

The “Blessed Hope” of Titus 2:13; What is it and When will it Occur?

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Introduction

In Titus 2:13, the Apostle Paul wrote that we who are Christians are waiting for the *blessed hope* and the appearing of the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. What exactly is “the blessed hope”? Is this the same as the appearance of the glory of Christ? If not, how are these two related? Many dispensationalists who favor a pretribulation rapture assume that the “blessed hope” in this verse is a reference to the rapture of the church before the tribulation. John Walvoord, in his 1957 book *The Rapture Question*, affirmed this:

In Titus 2:14 [*sic – should be 2:13*] the expression “the glorious appearing” has been taken to refer to the coming of Christ to establish His kingdom because of the reference to the word *glorious*. However, the church will see the glory of Christ at the coming of the Lord for His church before the tribulation, and there is no valid reason why the term *glorious appearing* should not be a reference to the rapture.¹

Another writer in the dispensational vein more recently declared, “‘The blessed hope’ of which the apostle Paul wrote in Titus 2:13 has become a dispensational catch phrase used to describe the imminent expectation of the pretribulation rapture of the church. For some within the dispensational tradition, hope and pretribulationism are inseparable.”²

But does a careful exegesis of this verse in its context support such a conclusion? What is surprising to discover is how little discussion there actually is of Titus 2:13 in regard to the rapture in commentaries and journal articles. When this verse is discussed, the focus is more on the final part of the verse (“of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus”) and the implications this has for the deity of Christ.

A closer examination of the first half of Titus 2:13 is indeed needed, and I believe that such a study will show that the “blessed hope” is not a synonym for a pretribulation rapture. Rather,

¹ John F. Walvoord, *The Rapture Question* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1957), 157. In a subsequent work, Walvoord tried to defend the idea that only a pretribulation rapture provides a true *hope* for the believer. He wrote, “This hope is defined by Paul in Titus 2:13 as ‘that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior, Jesus Christ.’ The hope of a rapture after enduring the great tribulation is hardly a happy expectation, and this passage is difficult for posttribulationists to explain. The hope is not that of resurrection after death and martyrdom, but rather the coming and revelation of Christ in His glory to them while they are still living on the earth” (*The Blessed Hope and the Tribulation* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976], 165).

² G. L. Nebeker, “The Theme of Hope in Dispensationalism,” *BSac* 158 (Jan-Mar 2001): 3.

the hope in view is either something the believer himself will experience at the second coming of Christ, or is simply a way of referring to the glorious return of Christ at His second coming.³

The Context of Titus 2:13

Titus 2:13, part of the paragraph making up Titus 2:11-14, follows an exhortation to various members of the church to live lives of high moral character fitting for sound doctrine. Titus 2:11-14 is very much related to this exhortation which encourages holy living:

¹¹ For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, ¹² instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, ¹³ looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, ¹⁴ who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.⁴

The moral concerns of the paragraph are readily apparent. Negatively, believers are to deny ungodliness and worldly desires. Positively, they are to live sensibly, righteously, and godly in the present age as they await the Lord's return, knowing they will see Christ in all His glory at that climactic moment of history. Verse fourteen closes the paragraph by reminding believers that Christ not only has redeemed us but also works to purify us for Himself.

In the quotation above of Titus 2:11-14, the word “and” has been underlined, because some translations omit this connective (though the Greek text clearly has the connective *καί*). For example, the ESV renders this, “waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.” Likewise, the NIV84 has, “while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.”⁵ The effect of the ESV and NIV translations, then, is to equate the “hope” with Christ’s “appearing” (categorizing the connective *καί* as the explicative use of the conjunction). From a grammatical standpoint, the explicative use of the connective *καί* is a legitimate possibility—but not the only possibility—and thus needs careful review.

³ In an earlier work, George Ladd rightly argued that Titus 2:13 pertained to the posttribulational appearance of Christ, yet equated the “blessed hope” with Christ’s “appearance.” He noted, “If this verse is any guide, the Blessed Hope is not a secret coming of Christ; it is not the resurrection of the dead; it is not the transformation of the living; it is not the catching up of the Church; the Blessed Hope is the glorious epiphany of *Our Lord Himself*, which occurs at the end of the Great Tribulation” (*The Blessed Hope* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1956], 158).

⁴ Unless otherwise notes, Scripture quotations are taken from the NASB95.

⁵ The NIV2011 also took the explicative view of the conjunctive *καί*, but made a slight revision of the second phrase: “the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.”

The Definite Article in Titus 2:13 and the Granville Sharp Rule

In the previous paragraph, I pointed out that the Greek text has the connective “and” (καί) standing between the word “hope” and “appearing.” Also to be observed is that the definite article “the” in the Greek text does not occur before both of these terms, though most English translations assume both words are definite and so include an article before both. Here is the Greek text with the definite article underlined:

προσδεχόμενοι τὴν μακαρίαν ἐλπίδα καὶ ἐπιφάνειαν τῆς δόξης

Literally, this reads, “waiting for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory . . .”

Some see the one article as uniting the two terms “hope” and “appearing.” For example, Hiebert writes,

In the Greek ‘the glorious appearing’ has no definite article. . . . The Greek connects ‘the blessed hope and glorious appearing’ under one article, suggesting that the reference is to one event viewed from two aspects. For believers, it is indeed the blessed hope and the longed-for consummation of that hope. For Christ himself, this awaited ‘glorious appearing’ will vindicate his character as the Lord of glory.⁶

I suggest, however, that this observation and conclusion about the definite article is incorrect. To do so, I need to clarify whether or not the syntactical construction in Titus 2:13 should be viewed as a case of the Granville Sharp rule. Wallace defines this type of construction:

In Greek, when two nouns are connected by *καί* and the article precedes only the first noun, there is a close connection between the two. That connection always indicates at least some sort of *unity*. At a higher level, it may connote *equality*. At the highest level it may indicate *identity*. When the construction meets three specific demands, then the two nouns *always* refer to the same person. When the construction does not meet these requirements, the nouns may or may not refer to the same person(s)/object(s).⁷

This phenomenon is covered extensively in Wallace’s *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*.⁸ The issue is whether in this type of construction (article-subject-*kai*-subject) the two subjects are

⁶ D. Edmond Hiebert, “Titus,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, 11, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 440-41. More recently, Andreas Köstenberger concurred: “Since ‘blessed hope’ and ‘glorious appearance’ are governed by the same article, they refer to the same event” (*1-2 Timothy and Titus* [EBTC; Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2021], 339).

⁷ Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics - Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub. House, 1996), 270.

⁸ Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 270-90.

identical or not. Wallace clarifies that the Granville Sharp rule is only true when certain conditions are present. He writes,

In other words, in the TSKS construction, the second noun refers to the *same* person mentioned with the first noun when:

- (1) neither is *impersonal*;
- (2) neither is *plural*;
- (3) neither is a *proper* name.

Therefore, according to Sharp, the rule applied *only* with personal, singular, and non-proper nouns.⁹

A clear example where the Granville Sharp rule applies is found with Ephesians 6:21, “Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful servant.” In the Greek, there is one article followed by two nouns joined by the connective “and” (Greek, *καί*). Tychicus is both a brother and servant.

The problem in the case of Titus 2:13, however, is that the nouns are *not* personal. Wallace does go on to take up the cases involving impersonal constructions.¹⁰ He notes that there are about fifty impersonal constructions like this in the New Testament. Based on his examination, he concluded, “the ‘identical’ category is quite rare, with only one clear example” (namely, Acts 1:25).¹¹ He categorizes the verses for impersonal constructions into five separate categories:

- (1) Distinct Entities, Though United (e.g., Lk 21:12; “the synagogues and prisons”)
- (2) Overlapping Entities (but the only clear instance is 2 Cor 12:21)
- (3) First Entity Subset of Second (e.g., Col 2:22; “the commandments and teachings of men”)
- (4) Second Group Subset of first (e.g., Lk 6:17; “all Judea and Jerusalem”)
- (5) Both Entities Identical (only Acts 1:25; “this ministry and apostleship”)

According to Wallace, then, the syntax of Titus 2:13 does not qualify as a case of the Granville Sharp rule, and the two entities involved are not necessarily identical. I postulate, however, that even if the nouns involved (“hope” and “appearing”) had been *personal*, their use in this verse would still not be a case of the Granville Sharp rule. Why? Because the construction “appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior” is considered definite apart from the article before “blessed hope.” The following demonstrates why.

The phrase “appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ” involves a genitive construct chain in which the object of the participle (i.e., “appearing”) is followed by two

⁹ Ibid, 271-72.

¹⁰ Ibid, 286-90.

¹¹ Ibid, 286.

genitives, namely, “glory” and “great God and Savior, Jesus Christ” (the latter being a compound genitive). There are other examples in the New Testament where a noun without the article followed by a genitive(s) that is definite results in the noun itself being definite.¹²

A clear example of this can be found in the final clause of Luke 2:9:

NASB95: “And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them.”

NA28: καὶ ἄγγελος κυρίου ἐπέστη αὐτοῖς καὶ δόξα κυρίου περιέλαμψεν αὐτούς.

In the English translation, the noun “glory” has a definite article before it (“the”). In the Greek text, however, the word translated glory (δόξα) has no article before it. Yet the phrase is clearly definite. The reason is that we have a genitive construct (δόξα κυρίου) in which the word “Lord” (κυρίου) is considered definite even without an article, because it is a proper noun. Hence, the genitive in the phrase (Lord, κυρίου)—being definite—causes its associated noun (“glory”) to be definite.

2 Thessalonians 2:14 provides another example of this:

NKJV: “to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ”

NA28: εἰς ὃ [καί] ἐκάλεσεν ὑμᾶς διὰ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου ἡμῶν εἰς περιποίησιν δόξης τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ

Here we have a genitive construct chain: περιποίησιν δόξης τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. In the Greek text, neither the genitive noun “glory” (δόξης) nor the noun “obtaining” (περιποίησιν) that it follows have a definite article. Yet they are both considered definite in light of the final genitive in the chain, “of our Lord Jesus Christ” (τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ).¹³

¹² In Hebrew syntax, this is the normative principle. The substantival in the absolute position, when followed by a noun in the genitive that is definite, will not have the definite article but nevertheless be considered definite. See section 9.7 in Bruce K. Waltke, and M. P. O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 156-57. Although this is not a normative principle in Greek, the same phenomenon does occur, perhaps due to New Testament authors writing under the influence of Semitic thought.

¹³ The example of 2 Thess 2:14 does involve a noun following a preposition, and in prepositional phrases Greek is very flexible as to whether the direct object requires a definite article or not. For example, “to the glory of God” (εἰς δόξαν τοῦ θεοῦ) in Rom 15:7 has no article before δόξαν although θεοῦ does. On the other hand, “to the glory of God” (εἰς δόξαν θεοῦ) in 1 Cor 10:31 has no article before either noun. Cf. 2 Cor 4:6; 4:15; Eph 1:6; Phil 2:11.

In the case of Titus 2:13, the noun “appearing” stands as the *object* of the action implied by the participle (“looking for,” προσδεχόμενοι). A similar example in which a genitive construct functions as the object of the verbal action occurs in Acts 7:55, and in this case the object is definite even though there is no explicit definite article.

NASB95: “he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God.”

NA28: ἀτενίσας εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν εἶδεν δόξαν θεοῦ.

The verbal action comes from the aorist verb “saw” (εἶδεν), and this is followed by the object of what he saw, namely, “the glory of God” (δόξαν θεοῦ). In the Greek text, there is no definite article preceding “glory.” Yet it is definite because of the genitive form of “God” (θεοῦ) that follows it. The word “God,” like other proper names, is considered definite by its very nature. Greek is flexible in this matter, because in other cases a phrase like “the glory of God” could have the definite article with both “glory” and “God” (e.g., Rom 3:23; 5:2).

In conclusion, the phrase “appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior” in Titus 2:13 is definite without any dependence upon the definite article that precedes “blessed hope.”¹⁴ If the sentence had not contained the phrase “the blessed hope,” the remaining elements would stand as they were, and “appearing” would still be considered definite. The translation would then be:

“looking for the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.”

Succinctly stated, the definite article preceding “blessed hope” does *not* govern both “hope” and “appearing,” because the latter is definite in light of the genitive construct chain that follows it. Therefore, one should not attempt to argue that “hope” and “appearing” are one and the same on the basis that the definite article before “blessed hope” governs both objects. Whether or not they are the same must be decided on the basis of other considerations.

The Likely Meaning of Christ’s “Appearing”

Assuming then that the one article before “blessed hope” does not demand that this “hope” and the “appearing” of Christ’s glory are one and the same thing (though the two are certainly related in some way), we will first attempt to define more clearly what is meant by His appearing. The Greek word for “appearing” is ἐπιφάνεια, and its cognate verbal form is ἐπιφαίνω. The noun form ἐπιφάνεια (occurring 6x in the NT) simply means “act of appearing, *appearance*,” and in the NT refers to either Christ’s appearance in His first coming (e.g., 2 Tim 1:10) or His

¹⁴ See Lk 2:32 for another example demonstrating that a noun can be definite without the article when it is followed by a genitive that is definite.

appearance in the future at His return (2 Thess 2:8; 1 Tim 6:14; 2 Tim 4:1, 8).¹⁵ In 2 Thess 2:8, His “appearance” (ἐπιφάνεια) clearly pertains to His second coming *after* the Great Tribulation, because He will slay the “lawless one” (the Antichrist) at that time. The corresponding verb form ἐπιφαίνω only occurs 4 times in the NT. It refers either to the *shining* of heavenly lights in Luke 1:79 and Acts 27:20, or to the fact that Christ *appeared* in the past (His first coming) in Titus 2:11; 3:4.

Both these terms, ἐπιφάνεια and ἐπιφαίνω, stem from a more basic root φαίνω.¹⁶ The verb is a very general term for something that *appears* or something that is *seen*. Of the 31 times that the verb φαίνω occurs, it only refers once to Christ in an eschatological sense, namely, Matthew 24:30: “And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory.” Here, His appearing is clearly *after* the Great Tribulation. A closely related verb form is φανερόω, occurring 49 times in the NT. This verb is used eschatologically of Christ’s return four times (Col 3:4; 1 Pet 5:4; 1 John 2:28; 3:2). Colossians 3:4 and 1 Peter 5:4 are not specific in regard to the time of the Great Tribulation. 1 John 2:28, however, is more likely afterwards: “Now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming.” What makes this appearance of Christ more likely *posttribulational* is that it occurs “at His coming.” The word “coming” at the end of the verse is the Greek word παρουσία. Although the occurrence in 1 Thess 4:15 (the key rapture passage) is disputed, what must be observed is that this is the term that Jesus clearly used in Matthew 24:27 of the posttribulational second coming event, as did the Apostle Paul elsewhere in his writings (1 Cor 15:23; 1 Thess 3:13; 2 Thess 2:1, 8).¹⁷ The evidence, then, favors the idea that the reference to Christ appearing in 1 John 2:28 is *posttribulational*. If that is true, then the use of the verb φανερόω three verses later in 1 John 3:2 would also be posttribulational, since the contextual use is the same: “Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.” So, it is at this appearance of Christ after the Great Tribulation that believers will be transformed into the image of Christ. This, in turn, would have a strong bearing on our understanding of Colossians 3:4: “when Christ, who is our life, is revealed (aorist tense of φανερόω), then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.”

¹⁵ BDAG, 386.

¹⁶ There are a number of cognate terms to φαίνω that are not used eschatologically of Christ and thus have no bearing on this study: φανερός (18x), φανερώς (3x), φανέρωσις (2x), φανός (1x), φαντάζω (1x), ἀναφαίνω (2x), ἀφανής (1x), ἐμφανίζω (10x), ἐμφανής (2x), and ἐπιφανής (1x).

¹⁷ Despite the numerous examples where *parousia* refers to the second coming of Christ after the Great Tribulation, those who hold to a *pretribulational* rapture still argue that the use in 1 Thess 4:15 refers nevertheless to Christ’s coming *before* the tribulation. In order to do this, they have to argue that the term *parousia* refers to a two-phase coming of Christ, once before the tribulation (a pretribulational rapture of the church) and once afterwards when Christ returns in glory. Since *parousia* is used a number of times for Christ’s second coming (as pointed out above) and since there are no clear cases where it is used of a coming of Christ prior to the tribulation, the notion of a two-phase *parousia* of Christ is without merit and unconvincing.

Based on this survey of ἐπιφάνεια and the cognate terms related to it, the reference to Christ's "appearing" in Titus 2:13 is certainly His appearing at the second coming *after* the Great Tribulation. In support of this is the use of ἐπιφάνεια in 2 Thess 2:8 and the cognate terms in Matthew 24:30 and 1 John 2:28; 3:2. Buttressing this conclusion is the fact that Titus 2:13 is not merely talking about His "appearing" but more specifically "the appearing of His glory."¹⁸ When the word "glory" (δόξα) is associated with Christ's future return, it always has in view the second coming of Christ *in glory* after the Great Tribulation (Matt 16:27; 24:30; 25:31; Mk 8:38; 13:26; Lk 9:26; 21:27; 1 Pet 4:13).¹⁹ Except for Luke 21:27 and 1 Peter 4:13, Christ's coming in glory is always said to be accompanied by angels. Not surprisingly, the vast majority of commentators understand that the second coming of Christ to earth is in view, not a pretribulational coming of Christ in the air.²⁰

¹⁸ Fee wisely asks, "how are we to understand 'of the glory'?" This could be "descriptive" (the glorious appearing; so NET Bible), or it could be "objective" (appearing of the glory; so NASB95, NRSV, ESV). Interestingly, the NIV1984 had "the glorious appearing," but this was changed in the NIV2011 edition to "appearing of the glory." Fee concludes that the objective rendering is more to the point, as the second coming will manifest Christ's glory (Gordon Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus* [NIBC; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Pub., 1988], 195-96). This is not merely a glorious event but an event in which His glory is on full display. Towner likewise concurs, "The NIV's *glorious appearing* smooths out the cumbersome Greek sentence (literally, 'the appearance of the glory of the great God'). However, 'glory' is probably not to be taken as an adjective but rather as that which will appear. It picks up the theme of an ultimate manifestation of God's glory at the close of history . . . , which in the New Testament is understood to be the return of Christ (Mt 16:27; 24:30; 2 Thess 1:10)" (Philip H. Towner, *1-2 Timothy & Titus* [IVPNTC; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994], 247). Cf. Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 752. Finally, Liefeld's observation confirms the objective rendering: "As regards the first issue, while 'glorious appearing' is possible, 'the appearing of the glory of God' corresponds, perhaps intentionally, to the appearing 'of the grace of God' in verse 11 and is therefore more likely" (Walter L. Liefeld, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus* [NIVAC; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999], 341). Towner has a very interesting discussion in his 2006 commentary of what the glory actually represents. For him, it is not merely a glory *around* Christ. He concludes that the eschatological epiphany will involve "the personal appearance of Jesus Christ, who is the embodiment and full expression of God's glory" (758).

¹⁹ Despite the evidence to the contrary, Walvoord attempts to defend the idea that the glory that is seen is for believers only at a pretribulational rapture of the Church. He writes, "How can the Rapture be described as a glorious event, as an event which reveals the glory of God? The answer is quite simple. While the world will not see the glory of Christ at the time of the Rapture as they will at the time of the Second Coming, at the Rapture Christians will behold Him in His glory, and to them it will be a glorious appearing" (John F. Walvoord, *The Prophecy Knowledge Handbook* [Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1990], 497). Such a suggestion is a mere grasping at straws. Not only does this fly in the face of the eschatological usage of the terms ἐπιφάνεια and δόξα, but there is nothing in the context about a pretribulational event of any kind.

²⁰ So J. J. Van Oosterzee, *The Epistle of Paul to Titus* (Lange's; New York: Charles Scribner, 1868), 16; William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Pastoral Epistles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1957), 375; Homer A. Kent, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1958), 235-36; J. N. D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles: Timothy I&II, and Titus* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1960), 246; Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles: An Introduction and Commentary* (TNTC; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 220; Hayne P. Griffin, Jr., *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, vol. 34 (NAC; Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 312; D. C. Arichea and H. Hatton, *A Handbook on Paul's Letters to Timothy and to Titus* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1995), 312; William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles* (WBC 46; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2000), 425; I. Howard Marshall and Philip H. Towner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* (ICC; London; New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 273; Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 752; and Köstenberger, *1-2 Timothy and Titus*, 340. Robert W. Yarbrough speaks of it as signaling "the end of the present age

Possible Clues to the Meaning of the “Blessed Hope”

This expression, “the blessed hope,” does not occur elsewhere in the NT. As we look for clues for what the Apostle Paul might have had in mind, we ought to be asking ourselves if there is evidence that he might have had in mind a *pretribulational rapture* of the church. If the available evidence, however, points in a different direction, then we should be prepared to accept that.

Both the terms “blessed” (μακάριος) and “hope” (ἐλπίς) occur frequently in the NT. The adjective μακάριος (“blessed”) occurs 50 times in the NT, and a number of things can be described as “blessed.” In all but two instances, however, it refers to God’s people who are blessed by Him or are in a state awaiting His blessing. For example, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matt 5:3), or “Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection” (Rev 20:6). In two instances, it refers to God Himself, meaning that He is worthy of being blessed, that is, being praised (1 Tim 1:11; 6:15). In no other instance in the NT does it refer to a *nonpersonal* object, making the reference to a “blessed hope” quite unique.²¹

Likewise, the noun ἐλπίς (“hope”) is a very common NT word, occurring 53 times, and can refer to a great many kinds of hope. Sometimes it can be a general hope that one has. For example, 1 Corinthians 9:10 states, “the plowman ought to plow in hope, and the thresher to thresh in hope of sharing the crops.” Several times in the book of Hebrews, it refers specifically to Christ’s blood being our hope before God (Heb 6:18; 7:19; 10:23). Of special interest are the cases where “hope” refers to the hope of being resurrected by God (Acts 2:26; 23:6; 24:15; 26:6, 7; Rom 8:24, 25; Col 1:5; 1 Thess 4:13; 1 Pet 1:3, 21; and possibly Acts 28:20; Gal 5:5; Eph 1:18; 1 Thess 5:8). Closely related to this is the hope of being glorified (Col 1:27; 1 John 3:3; and possibly Rom 5:2).

In light of the usage of ἐλπίς (“hope”) in the NT—particularly when the term is used with an eschatological hope in view—the Apostle Paul most likely had in mind the hope of believers being resurrected and given a glorified body. When Paul stood at his trial before the Jewish Sanhedrin, he stated, “Brethren, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees; I am on trial for the hope

... and the beginning of the new one” (*The Letters to Timothy and Titus* [PNTC; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2018], 530).

²¹ Liefeld acknowledges, “The hope is called ‘blessed.’ Normally in Scripture, it is people, not things that are called ‘blessed’” (*1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 340). Towner also sees the *personal* application, yet he wants to connect this with the person of Christ in the following phrase rather than even consider that this might refer to the believer who is “waiting patiently,” having assumed that the καί before ἐπιφάνειαν is exegetical. He writes of the term *blessed*, “More frequently it is used of people who experience God’s benevolence in various ways (Matt 5:3, 4, 5, etc.; Rom 4:7; 1 Pet 3:14. . . . If this phrase is actually equivalent to the person about to be described (see below), then ‘the blessed hope’ is a way of describing Jesus Christ as the very embodiment of hope’s fulfillment” (Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 751).

and resurrection of the dead!” (Acts 23:6). Similarly, Peter spoke of the hope that believers have because of Christ’s resurrection: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Pet 1:3). Peter could call it a “living hope,” because Christ was alive following His resurrection and because believers are promised eternal life.

If “hope” in Titus 2:13 refers to the hope of believers being resurrected and given a glorified body (a very common NT use of the term), the adjective “blessed” would be quite appropriate and in keeping with NT usage that overwhelmingly refers to God’s people who are in a state of waiting to be blessed by Him. Yet there are two further reasons why this “blessed hope” might refer specifically to what believers will undergo in being resurrected and glorified. First, Paul states that believers are “looking for the blessed hope.” The words “looking for” are used to translate the verb προσδέχομαι. The Greek lexicon BDAG gives the meaning in this instance “to look forward to, *wait for*.”²² The verb is used in regard to *waiting for* resurrection in Acts 24:15 and Romans 8:25. In Jude 21 it is connected with *eternal life*: “keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life.” One could “look for” other future things (e.g., the kingdom of God, Mk 15:43; Lk 23:51), but the idea of looking for resurrection and eternal life would certainly fit the case of Titus 2:13.²³

Second, another reason for understanding “the blessed hope” as possibly the believer’s resurrection and glorification is the way that the Apostle Paul uses “hope” in the two other instances in which it occurs in the epistle of Titus. In Titus 1:2, Paul mentioned “the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago.” Then, in the final chapter of the same epistle, Paul reminded believers that the Holy Spirit had been poured out upon us “so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to *the* hope of eternal life” (Titus 3:7). If Paul considered the object of hope to be “eternal life” in the other two instances in which the word is used in Titus, certainly this opens the door for how Paul’s use of “hope” in Titus 2:13 might be understood.

How the Connective *καί* Between “Hope” and “Appearing” Should be Understood

If Titus 2:13a is translated literally, the verse reads, “looking for the blessed hope and *the* appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus.” The word “and” in the above translation has been underlined, because in the Greek text, there is a connective *καί* in the text. Although the word *καί* is normally used to express simple coordination and translated “and,” it

²² BDAG, 877.

²³ Note that in the case of Rom 8:25, the words “waiting for” and “hope” are applied to the believer’s expectancy of bodily resurrection (what he calls “the redemption of our body” in Rom 8:23).

can be understood in other ways. The following discussion outlines three alternative ways of understanding the connective *καί* in this text and the resulting interpretative meaning each has.

A. *καί* as Indicating Simple Coordination

As mentioned above, this is the dominant use of the conjunction *καί*, and expresses simple coordination of two or more items. In this case, the word “and” is explicitly used in the translation. The point is that believers are looking for “the blessed hope,” and they are looking for “the appearing of the glory of Christ.” Hence, the “hope” and the “appearing” are not necessarily the same thing, though they could be. If not the same, contextually they are at least concurrent. In defense of the concurrent aspect are the two temporal focal points of the paragraph. The paragraph opens in verse 11 by calling attention to Christ’s first coming in which He “appeared” (aorist indicative of ἐπιφάνω). This stands in contrast to His “appearing” (accusative noun of ἐπιφάνεια) in glory in the future at His second coming. The translations given by the NASB95, NRSV and NKJV reflect this understanding of the conjunction *καί*.

B. The Epexegetical Use of *καί*

In the epexegetical use of *καί*, the conjunction has the force, “that is to say”²⁴ The point is that the latter expression defines or clarifies the first. Also, the conjunction *καί* need not be translated at all, but can capture the sense by use of a dash or simple comma. The NIV2011 handles Titus 2:13 in this way using a dash: “while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.” The ESV is essentially the same, though using a comma rather than a dash: “waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.” The point is that the two are to be equated; the blessed hope is His appearing. Several commentators take the conjunction *καί* in this way.²⁵

²⁴ F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, a translation of the ninth-tenth German edition by Robert W. Funk (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961), §276.3 and §442.9.

²⁵ Mounce writes, “This first *καί*, ‘and,’ is probably epexegetical: believers live their lives in the expectation of seeing the blessed hope, that is (*καί*), their great God and savior, Jesus Christ” (*Pastoral Epistles*, 425). Similarly, Griffin states, “The NIV correctly interprets the ‘and’ (*kai*) in this phrase, ‘the blessed hope and appearing’ (*tēn makarian elpida kai epiphaneian*), as an epexegetical *kai*, thus defining ‘the blessed hope’ as being ‘the glorious appearing’” (*1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 312). Fee also concurs, “The first ‘and’ is almost certainly equal to ‘even’ or ‘namely’ (thus, ‘the hope that brings blessing, namely, the appearing . . .’) (*1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 195). Towner also takes the *καί* as epexegetical (*The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 751, fn. 35), as does Yarbrough (*The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 529).

C. The Use of *καί* to Express a Hendiadys

According to Blass-Debrunner, “The co-ordination of two ideas, one of which is dependent on the other (hendiadys), serves in the NT to avoid a series of dependent genitives.”²⁶ In support of this category, they cite Acts 23:6. The NASB95 translates the final clause, “I am on trial for the hope and resurrection of the dead!” (simple coordination). However, Blass-Debrunner would render this, “on account of the hope *of* the resurrection of the dead!” The idea is that the word “hope” depends on the following phrase (“the resurrection of the dead”) to explain it completely. In effect, this is not very different from the epexegetical use of *καί* described above. The hendiadys view is favored by Arichea and Hatton in the UBS handbook on Titus:

“The blessed hope and the manifestation” is most probably a hendiadys, with “manifestation” being the content of the “hope.” “Manifestation” is related to the word translated “has appeared” in verse 11; hence *the appearing*. . . . Therefore what we are waiting for with confidence is *the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ*.²⁷

The NET Bible appears to take this approach: “as we wait for the happy fulfillment of our hope in the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.”

In evaluating these three options, all three are grammatically possible. Options two (epexegetical use) and three (hendiadys view) would result in the conclusion that the “blessed hope” of the believer is the return in glory of the Lord Jesus at the second coming. The first option (simple coordination) could either result in the conclusion that they are the same, or allow for the interpretation that the “blessed hope” is specifically the hope that believers have of being resurrected—being given a glorified body to enjoy in the future aspect of eternal life that God has promised us.²⁸ Yet even the latter possibility would occur at the Lord’s return in glory at the

²⁶ Blass and Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar*, §442.16.

²⁷ Arichea and Hatton, *A Handbook on Paul’s Letters to Timothy and to Titus*, 293. Compare Wallace (*Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 673) under “explanatory conjunctions” when he writes, “This use indicates that additional information is being given about what is being described” and for which the translation “that is, namely” can be used. The hendiadys view is apparently also the view of Marshall and Towner who write, “The content of the expectation is given in two nouns followed by a lengthy gen. phrase. ἐλπὶς (1.2 note; 3.7 note) is used here by metonymy for the content of the hope, its fulfilment (Spicq, 639; cf. Acts 24:15; Rom 8:24; Gal 5:5; Col 1:5)” (Marshall and Towner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, 273).

²⁸ Sometimes the Scriptures use “eternal life” as a present possession. For instance, “he who hears my word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life” (Jn 5:24). At other times, however, the emphasis falls on that which is yet to be experienced in the future. The rich young ruler asked, “Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” (Lk 18:18). Jesus went on to tell His disciples that those who had made great sacrifices for the sake of the kingdom of God would “receive many times as much at this time and in the age to come, eternal life” (Lk 18:30). Very possibly, 1 John 2:25 falls into the latter category (“This is the promise which He Himself made to us: eternal life”), though John certainly saw eternal life as a present possession as well (1 Jn 5:11-13). Regarding the connection of eternal life to the believer’s resurrection, cf.

second coming (as argued earlier in this paper). The “appearing of the glory” refers specifically to the appearance of Christ’s glory that will be seen by all at His second coming *after* the Great Tribulation, as most commentators agree.

Conclusions

Titus 2:11-14 is a passage with both advents of Christ in view. In the case of Titus 2:13, a study of the use of “appearing” (ἐπιφάνεια) in the New Testament indicates that this refers to Christ’s appearing at the second coming *after* the Great Tribulation, especially since it is described as being “in glory,” which elsewhere is a descriptive of the second coming (e.g., Matt 24:30). This is the understanding of the majority of commentators. Hence, in His first advent, Christ died for the sins of mankind, thereby providing salvation by “the grace of God” to any who would turn to Him in faith. In His second advent following the Great Tribulation, Christ will appear *in glory*, just as He promised in Matthew 24:30. In conjunction with this great event, believers in Christ are to be looking for and anxiously awaiting the “blessed hope” promised them.

The relationship of the “blessed hope” to Christ’s second coming in glory must be decided on the basis of lexical and grammatical matters in Titus 2:13. Since the Granville Sharp rule does not apply in the case of Titus 2:13, “the blessed hope” and “the appearing of the glory” of Christ cannot be viewed as synonymous based on the argument of the definite article τὴν before “blessed.” Consideration, then, must turn to the lexical meaning of the terms “blessed” and “hope” in this context, as well as the proper understanding of the conjunction καί between “the blessed hope” and “appearing of the glory.”

One interpretative possibility, regardless of which of the three options of καί is taken, is that the “blessed hope” is the future event of Christ returning in glory at His second coming. The other possibility is that the “blessed hope” is concurrent with the second coming but refers more specifically to the believer’s own experience of being resurrected and entering into eternal life. As for the latter possibility, the term “blessed” commonly refers to God’s people who are blessed by Him or are in a state awaiting His blessing, but—as used in the New Testament—does not refer to a non-personal object. The term “hope,” when used eschatologically, typically refers to the believer’s hope of being resurrected by God (e.g., Acts 23:6) or of being glorified (e.g., 1 Jn 3:2-3). That the “blessed hope” might be related to the believer’s experience receives some support from the way the word “hope” is used in the two other occurrences in which it is found in Titus (namely, Titus 1:2 and 3:7), both of which refer to “the hope of eternal life,” a benefit to be enjoyed by believers in Christ.

Regarding these two possible interpretations, the NET Bible, NIV, ESV and most commentators take the position that the “blessed hope” is the expectant hope of Christ’s return in glory at the

G. K. Beale, “Resurrection in 1-2 Timothy and Titus,” in *New Testament Biblical Theology; The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 290–91.

second coming following the Great Tribulation. The other possibility (that the “blessed hope” is the believer’s experience), though a minority view, would still be concurrent with Christ’s return in glory.²⁹ In either case, since the “appearing in glory” refers to the second coming of Christ, the most reasonable conclusion is that “the blessed hope” does not occur at a pretribulation rapture of the church.³⁰

²⁹ In this case, the “blessed hope” is best defined as the believer’s experience at the time of the second coming when he is resurrected, given a glorified body, and enters into the future aspect of inheriting eternal life.

³⁰ Although Titus 2:13 weakens the case for a pretribulation rapture, the possibility remains that the rapture could be either prewrath or posttribulation, and a final decision between those two alternatives would need to be decided on other grounds. Cf. Alan Hultberg, ed., *Three Views on The Rapture; Pretribulation, Prewrath, or Posttribulation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010).