

I hope you all have your Bibles with you this morning because I'm going to refer to quite a number of passages. We'll look at the Scripture together. First we'll look at 2 Tim. 4:8, There is some disagreement among Bible scholars as to whether Paul's last epistle was 2 Tim. or whether it was Titus. At any rate these two are considered to be the last of the epistles Paul wrote, expressing his ideas at the very end of his life.

2 Tim. 4:8, "Now there is in store for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge will award me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have longed for his appearing." I wonder how many people pay attention to this verse, as they think of the Life of Paul. He says And not only to me but to all who have longed for His appearing.

All through Paul's missionary journeys, all through the writing of his epistles, all through his active work in spreading the gospel he said he was longing for the appearing of Christ. Now the appearing of course doesn't mean the appearance. It doesn't mean he is longing for a picture. It doesn't mean he was longing to see what he looked like. He was longing for Him to come. He was longing for Him to return.

In another of his final epistles--Titus 2:13 says, "We wait for the blessed hope, the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ." Just before our Lord ascended into heaven as he was walking with his disciples (Acts.1), the disciples asked him (v.6), "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel. He said to them, It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by His own authority." Then a little farther on we read He was taken up into heaven and a cloud received Him out of their sight and while they were looking up suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. 'Men of Galilee,' they said, 'Why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus who has been taken from you into heaven will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.'

Saul was not present when the Lord said this, but of course he had heard about it. All through his life he said he was longing for Jesus to come back. He says he is going to receive a special crown of righteousness. Not only to me but to all who have longed for His appearing. Personally I'm not much interested in trying to figure out details of the future events from the Bible. I don't think it was God's intention to enable us to understand the panorama of history as it unfolds.

Jesus said to his disciples on the Road to Emmaus, "Fools and slow of heart to believe all the prophets have spoken. Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" They should have recognized from the OT that it was prophesied that Messiah would not only come to destroy all evil and set up His glorious kingdom of righteousness and peace, but that He would come to give His life a ransom for many, that He would be the lamb whose blood was shed for the salvation of all the world.