

May the Lord Come at Any Time?

by C.I. Scofield

The speaker argues that the coming of the Lord into the air for the church may occur at any time, based on the writings of the Apostle Paul.

Scripture: Matthew 24:14, Luke 19:11, 1 Corinthians 15:22, 1 Thessalonians 4:13, Revelation 3:10

Topics: "Second Coming", "Eternal Hope"

Description

C.I. Scofield delves into the Scriptures to shed light on the timing of the second coming of Christ, emphasizing the importance of understanding the event of the Lord descending into the air for His church as revealed through the Apostle Paul. The sermon focuses on the belief that this event could happen at any time, supported by the absence of specific predicted events that must occur before His coming and the believer's attitude of eagerly waiting for the blessed hope of His return.

Transcript

No one denies that the Scriptures teach a second coming of Christ at some time; and the church, even in her worst estate, has never ceased to bear testimony by her creeds, at least to the same truth.

But upon the two questions of the manner and of the time of His return wide divergencies of teaching have lately arisen. Into the question of the manner of our Lord's second coming it is not my purpose to enter, but only to seek light from Scripture concerning the question of the time of that coming. And even here I shall consider only that aspect of His coming revealed through the Apostle Paul.

Attentive students of the Word are aware of that, to the Apostles to the Gentiles was committed a body of revelation concerning the church; that the Old Testament knows nothing of the church (though allowance is made for it); and that our Lord did no more than to announce His purpose to build it. Apart from the writings of the Spirit by Paul, we should know practically nothing of the mystery of the "church which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all."

But through these writings we are blessed with a full and clear revelation concerning the church, her origin, method, relationships, calling and destiny. Obviously, any inspired account of the church which should omit to tell what the end should be of her earthly pilgrimage, would be in so far defective. We have, therefore, in two notable passages in the Epistles, written through Paul, a succinct but satisfying prophecy of that ending.

"For, as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order--Christ the first fruits; afterward they that are Christ's, at His coming . . . Behold I show you a mystery! We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (1 Cor. xv:22, 23, 51, 52). "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. For this we say unto you, by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent (go before) them which are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we, which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thess. iv:13-17).

It is this event, and this only, which is before us in this article. That there is a vast body of prophecy which has to do with the return of Christ to the earth, in connection with the setting up of the Messianic kingdom, the resumption of the divine dealings with Israel, and the blessing of the whole world, we are well aware. But the coming, of which the quoted passages speak, is not to the earth, but into "the air"; it does not establish anything on the earth, but takes a people away from the earth.

The descent of the Lord into the air for the church, is not, therefore, that aspect of the second coming of which the Old Testament prophets speak (e. g., Zech. xiv:1-9), nor that aspect of His coming of which our Lord spoke in the Olivet discourse, and in His eschatological parables. It is part of what Paul calls "my gospel"--part of the truth concerning the church.

I now ask: May the coming of the Lord into the air for the church occur at any time? I answer, yes: and for two reasons.

I. There is no predicted event which must be fulfilled before that coming.

It is sometimes said that our Lord indicated an intervening condition when He said (Matt. xxiv:14), "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations: and then shall the end come"; and it is objected this has not yet been accomplished.

To which I answer (1) that "the end" of which our Lord speaks is not His descent into the air for His church, but the "end of the age," concerning which the disciples had questioned Him (verse 3). (2) That the church is not set to preach the "gospel of the kingdom," but "the gospel of the grace of God"; and (3), that there is to be a world-wide preaching of the kingdom by the Jewish remnant during the tribulation. (Rev. vii:9-11; vii:13, 14 R. V.; Zech. viii:23, etc.)

Again, it is said that the Lord does not return until after the millennium. As to this objection, it is sufficient to say that the parable of the Wheat and the Tares, of the Nobleman and the Far Country, and the descriptions of the course of this age, alike forbid the possibility of a millennium before the return of the Lord in glory to the earth. (Matt. xiii:24-30, 36-43; Luke xix:11-14; Matt. xxiv 16-14; 2 Thess. ii:7, 8.)

And, since the descent of the Lord into the air must precede His return in glory to the earth, it is evident that no millennium can possibly occur before the latter event.

Others aver that the great tribulation must run its course before the church can be caught up. To this I answer: (1) there is an express promise that the true church shall be kept "from the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." (Rev. iii:10.) (2) That the church, priestly and royal, is seen in the persons of the elders in heaven before the events which constitute the great tribulation begin to occur on the earth. These elders are seen in Rev. iv, and before the first, or seal, series of judgments begin--and these but prepare --the tribulation. (3) That all the types bear out this view. Sodom could not be destroyed till Lot was taken out of it, etc.

II. In the Epistles of Paul, who alone tells us of the rapture of the church, the characteristic attitude of the believer is "waiting" --not for the millennium, nor for the great tribulation, but for "His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, Jesus"; and, "looking for that blessed hope."

We, therefore, answer the question: "May the Lord come at any time?" affirmatively--He may.

And surely when we look about us we are constrained to echo the last prayer of Scripture: "Even so, come. Lord Jesus."

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/ci-scofield/may-the-lord-come-at-any-time/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net