

NEWSBYTES

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“Let us be alert to the season in which we are living. It is the season of the Blessed Hope, calling for us to cut our ties with the world and build ourselves on this One who will soon appear. He is our hope—a Blessed Hope enabling us to rise above our times and fix our gaze upon Him.” Tozer

Idea of central bank digital currency gains traction among more countries

BRIAN CROCE

John Kiff said the rising use of pay apps and falling use of cash is increasing interest in digital currencies.

Central banks in more than 50 countries are at least in the early stages of studying or developing a central bank digital currency, including in the U.S., according to John Kiff, former senior financial sector expert at the International Monetary Fund.

A central bank digital currency is a widely used digital representation of a country's sovereign currency issued by and as a liability of a jurisdiction's central bank or other monetary authority, explained Mr. Kiff, who retired from the IMF last month and is based in Round Hill, Va., in an interview prior to his retirement.

The reasons for adopting a central bank digital currency vary depending on the maturity of a country's financial system, the percentage of its population with access to a bank account and the number of financial transactions that are already virtual, but central banks in both large and small countries are leading the way on implementation.

The Central Bank of the Bahamas started a pilot version of the sand dollar, a digital version of the Bahamian dollar, in 2019 and officially launched the sand dollar in October. And in China, which has been working on a digital currency since 2014, its central bank in 2020 launched pilot projects of its digital yuan in a few cities.

The declining use of cash, especially in China where a majority of transactions are completed via apps like WeChat Pay and Alipay, has motivated central banks to explore digital currencies, Mr. Kiff said.

"Declining cash usage reduces somewhat the central bank's ability to conduct monetary policy because people aren't actually using the central bank's money to transact," he added. In the U.S., the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston announced a partnership in 2020 with the Digital Currency Initiative at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology to perform technical research related to a central bank digital currency.

The Boston Fed and MIT have structured the research collaboration into work phases that extend over two to three years. The first phase involves jointly building and testing a hypothetical central bank digital currency for wide-scale, general purpose use. The objective in this phase is to determine how to build a scalable, accessible cryptographic platform to meet the needs of a theoretical U.S. dollar central bank digital currency, including stringent design requirements for speed, security, privacy and resiliency, according to a Boston Fed statement.

In later phases, researchers will assess technology trade-offs by coding and testing various architectures to see how they impact the central bank digital currency's design goals, the Boston Fed added.

In discussing central bank digital currencies in a speech last month at a virtual Basel Committee on Banking Supervision conference, Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell cited a report from the Bank for International Settlements and a group of seven central banks that includes the Fed. One of the report's three key principles is that "a CBDC needs to coexist with cash and other types of money in a flexible and innovative payment system," Mr. Powell said, according to a transcript posted on the Fed's website.

As with conventional cryptocurrencies like bitcoin, a central bank digital currency is stored on distributed ledger technology, like blockchain. "In an institutional setting, that might mean faster settlement for certain types of transactions," said Tom Jessop, New York-based president of Fidelity Digital Assets.

Some stakeholders have raised privacy concerns with respect to central bank digital currencies because the transactions would all be tracked, Mr. Kiff said. On the flip side, "If you made it totally anonymous, it becomes a financial integrity nightmare for money laundering and tax evasion," he added.

Also, there are cybersecurity concerns. "The risk of failure of a CBDC would be like the ultimate counterfeiting operation if someone cracked the code or something," Mr. Kiff added.

Those concerns are why central banks across the globe are taking years to study the topic. But more central bank digital currencies are on the way. "It's more about getting it right than being first," Mr. Kiff said.

So Much Rapture in Paul's Letters!

By Tom Tillman

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Philippians 3:20: "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ."

As I've been teaching through Paul's letter to the Philippians, I began to notice so many references to the Rapture, far more than we've usually noticed. Then I began to see that the Rapture is woven all through Paul's writings. We all know the major Rapture references: 1 Cor 15, 1 Thes 4, etc., but there are far, far more references throughout Paul's writing.

Paul wrote at least 14 letters, of which we have 13. Remember, in his letter to the Colossians, he mentions his letter to the Laodiceans, but it, along with who knows how many others, was lost during

the first few hundred years until the various collected letters and books became our established Canon of Scripture.

Of Paul's 13 letters, at least 5 mention the Rapture, and all of them 'assume' the Rapture. Foremost in his mind, as he taught and wrote, was that he, with all other true believers, would be caught up in the Rapture at any moment. That is what informed his thinking and writing.

Paul had been taken up into Heaven to be taught our Doctrine by the Lord Jesus Christ by Whom he was appointed an Apostle. In fact, in 1 Cor 12, where he describes being caught up to Heaven, he uses the same word, *harpazo*, which he used to describe our being caught up at any moment. Luke also used the very same word in Acts as he described Philip's being 'caught up and away' from the presence of the Ethiopian Eunuch.

Paul had been given details and understanding of the Gospel; a greater understanding of the Grace of God; the special relationship of the Church to the Lord Jesus Christ, that we are His Bride, that we are saved wholly by God's Grace through our faith; and especially of the truth and reality of the ever-imminent Rapture of the Church. In 1 Thes 4:7, he said we would be caught up; the word he used means to be snatched away by force. He used the Greek word '*harpazo*,' which Jerome translated into Latin, '*rapturo*,' from which we get the English, '*rapture*.' He says that he is teaching 'my Gospel' which was given to him by the Lord Jesus Christ.

Since Paul had been to Heaven and had walked and talked with the Risen Lord Jesus Christ — the same risen Jesus Christ that John describes so gloriously in the first chapter of Revelation — his mind and heart were always on the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ might return at any moment to raise the 'dead in Christ' and those who were alive and remained. Jesus didn't tell Paul that it would be nearly 2,000 years until the Rapture actually came to pass, so he expected it at any moment; and he taught, always, that it would happen at any moment.

In his letter to the Philippians, Paul refers to the Rapture 6 times!

In chapter 1:10, he wrote, "...that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense **till the day of Christ**..."

Paul is the only writer to use the phrase, "day of Christ," and it always refers to the Rapture, the day when Jesus Christ comes for His Bride. Throughout Scripture, we read the phrase, "Day of the Lord," which always refers to the Judgment and Wrath of God on sinful man, the time of the beginning of the Tribulation onward.

In chapter 2:16, he wrote, "...holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in **the day of Christ** that I have not run in vain or labored in vain."

In chapter 3:11, he wrote, "... if, by any means, I may attain to **the resurrection from the dead**."

In this, he refers, of course, to the Rapture; but here, when this letter was being written about AD 61, he was beginning to recognize, as he is imprisoned in Rome, that he might not remain alive all the way to the Rapture. And yet again, he always believed that it could happen 'today.' But he did get 2,000 years more in Heaven.

Paul was likely beheaded by the Romans in about AD 68. (A.D. NOT C.E.!)

In chapter 3:14, he wrote, "... I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."

The upward call of God is our heavenly citizenship while we accomplish what God has called us to while we are foreigners, shining as light in a foreign land... this present kingdom of darkness. The prize to which we are called is our final reward which we will receive at the end of our race whether we've died first or we remain alive until the Rapture.

In 1 Cor 9:24-25, he wrote, "Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain *it*. And everyone who competes *for the prize* is temperate in all things. Now they *do it* to obtain a perishable crown, but we *for an imperishable crown*": the goal of the prize.

And the writer to the Hebrews, which certainly could have been Paul, wrote: "Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares *us*, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of *our* faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb 12:1-2).

Php 3:20: "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ."

Here, then, is Paul's 5th reference to the Rapture in his letter to the Philippians. The Greek word he used for citizenship is 'politeuma,' which can also refer to 'politics.' The KJV uses the word *conversation*: "Our *conversation* is in Heaven."

The Greek word, 'politeuma,' is defined as: 'the administration of civil affairs or of a commonwealth; the constitution of a commonwealth, for of government and the laws by which it is administered; a state, commonwealth; the commonwealth of citizens.'

Our *politics* is in Heaven.

Our *politics* is not of the earth or the USA. Our citizenship and our politics are in Heaven where every political decision has been made perfectly, forever, and those are the politics that should be governing our words, thoughts and deeds. Our conversation should be governed by the 'Constitution' of the Commonwealth of Heaven. God's written Word is the Constitution of the commonwealth.

The Church began as a true commonwealth; in Acts, we read, "Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid *them* at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need" (Acts 4:32-35).

Many people claim that they want the Church to be like it was in Acts, but all they really mean is that they are looking for signs and wonders as were done by the Apostles and Prophets. However, few would be willing to sell their lands and houses so that the needs of all believers could be met. Today they seek for false signs and lying wonders.

The only genuine Commonwealth is that of Heaven and all the True Church. The Lord Jesus Christ is heir of all things, and we are all fellow heirs with Him; we will rule and reign with Him for 1,000 years and then forever, and we will share in all that is, again, throughout all the vast Universe.... think about it! Imagine it! Feel it!

We eagerly wait for our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, Who will come for us, at any moment, to receive us up to Himself in the clouds: “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words” ([1 Thes 4:16-18](#)).

“For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ... Verse 21: who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.”

That is the ultimate prize that every believer will receive at the moment of the Rapture: those who have died ‘in Christ,’ and then we who are alive and remain. In that instant, in a ‘twinkling of an eye,’ our mortal bodies will be changed from dying, degenerating, weak and feeble bodies into glorious, eternal bodies like that of the Lord Jesus Christ.

John wrote of that moment, “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God; 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.** And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure” (1 John 3:1-3).

Everyone who has this hope — our blessed hope, Paul calls it — all who hold on to this hope and guide their conversation and lives by this hope will constantly purify themselves, meaning they will be much more apt to “walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which we’ve been called” (Eph 4:1).

“...looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself *His* own special people, zealous for good works” (Titus 2:13-14).

Again, Paul is constantly bringing into his letters reminders of what our true goal is: to walk worthy of the Lord, to set our minds on things above and to wait eagerly and expectantly for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ who will, at that moment, fully redeem us.... finally we will be redeemed, not only as we already are in spirit and soul, but then, the completion of that for which the Lord Jesus Christ bought us, that we would be like Him.

That is God the Father’s ultimate goal for you and me... that we are finally and fully transformed into the image and likeness of His Son: the glorious, spotless Bride whom He planned, chose, elected, called and saved, whom the Father will, then, as it were, walk us down the aisle as the Father of the Bride and hand us over to His beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ Who went to the Cross for us to fully pay the price for all our sin and to purchase us for Himself. That will all occur in Heaven at the Marriage of the Lamb during the final week of Daniel 9’s 70 weeks of years, when the World will experience the Wrath of God poured out without measure in payment for how they rejected His free gift of Salvation through faith in His Son.

The Father walked through the Slave Market and chose out all of the most hopeless, dirty, worthless slaves He could find and paid the full price of our redemption; He took us home, delivering us into His Kingdom of Light; He washed us in His Son’s blood; clothed us in robes of His Son’s Righteousness; seated our spirits with Him in Heavenly places; and now awaits His planned moment when He will send His Son to retrieve us from this hostile, foreign kingdom of darkness to finally fully redeem us body, soul and spirit.

Our bodies walk the Earth, our spirits are seated in Heavenly places, and our souls somehow inhabit both; our flesh always wants to sin, our spirits always draw us toward God, and our souls must always, daily, hourly, and minutely choose.

“The power by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself”: the Word says that eventually every knee will bow and every tongue confess, ‘Jesus Christ as Lord of all.’

We, of course, already do so, but the unbelieving World refuses to. When they are all resurrected at the end of the Millennium to be judged guilty and thrown into the Lake of Fire along with Satan, the Antichrist and the False Prophet, as they stand before God, I think there will be a large angel behind each one who will place their heavy hands on each guilty one and force them down into a bowing position, and then squeeze their shoulders so hard while whispering in their ears, ‘I can’t hear you... what did you say?’ And then squeeze even harder until the one who is forced to bow will cry out, ‘Jesus Christ is Lord of all!’ The angel will say, ‘Good boy or girl,’ and then pick them up and throw them into the fire.

That is what awaits everyone who refuses God’s free gift of Salvation... our neighbors and friends, even relatives and loved ones; all we can do is lovingly present the Gospel and pray for their eventual salvation, remembering that even after the Rapture, there will be the greatest harvest of souls for God’s Kingdom that has ever been... many will remember the things we’ve said... but we will remember the things we did not say.

Php 4:1: “Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so **stand fast in the Lord, beloved.**”

Remember, when Paul writes, ‘therefore,’ we need to ask what it’s there for: he is saying, ‘Since our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, at the Rapture, which could happen at any moment, who will transform our weak, earthly bodies into glorious, eternal bodies like His own, **Stand fast in the Lord!**’

How do we stand fast in the Lord? He tells us in his letter to the Ephesians: “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, **and having done all, to stand**” (Eph 6:10-13).

Then he goes on in Ephesians to describe each part of the armor of God.

Peter writes, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith...” (1 Peter 5:8-9).

Always remember... we are not called to go out looking for demons with which to do battle. We are to stand fast in the Lord when any attack comes.

“Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me! For my soul trusts in You; And in the shadow of Your wings I will make my refuge, Until *these* calamities have passed by” (Psa 57:1).

“He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, ‘*He is my refuge and my fortress; My God, in Him I will trust.*’ Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler *And* from the perilous pestilence. He shall cover you with His feathers, And under His wings you shall take refuge; His truth *shall be your* shield and buckler” (Psalm 91:1-4).

That is David saying the same thing that Paul and Peter tell us: stand firm, stand fast, and stand still in the Lord. He is the One Who fights for us, the One Who defends us; He is the One Who wills and works within us to accomplish all His will through us, and He will continue to form us and mold us into the image and likeness of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, right up until He is finished with each one of us at the moment of the Rapture.

That is why it is so important for us to be faithful in allowing Him to change us because once that Rapture comes, that's it; there will be no more time or room for the kind of growth and maturity that He planned for us to undergo while here in this infinitesimal moment on Earth compared to our Eternity with Him, ruling and reigning with Him forever.

When I misspelled forever, my spell-check wanted to put, 'forefeel.' Is that even a word? Well, if spell-check says it is... it must be! I looked it up; it means 'To feel beforehand; have a premonition of. To feel beforehand; feel as if by presentiment, an anticipatory feeling or anticipatory *tactual* perception; a tactual image associatively aroused by the presentation of a visual, *auditory, etc., stimulus*.

That is exactly our goal in teaching: that we forefeel the Rapture, our new bodies, seeing the Lord Jesus Christ in all His Glory, Heaven, our ruling and reigning forever with Him, our eternal rewards scattered throughout the vast Universe, our being with Him always... these are the things that I work to instill in all of us.

Then I had to look up *tactual*: from tactile: Communicating or imparting the sense of touch; giving rise to the feeling of contact or impingement. Arising from or due to touch; impressed or communicated by contact or impingement; relating to or originating in touch.

That's it also, exactly: I want Heaven, the Rapture, Eternity, Rewards... all of it... I want it to be so real to us that we feel it, that we can actually touch it from the auditory stimulus of teaching.

Whenever I write, I want us to feel like we've touched eternity... then, I know, God has done what He intended.

Headlines...

80,000 Russian troops still on Ukraine's border after claiming withdrawal: Report

Nearly 80,000 Russian troops are reportedly still gathered along the Russian border with Ukraine this week, despite Russian claims they would withdraw by May 1. At the peak of Russia's recent Ukrainian border deployment, Josep Borrell, the European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy said an estimated 100,000 Russian troops were mobilized along the border. Senior Defense Department officials told the New York Times on Wednesday that only a few thousand of those Russian troops actually left the Ukrainian border.

China building massive power farm near US Air Force base in Texas

The wind farm project, known as the Blue Hills Wind development, is being managed by GH America Energy, the U.S. subsidiary of the Chinese Guanghai Energy Company according to a 2020 report by Foreign Policy. The project entails the purchase of around 140,000 acres of land located about 70 miles from Laughlin Air Force Base. Guanghai Energy is owned by Sun Guangxin, a Chinese billionaire who reportedly has ties to the ruling Chinese Communist Party.

SC House, Senate pass bill for firing squads for executions, Gov. expected to sign

Approved by 66-42 vote, the bill would allow death row inmates to choose between firing squad or electrocution if lethal injection drugs are unavailable. According to The Associated Press, South Carolina is one of just nine states to still allow the electric chair, and could become the fourth state to allow death by firing squad.

Macron pushes East African oil pipeline as French banks shun project

Macron stated the project will be a “major opportunity to intensify trade between our two countries and to further expand our co-operation”, in a letter to recently re-elected Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni published by the East African nation’s government on May 1. It follows reports that the three largest French banks, BNP Paribas, Crédit Agricole and Société Générale will not provide finance for the proposed 1,445km heated oil pipeline running from Hoima, Uganda to the port of Tanga in Tanzania.

Asteroid impact: NASA simulation shows we are sitting ducks

The question the agency sought to answer was this: If we discovered a potentially deadly asteroid destined to hit Earth in six months, was there anything we could do to prevent a horrifying catastrophe? The disturbing answer is “no,” not with currently available technology.

Nuclear deal possible in weeks despite gaps if Iran takes decision

While big gaps remain between Washington and Tehran, there could be an agreement within weeks for both to resume compliance with the 2015 Iran nuclear deal if Iranian authorities decide to do so, a senior US State Department official said on Thursday.

‘Oddball supernova’ reveals star’s death throes before exploding

Stars experience very violent lives that usually end in dazzling explosions, and scientists have tried for years to determine what happens to massive stars just before this bombastic finale. Now, an unusual supernova is helping researchers piece more of that stellar puzzle together. An international team of researchers used NASA’s Hubble Space Telescope to observe a massive yellow star 2.5 years before it exploded in a supernova. The star was located 35 million light-years from Earth in the Virgo galaxy cluster.

Gaza threatens war if Israel evicts Arab squatters from homes in Jerusalem

Islamic Jihad terrorists in Gaza are threatening missile escalation should Israel continue its eviction of illegal Arab squatters in the Shimon Hatzadik (Sheikh Jarrah) neighborhood in Jerusalem. The Islamic Jihad, the second biggest terror group in Gaza after Hamas has warned: “If Israel doesn’t cease its war on Sheikh Jarrah in Jerusalem, they can expect a response that they never even considered.”

Right before 3 terror attacks: Abbas cabinet called on ‘Palestinians’ to fight Israel to the death

Religious lesson by Abbas’ advisor on official PA TV: “Islam does not want you to be submissive to others, it wants you to be powerful, ruling, strong, dignified, proud” “Don’t be a coward! Don’t be fearful! Don’t be submissive!” If you die fighting, you go to “Paradise”; if you kill the enemies, they go to “hell”.

Rapture Ready