

THE APPEARANCE
TITUS 3:4-6

NASA's Apollo Missions program successfully sent 24 astronauts to the moon and 12 of those actually walked on the moon. The last Apollo mission was sent up in 1975; since then, there have been numerous Space Shuttle flights as well as flights to the international space station. But no one has walked on the moon since 1972 — now 50 years.

So, NASA has started another space venture, called Artemis; the goal is to again place mankind on the moon on its third flight, scheduled for 2025. Its first flight — an unmanned venture — just returned to earth on December 11. While it was unmanned, it wasn't empty; it carried several artifacts into space, among them a commemorative coin from Apollo 8, a bolt from an Apollo 11 engine, and a mission patch from Apollo 17.

While there is limited room within the capsules, most space flights include some artifacts — some are put on display in museums, and others are sold because the value of the items increases significantly after it has been to space. [Some items](#) that have gone into space (on both private and NASA missions) include:

- ✓ Dinosaur bones and part of a dinosaur eggshell
- ✓ Amelia Earhart's wristwatch
- ✓ A 17th century shipping tag from the Jamestown Colony
- ✓ Human ashes — some 1500 people have been “buried” in space by the company Celestis
- ✓ A bit of fabric from the first plane of the Wright brothers that flew
- ✓ At least three different Olympic torches
- ✓ 66 lbs. of hops, which Samuel Adams used to make “Space Beer”

It seems if something goes to the heavens, it becomes more valuable. [You know where I'm going, don't you?] Of infinitely greater worth is what has come from Heaven to earth — the eternal God-Man, Jesus Christ. He is of infinite worth not because of where He went (space) but because of who He is. And His value and significance is magnified by what He did — coming to earth and ultimately to die for sin.

This Christmas season, we are considering the advent of Christ from Paul's letter to Titus. Last week we saw the promise of Christ's coming, this morning we will be reminded of the importance of the appearance of Christ, and next Sunday we will observe the fulfillment of Christ's coming. These are passages that not only point out the importance of Christ's advent, but they also emphasized the hope of His coming.

This morning, as we look at Titus 3, we will discover that,

EVERY BLESSING FOR THE BELIEVER IS FOUNDED ON THE APPEARANCE OF CHRIST ON EARTH.

In this passage we find **three** implications from the appearance of Christ:

1. The **MOTIVE** for Christ's Arrival (3:4a)

- This section is something of a conclusion of Paul's discussion on the gospel and ministry in Crete.
 - ✓ He has given instruction for the leaders (1:5ff).
 - ✓ He has given instruction for the members — young and old, men and women (2:1ff).
 - ✓ He has given a summary of what the gospel and salvation is given by God to do (2:11-14).
 - ✓ He has given instruction for how all believers are to relate to the government (3:1-2).
 - ✓ And in 3:3 he has reminded the readers what we all were without Christ.
- Having reminded the Cretans about their spiritual past, he then interjects hope: **but...**
 - ✓ There could be an emphatic exclamation behind that conjunction — **but!** It is a startling contrast.
 - ✓ If you are thinking theologically, you can't help but think about the "but God" statements of the Bible — man was sinful, enslaved, hostile to God, *but* God interjected Himself into their lives.

- **Gen. 8:1** *But God* remembered Noah and all the beasts and all the cattle that were with him in the ark; and God caused a wind to pass over the earth, and the water subsided.
- **Gen. 50:20** "As for you, you meant evil against me, *but God* meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive."
- **Ex. 13:18** *But God* led the people around by the way of the wilderness toward the Red Sea. And the people of Israel went up out of the land of Egypt equipped for battle.
- **Neh. 9:17** They refused to obey and were not mindful of the wonders that you performed among them, but they stiffened their neck and appointed a leader to return to their slavery in Egypt. *But you are a God* ready to forgive, gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and did not forsake them.
- **Rom. 5:8** *But God* demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.
- **Eph. 2:4** *But God*, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)...

- ✓ This has led one pastor to comment —

...the late James Montgomery Boice wrote, "May I put it quite simply? If you understand those two words — "but God" — they will save your soul. If you recall them daily and live by them, they will transform your life completely." ...

It is the perfect phrase for highlighting the grace of God against the dark backdrop of human sin. To the left of "But God" in Scripture appear some of the worst human atrocities, characterized by disobedience and rebellion. To the left of "But God" is hopelessness, darkness, and death. But to its right, following "But God," readers of Scripture will find hope, light, and life. Following God's intervention, the story of Scripture becomes one of grace, righteousness, and justice. " [Casey Lute, "But God..."]

- The question is (always) *why*? Just why would God involve Himself in people's lives in this way? And in this passage, *why* would Christ appear on earth as the great manifestation of God's grace?
- ✓ **Christ arrived because God is our Savior.**
 - The title **God our Savior** is not only unique to Paul, but it only appears in the Pastorals (1 Tim. 1:1; 2:3; Tt. 1:3; 2:10; 3:4). *Perhaps* to emphasize that this is essential gospel truth in the church?
 - We know that the Son is our Savior (v. 6), but this verse affirms that *the Father* also is our Savior (cf. 2:10). The Son is not working contrary to the Father (or the Father against the Son).
 - In fact, *all* the members of the Trinity are actively involved in the process of our salvation. The Father is the planner and initiator of our salvation (v. 4), the Spirit is the instrument of our regeneration and renewal (v. 5), and the Son is the agent of our redemption (v. 6).
 - God — the entire Tri-Unity — is our Savior. He belongs to us, and we belong to Him. We are His and He is ours. He and He alone is our Savior.
 - Christ came as an expression of the unity of the Father and the Son in salvation.
- ✓ **Christ arrived because God is kind.**
 - When Scripture uses the word **kindness**, it typically indicates goodness of heart or goodness in action, goodness expressing itself in deeds.
 - When it is used of humans, it has the sense of a kind and good disposition to others — we might say someone is “right neighborly...”
 - When **kindness** is used of God, it contains that idea of goodness, but the goodness is somewhat tempered in that His goodness could be expressed by His indignation against sin. So when used of God, kindness means goodness combined with tenderness and compassion. And when the word is used of God it almost always is used in the context of His salvation.
 - ... God is kind to all men (Lk. 6:35). That principle demonstrates His transcendence.
 - ... But God is particularly kind to believers (Rom. 2:4; Eph. 2:4-7; 1 Pt. 2:3).
 - Because God is kind, “[God] took the initiative, he came after us, and he rescued us from our hopeless predicament.” [Stott]
 - And in this context, because God is kind, He took initiative to send the Son and because the Son is kind and disposed to save sinners, He came.
- ✓ **Christ arrived because God loves all mankind.**
 - The word used of God's love is different from what is normally used — it is *philanthrōpia*, it is the combination of two words, “love” and “man,” so it has the idea of love or generosity towards mankind. It has the idea of compassion, kindness, love that people generally have for those who are in pain, trouble, or danger. It does not emphasize the emotion of love as much as the helpfulness of the loving action (e.g., Acts 27:3; 28:2).
 - To say that He loves all mankind is a reminder that God does not delight in the death of the wicked (Ezk. 33:11). In Christ's advent, He came offering to save all men (2 Pt. 3:9; 1 Jn. 2:2).

- We do well to remember that we are saved not because we loved God but because He loved us. He initiated love for us while we were sinners (**Rom. 5:8**). And demonstrated it in sending Christ.

“It is staggering that God should love sinners; yet it is true. God loves creatures who have become unlovely (and one would have thought) unlovable. There was nothing whatever in the objects of His love to call it forth; nothing in man could attract or prompt it. Love among men is awakened by something in the beloved, but the love of God is free, spontaneous, unevoked, uncaused. God loves men because He has chosen to love them...”
[Packer, *Knowing God*, 112.]

- There is a temptation for believers *and* unbelievers to question the love of God. We wonder if He loves us after we sin. We wonder if He loves us after we sin decisively and disastrously. Yes. He loves us. Our fellowship may be changed (Heb. 12), but His love is fatherly and unwavering.
 - The Lord loves all people (**Jn. 3:16**). And He particularly loves His chosen people (**1 Jn. 4:9-10**). He does not love because of the merit of the one who is loved; He loves because He does (Dt. 7:7).
 - And His love for His people is designed to stimulate them to know and trust God (Dt. 7:9-11).
- We will see in a moment that Christ came. Why? What was His motive in coming? His motive was obedience to the promise of God (1:2) and that promise was motivated by *God’s kind, saving, love*.

2. The **MEANING** of Christ’s Arrival (3:4b)

- God’s kindness is unlimited, enabling Him to act as a friend to those who are His enemies.
- But we knew nothing of that kindness until it **appeared** and He initiated our repentance.
- The word **appeared** is the root of our word “epiphany.” It indicates a sudden appearance and understanding — light is shining in the darkness making the way clear for those who are lost.
 - ✓ This is the second time that Paul has referred to this *appearing* in Titus (cf. **2:11**).
 - ✓ When did this grace and kindness appear? In the life of Christ (cf. **2 Tim. 1:9-10**). Christ appeared and explained God (Jn. 1:18) — “No one has seen God at any time, the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.”
- At the event of Christ’s arrival, there are indications that the participants in the story understand that they have received kindness from the Lord:
 - ✓ The shepherds spoke evangelistically about the arrival of Jesus (Lk. 2:20).
 - ✓ Mary exulted in the Lord (Lk. 1:46ff) and treasured the events in her heart (Lk. 2:51).
 - ✓ Joseph obeyed the angel and gave the name Jesus’ to Mary’s son (Mt. 1:24-25)
 - ✓ Both Joseph and Mary were amazed by everything others were saying about Jesus (Lk. 2:33)
 - ✓ Simeon blessed God by saying He had seen the salvation of Israel and the world (Lk. 2:32).
 - ✓ Anna thanked God for Jesus’ birth and evangelized those looking for the redemption (Lk. 2:38)
 - ✓ The Magi rejoiced with joy when they saw the Christ child (Mt. 2:10)

- While some understood something of the kindness of the Lord, they would not understand the fullness of God's kindness in Christ's advent until He also went to the cross and was resurrected.
- What is particularly interesting about this word is that it is an unusual word to use for a child's birth.
 - ✓ I've been a dad for several decades. I've never said, "on the day my first born appeared..."
 - ✓ Yet the Biblical writers do that consistently. Why? To preserve the uniqueness of Christ's nature.
 - ✓ He certainly was born because He was truly a man. But He was also deity, and the word **appeared** suggests pre-existence and that He "appeared" (think of the word "arrived") at the right time.
 - ✓ So, the word **appeared** upholds the truth of the hypostatic union — truly both God and man.

"To heal this race of Adam, he could not just appear in a body, cobbled together and brought down from heaven; he had to take Adam's flesh and blood. Of course, he could have started a wholly new human race by taking dust afresh from the ground, as he'd done with Adam. But that would do us no good. The old race of Adam would be left entirely unaffected by what he did. Outlandish it may sound, but we must say it: no umbilical cord of connection, no redemption!" [Michael Reeves]

- ✓ And the hypostatic union is important because if Christ is not deity then He cannot endure the infinite wrath of God. And if He is not a man, He cannot die in the place of sinful man.
- ✓ It took One who was both God and man to redeem men, and that truth is suggested by the word **appeared**. He who was eternally pre-existent arrived to fulfill the promised plan of God.

3. The **MANIFESTATIONS** of Christ's Arrival (3:5-6) — the results and benefits of Christ's arrival

- **He saved us**. He is not only "God our Savior," but He really does save sinners. This is the one main reality of these two verses, with multiple explanations of how He saves us.
 - ✓ The word indicates that He saves us definitively and permanently. When saved, it is not temporary.
 - ✓ *He saved us from sin* — from the enslavement to sin (3:3). We are saved from sin's power.
 - ✓ *He saved us from Himself* — from His wrath against sin (1 Tim. 5:24f). We are saved from sin's penalty.
 - ✓ *He saved us for good deeds* — for the purpose of living righteously (3:8). We are saved for goodness.
 - ✓ This salvation is available to all people — all mankind (v. 4). But you must believe in Christ alone.
 - ✓ If you do not yet a Christian, you are not beyond salvation. Believe that Jesus died for you...
- **He saved us because we are not saved by ourselves**.
 - ✓ While the easiest way to read this verse is to begin with the main verb, "saved," there are 14 Greek words that precede the word "saved" — and they all demonstrate how we are *not* saved.
 - ✓ Ted Turner once famously said, "Almost every religion talks about a savior coming. When you look in the mirror in the morning, you 're looking at a savior. Nobody is going to save you but yourself."
 - ✓ Scripture corrects (and condemns) such thinking.
 - ✓ This verse emphasizes the pronouns **we** and **His** — it is *not* us, but it *is* Him.

- ✓ There is nothing in any individual anywhere in the history of the world to commend him to God.
 - ✓ The **righteous deeds** might refer to things before or after salvation. We could do nothing prior to our salvation that was righteous enough to produce salvation. And we could do nothing after our salvation which would merit or keep our salvation. God's nature demands righteousness. We are not righteous.
 - ✓ There is nothing we can do that is righteous enough to produce salvation. And God does not respond to any of our actions and deeds and meritoriously grant salvation (Rom. 3:27f).
 - ✓ [This also means it is folly for Paul, Titus, the Cretans, or me to mock others in self-righteousness.]
 - ✓ If we aren't saved from anything good in ourselves, then how are we saved? (You know the answers, but it's good to review and meditate on these realities).
- He saved us in accord with His mercy.
 - ✓ It has been said, "Mercy is God's ministry to the miserable."
 - ✓ God saw our miserable and pitiful condition (v. 3), had compassion and pity, and withheld His wrath from us, and responded to our need by graciously saving us. That's mercy.
 - ✓ So, there was a need by the recipients and there was enough mercy in the Giver to save.
 - ✓ God is a God who is both just and merciful. He always does what is right and what is kind at the same time. He never violates His holiness, yet He is still compassionate. He saves mercifully.
- He saved us by regeneration.
 - ✓ The phrase **washing of regeneration** means we were cleaned (of sin) and given a new life.
 - ✓ We who were dead in sin and because of sin have a new life because of Christ's death.
 - ✓ The person who is a believer in Christ is really alive — alive on this earth and alive spiritually, never to die again (which is why Paul could say things like 2 Tim. 4:18).
 - ✓ This is the very reality pictured by Ezekiel 36:25-27; 37:1ff.
- He saved us for renewal by the Spirit.
 - ✓ This **renewal** is not the new life of salvation (regeneration), but a new way to live (Rom. 12:2).
 - ✓ It is the new living that comes from the power of the Spirit of God living in the believer (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 5:22-25; Rom. 8:3-4ff).
 - ✓ This also suggests a common NT theme that Christ has come to enable us to live righteously (v. 14). The normal Christian life is an obedient and transformed Christian life.
 - ✓ The Spirit who empowers us to live this way is given to us abundantly and amply — **richly**. We have all of the Spirit of God (not just part); and that infinite power is adequate for all our needs.
 - ✓ Because that is true, "Every faulty or inadequate experience of renewal is always due to some human impediment, never to God's inadequate provision." [Hiebert]
 - ✓ And to complete the image, Paul notes that the Spirit comes **through Jesus Christ, our Savior**.
 - ✓ He saved us so that we might be sanctified and enjoy the blessings of the sanctified life.

- **He saved us!**
 - ✓ The Father made a promise to the Son (and made the plan of salvation, 1:2-3).
 - ✓ The Son appeared, died, and rose to defeat sin and impute His righteousness (3:4, 6).
 - ✓ The Spirit was the one who regenerated us, bringing us to life (3:5).
 - ✓ It's all the work of God, and while it was always (eternally) the plan of God, it was initiated on earth at the moment of Christ's advent.
 - ✓ He appeared so we might be saved. That's the Christmas story.

BENEDICTION: **Romans 16:25-27**