

CHRIST'S TWO APPEARANCES
TITUS 2:11-14

'Tis the season for **waiting**. And waiting. Maxine Bland can empathize. A couple of decades ago she showed up to work and found a letter for her that was postmarked *14 years earlier*. It had the correct postage for the time, the correct address and zip code; it just took a few years longer than normal to arrive. The letter was from her sister and contained a check for \$150. That's a long time to wait for a repayment. I guess the good news is that they had both forgotten about the letter and why the money was sent.

Christmas — in the biblical sense of the word — is also a time of waiting.

- ✓ The *prophets* waited for the Messiah — “As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that *would come* to you made careful searches and inquiries, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow...” (1 Pt. 1:10-11)
- ✓ The *angels* also waited for the Messiah — “It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven — things into which angels long to look.” (1 Pt. 1:12)
- ✓ *Simeon* labored long in the temple while he waited (he waited long enough that it seems he could have anticipated he would die before he saw his answered prayer) — “And there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ.” (Lk. 2:25-26)
- ✓ Similarly, *Anna* served in the temple while she awaited the Messiah — “And there was a prophetess, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years and had lived with *her* husband seven years after her marriage, and then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple, serving night and day with fastings and prayers. At that very moment she came up and *began* giving thanks to God, and continued to speak of Him to all those who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.” (Lk. 2:36-38)
- ✓ The *history of the OT* is a history of faithful people who waited for the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham (which could only be fulfilled in the Messiah), as Hebrews 11 demonstrates.
- ✓ *Joseph* of Arimathea (who provided Jesus' tomb) was waiting for the Kingdom (Mk. 15:43)
- ✓ The *disciples* were waiting for Christ to assume His throne (Acts 1:6)
- ✓ Even *creation* is waiting for the consummation of God's plan (Rom. 8:19ff)

Waiting. And waiting. And still waiting. And then. A revelation. A child is born. And God appears.

While numerous NT writers speak about the appearance of God in the arrival of the God-Man, Jesus, this morning, let's look at Paul's letter to Titus, where Paul teaches his disciple (and us) that —

THE TWO APPEARANCES OF CHRIST SERVE AS A MOTIVE FOR OUR SERVICE OF CHRIST.

Why do we serve the Savior, the God-Man, Jesus Christ? We serve Him because He has come, and because He is coming — and both those appearances also have implications for our service...

1. In His First Appearance... (vv. 11-12)

- Christ Brought **GRACE**
- Christ Brought **SALVATION**
- Christ Brought **SANCTIFICATION**

2. In His Second Appearance, Christ Will Bring **GLORY (vv. 13-14)**

1. In His First Appearance, Christ Brought... (vv. 11-12)

- We see God's grace — His unmerited favor — in many daily circumstances: a job, a bill paid, a spouse, children, a parking spot that enables you to make an appointment on time, a kind word, endurance for a task... But God's grace has been revealed particularly in the appearance of Christ.
 - ✓ The word **appeared** is the word from which we get our word, "epiphany," it is a revelation...
 - ✓ God's grace was particularly manifested in the appearance and advent of Christ (3:4-5; 2 Tim. 1:10).
 - ✓ This is an important word because it infers that Christ came in a unique way — He wasn't made or created, but He merely showed up on the scene as the uncreated One. He was pre-existent and at the right time He appeared (was revealed). Jesus was not a man who was created, but He is the eternal God who came revealing Himself and the nature of the Father (1 Jn. 3:5, 8; Jn. 1:18).
 - ✓ (And His second coming is spoken of in the same way — 2 Th. 2:8; 1 Tim. 6:14; 2 Tim. 4:1, 8).
- The arrival of Christ is also the reason (and the power) for us to serve Christ. In vv. 1ff, Paul tells Titus to teach and build up the churches with sound doctrine. And beginning in this verse Paul gives the reason Titus is to do that **for** — because — grace has come. The only sufficient message to help people and to build the church has come to earth. And we will teach something else? That would be folly.
- Paul also notes three particular aspects of this grace: notice what Christ "brought" to earth...

• Christ Brought GRACE

- ✓ It is notable that Paul doesn't say "Christ appeared," but **the grace of God has appeared**.
 - Paul means, "when Christ appeared, grace appeared." Grace looks like Christ.
 - In fact, to say that **grace appeared** means that Christ is the embodiment of grace. He doesn't just have (some) grace, but He is the epitome of grace and possesses all grace. He is the source of grace because grace is His very nature.
 - We also know that because Christ and God are eternal, grace has always existed. So when Paul says, **the grace of God has appeared**, he doesn't mean it has not previously existed.
 - This phrase itself indicates it has always existed because God is the source of grace — it belongs to Him (it is "grace of God" — it emanates from Him).
 - We know that grace is not just a NT idea because the Old Testament is also filled with evidences of God's grace — Gen. 6:8; 18:22ff; Ex. 20:6; 34:6f; Dt. 7:9; Ps. 84:11; Zech. 12:10.
 - This verse doesn't mean God's grace has changed, but that *the manifestation* of it has changed.
- ✓ What has changed about grace is not just that God has acted graciously to individuals, and Christ didn't just *bring* grace, but that He came as the embodiment of grace.
 - When we saw Christ, we saw grace. Grace was revealed. There was nothing greater that God could do to manifest His grace than to send Christ. There is no greater grace than Christ.

"The early Christians did not stay in dismay: 'Look what the world has come to,' but in delight, 'Look what has come to the world.' They saw not merely the ruin, but the Resource for the reconstruction of that ruin. They saw not merely that sin did abound, but that grace did much more abound. On that assurance the pivot of history swung from blank despair, loss of moral nerve, and fatalism, to faith and confidence that at last sin had met its match." [E. Stanley Jones, missionary to India, in 1942.]

- The NT speaks of Christ as our teacher, brother, friend, Groom, sovereign, Lord, and King. But more than all these things *He is our grace* — God's greatest gift to us (Jn. 6:37ff).

• Christ Brought SALVATION

- ✓ Grace has been revealed particularly in Christ's **salvation** — what Christ did to save mankind.
- ✓ When you read, **bringing salvation to all men**, don't read it as "all men will be saved" (universalism). The only means of salvation is through God and Christ (Is. 45:21; 43:11). And God gave all we need to know that salvation and bring it to us (Acts 13:47; Heb. 2:10).
 - Christ did not save all men spiritually, but he has provided the means of salvation for **all men**.
 - ... God desires all men to come to salvation (1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pt. 3:9).
 - ... God has chosen (elected, predestined) those who will believe (Eph. 1:4-5; Jn. 6:37).
 - ... But those who do not believe are responsible for their own unbelief (Jn. 3:17-20). The offer is genuine and His ability to save is infinitely sufficient to save all people everywhere.
 - ... God is the Savior of all men in that He makes the offer of salvation to all and He graciously and patiently withholds immediate judgment of sinners. But He is Savior particularly and uniquely only of those who believe in Christ (1 Tim. 4:10). Only they are saved from wrath.
 - So, what **bringing salvation** means is that the offer of salvation is made to all men; the work of Christ is sufficient to save all men, but it is effective to save only those who believe in Him.
 - The meaning of this statement is that salvation has come to earth and no tongue, class, or group was excluded from the offer of that salvation. It rendered all men savable, even slaves (9-10)!
- ✓ The reason that Paul explains this (and why I have explained it at such length) is because it is the foundation of Titus' and the church's teaching (vv. 1ff). Titus can only teach men, women, and slaves to live in the way that Paul has prescribed because of this salvation.
- ✓ There is nothing more gracious in our lives than the appearance of God's salvation in Christ.
- ✓ If you are not a Christian, you might be confused about what Christianity is about — it's not a crutch for weak people and it's not a quest for the genie in the bottle to give us whatever we want. Christianity addresses our greatest problem by accomplishing what we cannot do (3:4-7).
- ✓ If you are not a Christian, this is what Christ came to do for you — to save you from God's wrath, to give you a new life and a new relationship and hope. I urge you to believe today in Christ as God's most gracious gift for your sin and as the salvation from your sin.

• Christ Brought SANCTIFICATION

- ✓ The grace of God not only provides salvation to all men, but it also provides *instruction*.
 - We receive instruction through Christ — Christ is not only grace personified but He is also our teacher, guide, and source for living out our salvation that He provides through grace.
 - We need instruction because we are like children who have not been taught to live on our own.
 - The goal of this instruction is not that we *know* something, but that we *live* a particular way. Specifically, it is going to instruct us about how *not* to live and then secondly, *how* to live. Or, what we are to put off and what we are to put on. This section serves as a contrast to 1:16 and those who say they know God but are disobedient and worthless for righteousness.
- ✓ God's grace — through Christ and through salvation — instructs us to *deny ungodliness*...
 - To deny ungodliness doesn't mean we just *avoid* ungodliness, but we *renounce* it. Believers are to have a murderous hatred for and aversion to sin (Rom. 8:13; Col. 3:5). But too often we think of sin as an inconvenience. We entertain it because we don't hate it and aren't willing to kill it.
 - This verse emphasizes that this is a definitive act of renouncing — a once-for-all act. We might translate it, "having renounced, we live soberly..." It points to a definitive act of hatred for sin at the point of conversion, but it also implies the daily activity of denying sin and the flesh.
 - What specifically are we to deny and renounce?
 - ... We are to deny *ungodliness*. This is the *activity* of sin (what sin does). Ungodliness is anything that is impious — sacrilegious words and activities. It is anything done by the person who has no place for God (Rom. 1:25). We have many kinds of lists that indicate what this might be (1 Cor. 6:9f; Gal. 5:19ff). But we don't just put off actions...
 - ... We are also to deny *worldly desires*. One writer has suggested these are inordinate desires for pleasure, power, or possessions. There are godly desires and longings and then there are also desires that are particularly identified with the world system (1 Jn. 5:19). Paul's point is that even the desires for sin are sin — and sin is fought at the level of desire first.
 - ... The grace of God's salvation is that it teaches us that we need to say "no" to sin, and it also equips us to say "no" to sin. Before salvation we could not stop indulging the flesh, but now we can say, "No, I will not indulge that covetous desire and I will instead please God by..."
- ✓ God's grace — through Christ and through salvation — also instructs us to *live*... This is the antidote to denying... This is how to live to reflect God's grace and God's salvation.
 - *sensibly* = This word and its relatives have been used repeatedly in Titus (1:8; 2:2, 5, 6). It refers to someone who is self-controlled and disciplined. He is of sound mind — he thinks clearly and discreetly, manifesting purity in all his thoughts, words, and actions. He is self-restrained. And he cannot be moved away from his godly convictions. He is resolute.
 - *righteously* = He is just and fair in all his dealings with others. He's not afraid to do the right thing, even if it is costly to him.

- **godly** = This is the opposite of the word **ungodliness** (v. 12) — the ungodly person has no place for God anywhere in his life, but the godly man is reconciled to God, loves God and lives for God.
- Combined, these verbs refer to his duties to himself (his mind), others, and God. He is to live with a self-controlled mind, rightly and justly with others, and in genuine piety and godliness with the Lord.
- ✓ We live in a perverse world. I don't even need to give you any examples. We are surrounded by corruption, deceit, sin, rebellion, anger, hatred, dishonesty, and perversity of all kinds.
- ✓ But the grace of God enables us to live in this very kind of world in a way that pleases the Lord.
 - Look at what Paul says — ***instructing us...in the present age...*** Literally, he says ***in the now age***. I.e., God's grace prepares us to live in *this* world, *and* the next one.
 - "Right here, right now, God's grace operates to make us the kind of people who live the kind of lives that honor God and benefit others and ourselves. The grace of God extends the power not just to rescue us from an evil world, but to transform us in the midst of it." [J. Kitchen]
 - Remember that he wrote this to the churches in Crete. These were young churches that were still waiting for elders to be appointed. They were living in an extraordinarily perverse culture (1:12-13a) — and some of that perversity was infiltrating the church (1:16).
 - We cannot throw up our hands and say, "It's impossible — who can do this? Doesn't God know how intense the pressure is?" Yes, He does. He lived in the same world. In Jesus' Jerusalem, Paul's Crete, and our United States it is possible to deny ungodliness and live righteously.
- ✓ With the emphasis on the gospel empowering our ability to put off and put on particular traits, Paul is telling us that Christ's coming brought the gift of sanctification. Because of salvation, the Word of God, the Spirit of the Word we are free from sin and free to obey. We can live in new ways (3:1ff). And that was made available to us through the Advent of Christ.

- Christ didn't just come once; He will come again with another gift and revelation of Himself:

2. In His Second Appearance, Christ Will Bring **GLORY** (vv. 13-14)

- Because Christ has come once and promised to come again, the believer is to ***look for the blessed hope***
 - ✓ **Looking** is more than just "looking," like you're waiting for a package from Amazon. It means, "to expect, to eagerly wait for something." (Think of being seven-years-old & waiting for Christmas).
 - ✓ The word is also a present tense, which means that it also has the idea that it is happening now — that is, it is always a desire; we are always looking.
 - ✓ **Looking** forward also explains ***to live*** in verse 12. We are ***to live...looking...*** Part of the way we live on earth now is to always look for the coming of Christ. We might say that heavenly mindedness is part of sanctified living.

- Paul says that part of living lives that are transformed by the gospel is that we are looking into the future for something particular. He identifies what we are to be looking for in two ways:
 - ✓ We are to be looking for **the blessed hope**. The word **hope** refers to an objective reality — the coming of Christ (His return is certain).
 - ✓ This hope is also **blessed** — “bliss, delight, glory, happiness.” How is His return happiness for us?
 - Christ’s kingdom and authority is established (2 Tim. 4:1)
 - Sin is removed (Phil. 1:21; Rom. 8:22-23)
 - Death is abolished (2 Tim. 1:10)
 - The imperishable is put on (1 Cor. 15:51-53; 2 Cor. 5:1-10)
 - We receive our new home in heaven (Jn. 14:1-3)
 - We receive the reward of the crown of righteousness (2 Tim. 4:8)
 - And pre-eminently, we receive the view of God Himself (1 Jn. 3:2).
 - Perhaps these realities are summed up in **1 Thess. 4:13-18** — return, resurrection (transformation), and always with the Lord.
- And Paul further identifies the **blessed hope** by calling it **the appearing of the glory...** (The word **and** doesn’t mean he’s talking about two separate things, but here it means something like **even** — the second object explains further what he means by the first object.) When He comes, we will see Him in all His glory (beauty and full manifestation) and be finally transformed into His likeness (1 Jn. 3:2-3).

C. S. Lewis paints a beautiful picture of heaven in the final book, *The Last Battle*. The book begins with a near collision of a railroad train, where the children are thrust into Narnia. But when their adventure is over, the children are afraid they will be sent back to earth again.

Having experienced the joys and wonders of Narnia, and the presence of Aslan—the Lion who is in fact Christ—the thought of returning to earth was unbearable. Then, in the final section, called “Farewell to the Shadow Lands,” Aslan, the great Lion, gives the children some wonderful news:

“There was a real railway accident,” said Aslan softly. “Your father and mother and all of you are, as you used to call it in the Shadowlands, dead. The term is over: the holidays have begun. The dream is ended: this is the morning.”

And as He spoke He no longer looked to them like a lion; but the things that began to happen after that were so great and beautiful that I cannot write them. And for us this is the end of all the stories, and we can most truly say that they all lived happily ever after. But for them it was only the beginning of the real story. All their life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia have only been the cover and the title page. Now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the great Story which no one on earth has read; which goes on for ever; in which every chapter is better than the one before. [Alcorn]

- Notice also how Paul identifies Jesus in these verses:
 - ✓ He is **our great God**. That is, He is **our** God. He belongs to us (and we belong to Him). Further, He is the **great** God. He is supreme and none stands above or alongside Him.

- ✓ And He is **God**. That is, He Himself is deity. The title **great God** is an OT term (this is the only place it's used in the NT) — and it typically is used to contrast God with the pagan gods. When Paul uses it here, it means, Jesus (the One who *appeared*) is the *only* great God and Savior — He is not merely greater than the other gods, but He is great and there is no one else that is great in any way.
- ✓ He is **Savior**. He is the One who saves and redeems us from sin. There is no hope for salvation in anyone else since He alone satisfies God's wrath. Christ is the only One who will accomplish the deeds of salvation (v. 14 then restates His saving and sanctifying work from v. 12).
- ✓ He is **Christ Jesus**. Jesus is the Messiah, the promised One, the Anointed One. While He is our groom, our brother, our friend, our redeemer, our shepherd. But supremely, He is the eternal God-Man who will receive the worship of all men (Phil. 2:10-11). So not only do we look for an event that is coming (transfer to Heaven), but ultimately, we are looking for a person, Christ Jesus.

CONCLUSION: At the beginning of this message we noted how so many people were anticipating and watching for the appearance of Christ, the Messiah. But while they were waiting, there were multiple appearances of God in the OT — He was at creation, He was in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve, He appeared and spoke to Abraham, He was in the pillar of fire and cloud in the wilderness, He was in the cloud and thunder at Mt. Sinai, He was the warrior in Josh. 5, He was in Holy of Holies in the temple, and He was the voice behind every word of the prophets.

Theologians call these appearances “theophanies” — lit., “appearances of God.” And of all the theophanies of God (and there were many), the greatest was the appearance of Jesus Christ in the incarnation. The appearance of Christ answers great questions about God —

- ✓ What is God like?
- ✓ What if God would be with me — what would His fellowship be like and what would life be like?

One theologian, writing about God's theophanies said, “Meeting God turns out to be an earthshaking experience that [will] change you forever....[Theophany] reminds us...concerning the God-centered character of the Bible and of the Christian faith. We should seek communion with God, not just enjoy his benefits or focus on ourselves as beneficiaries of salvation.” [Poythress, *Theophany*, 17.]

When Christ came in His first public theophany it turned the world upside down; and it will be even more dramatic at His second coming. We (rightly) look backwards to Christ's first advent, but remembering His first coming should also stimulate our desire for His second coming (and give us confidence to live in the *now* world).

Benediction (Rob): 1 Thess. 5:23-24