it's been a good time we've had together. Thank you to those who've got the food ready and prepared it, brought it out. And thank you to the saints here at Catford who, under great difficulty, have allowed us to use this room. So, thank you to everybody. That's the first thing I want to say. The second thing is, I've got a lot of slides here, and I'm going to refer to a lot of scriptures.

[00:01:01] Now, to make things easier for us, I'm actually going to put all the scriptures on the slides. Okay, so we don't have to search through our Bibles to look for the scriptures. Now, of course, I may not put up your favourite scripture. You may think there are scriptures that I should have included that I haven't. Well, we're limited for time. I've chosen the ones which I felt were appropriate, but there are plenty more I could have included. The third thing is, what's this weekend about? What's it say? Local expression of the Church of God.

And what we've been talking about for the last 11 sessions has primarily been to do with here and now. So, if you're a thoughtful person, and I hope you are, you may have wondered, why is it that we have a session on the hope of the Church? [00:02:13] Now, when we're talking about hope, we're talking about the future, aren't we? Because who hopes for what they have? This is the future we're talking about. So, why have we got a session when primarily we're dealing with here and now? Why have we got a session on the future? Well, I'll suggest an answer. There are probably other answers. But what I suggest to you is that what happens in the future should affect our thinking, our attitudes, our behaviour, here and now, both corporately, as the Church, as assemblies, and individually.

[00:03:05] Okay, so that's my topic, the hope of the Church. Now, I'm splitting this into four sections. The first section, very brief, I'm just going to talk about the word hope. Then we have a longer section on hope in the New Testament. Then we have a longer section about the Lord Jesus Christ coming again. And finally, I've got a slide on what I consider to be some personal implications of Christ's

return. So, we start with the first one. The word hope. What does the word hope mean?

Well, languages aren't static. Meanings, emphases. Sorry about that. That's what I've done there. I've wrecked it, obviously. Hold on.

[00:04:10] So, apologies, folk. There we go. I'll come back to it. We'll get there.

Right. I don't know what I did there, but anyway, we're back. So, meanings, emphases and usage change over time.

As is usually used now in normal English, hope means a desire for the future, doesn't it?

Something we want to happen, or something we want to be the case, we hope for that. I've got to go to work tomorrow. I hope it doesn't rain, but I'm not terribly optimistic about it. Now, when we come to the New Testament, the New Testament was, of course, written in Greek. [00:05:04] And in New Testament Greek, the word translated hope has a slightly different meaning.

And I've taken this from Vine's expository dictionary, but any Bible dictionary will tell you something similar. Hope means a favourable and confident expectation. It's not just a vague wish for something. It's an expectation. It goes beyond a wish. It's an expectation. A favourable and confident expectation. And just to emphasize the difference between hope as we usually use it in English and how it's used in New Testament Greek, there's this English expression which I'm sure you've come across. Maybe you've used it yourself. We do something more in hope than in expectation. So if you want something to happen and you do something wishing that happens, [00:06:04] then you're doing it perhaps more in hope than in expectation.

Okay, some general principles.

Now, I've got several slides following this one where we're mentioning some New Testament hopes.

And these hopes that we're going to mention are expectations for all believers. Obviously, they refer to events that haven't yet happened.

They're promised by God. So therefore, these hopes will take place.

They're certainties. They're not just hopes. They're not just expectations. They're actually certainties. Why? Because he who promised is faithful.

[00:07:05] So this is the first of my hopes. So we take this from Paul's letter to Titus.

He writes this.

Having been justified by his grace, we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

So that's my first hope. Hope of eternal life. Now, we might think that's rather strange because we all are given by God's grace eternal life. When we're saved, we have eternal life. We have it here and now. So why is it a hope? Well, we don't appreciate eternal life until we're with Christ.

Eternal life in all its fullness will be ours when we're with him. [00:08:06] That, I believe, is the hope of eternal life. Okay, here's my second hope.

I'm sure you're familiar with the letters to the Galatians. There were those in Galatia who were teaching appalling error. They were teaching that faith in Christ was not sufficient and that it was necessary to keep the law in order to be justified. Being justified means, of course, being accounted righteous by God. So Paul, in writing to the Galatians, says this.

You have become estranged from Christ.

You who attempt to be justified by law, you have fallen from grace.

For we, through the Spirit, eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.

[00:09:08] These Galatians and their teachers were thinking that they could become righteous before God by keeping the law. Well, that's an impossibility. God imputes righteousness to us by faith.

That's Galatians 5.

So the hope of righteousness is by faith, not by keeping the law.

We have been justified, counted as righteous by God, but, of course, we're sinful creatures, sadly.

But we will be changed.

And when we're with Christ, all will be righteousness. It won't be just us who are righteous. All will be righteousness. Everything will be righteous when we're with the one who is perfectly righteous. [00:10:03] I think that's the hope of righteousness, being with him, where all will be perfectly righteous. Number three.

Paul thanks God for the Colossians. He says, we give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and your love for all the saints, because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven.

So that's in Colossians 1.

The hope which is laid up for you in heaven. So this is an expectation of being with Christ in heaven.

Number four.

Paul writing to the Romans. So after explaining how we are justified, accounted as righteous by God, he writes, [00:11:02] therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.

There's another hope. The hope of the glory of God. That's from Romans 5.

Well, all heaven will be for the glory of God. It will show his excellence.

And we'll be there.

That's truly wonderful, isn't it? We will be there where all shows the glory of God. Number five.

This is from John. John, exulting in the love that the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God, writes, Beloved, now we are children of God.

[00:12:02] 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. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself just as he is pure.

That's the hope. The hope that we will be like him and see him as he is.

The expectation, the certain expectation that we'll be like him and see him as he is. It's a marvelous prospect, isn't it?

This looks forward to his coming again for us.

So I've just listed these five. You look through the scriptures, you'll find some others. But these five I'm listing. Hopes with fulfillment that is certain. [00:13:01] Hope of eternal life. Hope of righteousness. Hope that's laid up for you in heaven. Hope of the glory of God. Hope that we shall be like him and see him as he is.

So these are some of the hopes presented to us in the New Testament.

Now I want you to try and imagine something. Imagine you haven't been here this weekend. Imagine that you have little understanding of the truths that have been taught this weekend.

Would you find this surprising? The church's hopes are these.

These have some similar characteristics, don't they? They're similar in many ways. But if you knew nothing about the church, I think you'd find this surprising. [00:14:05] That these are the church's hopes or some of the church's hopes.

What's similar about them? What's similar about them is that none of them have anything at all to do with this world.

They're not focused on this world.

So the church's hope is not that Christian influence and moral teaching will spread throughout the world to improve it. The church's hope is not that the world will get a better and better place until it's a fit place for the Lord to rule. This can't be the church's hope because it won't happen. Hope is an expectation. It won't happen.

So why is the church's hope directed away from the world?

[00:15:06] Well, this goes back to something that Brother Hans Rudy was telling us in the first session. He reminded us the church began at Pentecost.

And it says in Acts 2, and suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them dividing tongues as a fire. And one sat upon each of them and they were filled with the Holy Spirit. And then I've skipped a load of verses. And the Lord added to the church daily those who are being saved. So this is talking about the beginning of the church. The church has a heavenly origin.

There's another scripture. Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the apostle and high priest of our confession, Jesus Christ. [00:16:08] The church has a heavenly calling.

Heavenly origin, heavenly calling. And thirdly, another scripture. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who according to his abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you. So this is a heavenly hope.

As I said, Hans Rudy mentioned these in his first talk. So the church has a heavenly origin, a heavenly calling, a heavenly hope.

[00:17:01] And just to emphasize this one stage further, the scriptures tell us that we are citizens of heaven.

Here's the text.

Paul writing, for many walk of whom I have told you often and now tell you even weeping that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly and whose glory is in their shame, whose mind is set on earthly things. For our citizenship is in heaven. So notice the contrast there. At the beginning of this verse, in fact, nearly all of it, we have citizens of the earth. Those whose minds and attitudes and behavior is focused on themselves and earthly things. [00:18:01] Our citizenship is in heaven. We're not citizens of this earth. So notice the great contrast there. Now I'm going to move on to talking about the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. So none of these hopes have their fulfillment until Christ comes back. And just to remind us, he says, surely I'm coming quickly. He will come back. He'll come back soon. So the church's certain expectation is the return of the Lord Jesus. And that's what we're awaiting.

And as far as has been revealed to us, it's the next event in God's calendar.

Well, the early church were waiting. The imminent return of the Lord Jesus was on the hearts of the Macedonians in Paul's day. [00:19:03] So Paul, when he writes to those in Thessalonica, says, you turn 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. And writing to the Philippians, he says, for our citizenship is in heaven. We mentioned that a moment ago, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to his glorious body, according to the working by which he's able even to subdue all things to himself. Now, I assume the we in this verse is the Philippians and Paul.

[00:20:02] The Thessalonians were waiting for his son from heaven.

The Philippians and Paul were eagerly waiting for the Savior. They were waiting.

So it was on the hearts of the Macedonians in Paul's day, but it seems to have been quickly forgotten. And the Lord Jesus illustrates this with a parable.

Now, I haven't put in the whole parable, just a summary on this on this slide. The parable refers to 10 virgins who are waiting for the bridegroom to come. His coming is delayed. The virgin slept. At midnight, the cry went out. The bridegroom is coming. Go and meet him. The virgins wake up, get their lamps ready. Five have oil, are ready, meet the bridegroom, go into the wedding. Five have no oil, try to buy some, miss the bridegroom's arrival and are too late to enter the wedding. [00:21:06] That's the parable.

So the virgins should have been waiting for the bridegroom, but they slept. And I think this illustrates the truth that the Lord's coming seems to have been forgotten through the centuries. It shouldn't have been, of course, because it's mentioned in nearly every New Testament book. But we do have to remember that in previous eras, there are many who couldn't read.

The scriptures weren't in the language of the people, and the leadership of Christendom doesn't seem to have been inclined to provide biblical teaching. But his coming is now known. The bridegroom is coming. [00:22:01] For many years, the news of his impending arrival has been taught. It's now well known. In all areas of Christendom, it is known that Christ will return. Although it is known, the truth has no good effect on some.

And the Lord spoke another parable which illustrates this. In Matthew 24, he refers to servants while the master's away. A faithful and wise servant who does what his master expects. An evil servant who says, my master is delaying his coming, and he beats his fellow servants and shares with the drunkards. He knew the master was coming back, but he didn't care. It didn't affect what he did. He behaved in his usual immoral and inappropriate way. And on the master's return, the faithful and wise servant will be rewarded. [00:23:01] The evil servant will be punished.

The Lord's coming will occur in two stages.

First of all, his coming for the church. The true believers, this is known as the rapture of the church. And secondly, his coming in glory, also known as his appearing.

And we will come with him, the scriptures tell us. So I've got a very minimal timeline here.

I like my timelines. So here's a timeline, okay?

The rapture occurs there.

There's then a gap of at least seven years, and there's his appearing. Okay, so let's look at both of these comings. The Lord will come for his own, or both of these parts of his coming, shall we say. The Lord will come for his own. [00:24:03] The Lord Jesus said, this is a very familiar scripture, but we'll look at it again. In my Father's house are many mansions.

If I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am, you may be also.

All of these scriptures are wonderful, aren't they? Don't they fill you with joy that this is true? The Lord

is coming back for us. He's prepared us a place, and he's coming back again. And here's the second scripture. The Lord himself would descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. The dead in Christ will rise first. Then we, who are alive and remain, [00:25:02] shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. We shall always be with the Lord. 1 Thessalonians 4.

So it's noticeable that at the rapture, we will meet the Lord in the air. Okay, so when's this?

When's this going to happen? Well, it's already been said. It could happen at any time. Any time at all, it could happen. The second part of his, the Lord Jesus' return, he returns in glory, and this will be later, his appearing.

Now I've got several scriptures, which I'm going to put up on this slide, which illustrate his return, his appearing, his return in glory.

[00:26:01] From Acts chapter 1, when the disciples saw the Lord Jesus go up into glory, it says, while they watched, he was taken up.

Then they were told, this same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw him go into heaven.

And then a totally different scripture. Going to the Old Testament, in Zechariah chapter 14, it says, and in that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives. The Lord Jesus will come back to this earth in person, and his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives. He'll be here in person.

Here's a scripture from Isaiah. It says, the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken. [00:27:02] And just one more.

We could find plenty more. Just one more here.

From Revelation 1.

Behold, he is coming with clouds, and every eye shall see him, even they who pierced him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of him. Even so, amen.

So the Lord will personally return to the earth.

When? Well, his appearing will be after much suffering on earth. The tribulation period.

We saw that earlier on. There will be a seven-year period of great suffering on the earth. Now, sadly, some Christians are confused, and they put these two stages of the Lord's coming together, [00:28:03] and their belief is that the church, true Christians, will go through the tribulation period.

I think there can be no doubt that they're separate. And I'll just refer back to one of the scriptures I quoted earlier.

Paul writes to the Thessalonians, and he tells them, You turn to God from idols to serve the living and true God and to wait for his son from heaven.

You know, if there was a period of suffering, we all had to go through the tribulation period. I think Paul would have written this differently. He doesn't write something like, well done, but you're wrong. You've got years of suffering first.

[00:29:03] And as has been noted earlier, the seven letters written to the churches in the province of Asia in Revelation 2 and 3 have a prophetic aspect to them.

And the church at Philadelphia, we can consider to be the faithful church at the end of the church period. And the Lord writes to them and says, Because you have kept my command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial, which shall come upon the whole world to test those who dwell on the earth. Behold, I am coming quickly.

There are other scriptures we could point to, but as far as I can see from these, the Lord Jesus is coming back for the church before the tribulation period.

[00:30:06] Now, Brother Hans mentioned the Bride of Christ.

The church is described as the Bride of Christ, indicating a place of love, intimacy, privilege. And the Book of Revelation tells us about the marriage supper of the Lamb after he's taken the church to be with him. So let's quote that scripture. Let us be glad and rejoice and give him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and his wife has made herself ready. And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Then he said to me, Write, Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb. And when will this take place? Well, I believe it will take place before his appearing, [00:31:06] because it says that we will come with him.

Why are we told about the return of the Lord Jesus? Well, we could give many, many answers to this, I think.

I have put on this slide a number of practical reasons why we're told about the return of the Lord Jesus. And this is a slide where I've put in scriptural references, but not quoted from scripture. So this is your homework. Yeah, I didn't know you can have homework, did you? To go through these, and in fact, I should make this wider, go through the New Testament, look for those places where we learn that the Lord Jesus is coming back again and see what the practical implications of that are.

[00:32:05] OK, there's a list here with my suggestions as to what practical implications are for some of the scriptures where it talks about the return of the Lord Jesus. You'll find plenty more.

So, for example, in 2 Peter 3, there's a reference to the return of the Lord Jesus, and it's really, at least partially, a warning to unbelievers, where Peter writes that the Lord is being long-suffering, not wishing that any perish, but that all come to repentance.

And then, of course, one we're very familiar with, in John 14, we're told about the return of the Lord Jesus. He tells us about his return. I don't know if untrouble is a word, but you know what I mean. [00:33:02] To untrouble our hearts so our hearts won't be troubled. In 1 Thessalonians 4, we're told about his return to give comfort, give comfort particularly over those who have already died, so that we will watch, so that we use our gifts to serve him, so that we'll live soberly, righteously, and godly.

To check or change our behavior with respect to purity. We mentioned that verse earlier. Holiness, fleshly behavior, to encourage in sufferings and trials, and to patiently accept unfairness.

As I said, there'll be plenty more if you look.

Therefore, now it's unfortunate that the King James Version [00:34:04] translates this wrongly.

The scripture does say, let us hold fast to the profession of our hope. It's the profession of our hope. That's the correct translation of that verse, not the profession of our faith. The profession of our hope, without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. Our hope, our expectation of being with the Lord forever and ever.

His coming back for us, and us being with him.

And what God promises, he fulfills. Therefore, our hope is a certain hope.

And finally, the Lord Jesus says, surely, I am coming quickly.

And surely, our response is, amen.

[00:35:01] Even so, come Lord Jesus.