

Behold, the Bridegroom Cometh

by Stan Thomson

The sermon calls believers to awaken to the imminent return of Christ and live in anticipation of His coming.

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 5:13

Topics: "Christ's Return", "End Times"

Description

Stan Thomson preaches about the imminent return of Christ for His bride, emphasizing the need for believers to be prepared and vigilant. He discusses the historical awakening to this truth and the subsequent decline in its significance due to false doctrines and lack of focus on Christ's return. Stan reviews Scriptural proofs for the imminent return of Christ and the practical effects it should have on believers, highlighting the distinctions between the Church, the Rapture, Christ's Second Coming, the Tribulation Period, and the Millennium.

Transcript

BEHOLD THE BRIDEGROOM COMETH!

By Stan Thomson

For centuries, the Church slept unawares of the coming of Christ for His bride. 150 years ago, the Spirit of God raised up men to recover this precious truth. The midnight cry went forth: "Behold the Bridegroom cometh!" (Matt. 25:1 - 7).

What was the effect? Believers arose and trimmed their lamps. The testimony of the Lord shone brightly through gospel work and personal service. There was much encouragement in their fellowship together as they waited for the Lord to come.

What has happened since then? The enemy has come in while men slept. The gripping cry, "Behold the Bridegroom cometh," has lost its force in the hearts of the people of God generally. Why is this? Two causes:

Doctrines of every sort have been sown within the professing Church which have robbed believers of their imminent hope.

Those who hold the doctrine of the Lord's imminent return have failed to allow His near return hold them as it should.

The purpose of this article is to review many of the Scriptural proofs for an imminent return of Christ to claim His bride, the Church, and to draw attention to some of the practical effects His return is meant to have on the believer.

Definitions...

Church

Comprised of all those who have put their trust in the shed blood of Christ for eternal salvation from their sins.

A mystery that was not revealed in the Old Testament but was revealed after the Lord ascended (Eph. 3:1-7; Rom 16:25-27; Col.1:26-29).

Began on the day of Pentecost (Matt. 16:18; 1 Cor. 12:13; Acts 1:5; Acts 2:4).

A called out company of believers distinct from Israel in birth, blessings, headship, government, promises, priesthood and eternal destiny (Eph. 2:12-19; John 3:29)

Rapture

The catching away of the Church from the earth to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thess 5:13-18).

A mystery not revealed in the Old Testament but revealed after the Lord ascended (1 Cor. 15:51).

Includes the bodily resurrection of Christians who have died and the translation of living Christians (1 Thess. 5:13-18; 1 Cor. 15:51-58)

Christ's Second Coming

Christ returns with His saints to execute judgment and to establish his kingdom upon earth (Jude 14,15; Rev. 19).

Preceded by numerous signs (Zech 14; Matt 24)

Accompanied with great wonders in creation (Zech 14; Matt. 24).

Tribulation Period

The 7 year period characterized by unparalleled wrath (Rev. 6:16,17; 11:18; 14:19; 15:1,7; 16:1,19; 1 Thess. 1:9,10; 5:9; Zeph 1:15,18) and judgment (Rev. 14:7; 15:4; 16:5-7; 19:2) poured out upon the inhabitants of the earth.

The fulfillment of Daniel's 70th week determined upon Israel (Dan. 9:27)

Millennium

The 1000 year reign of Christ on earth following the tribulation period.

Righteousness and peace shall rule (Isa. 11:1-9).

Satan is bound in a bottomless pit (Rev. 20:1-4).

The literal fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant (Gen 12:1-7; 13:14-17; 15:1-21; 17:1-14; 22:15-18), the Palestinian covenant (Deut. 30:1-10), the Davidic covenant (2 Sam. 7:12-16; Psa. 89:3,4, 34-36; Jer. 33:14-22) and the new covenant (Jer. 31:31-34; Isa. 61:8,9; Ezek. 37:21-28).

Views of Christ's Second Coming

Spiritual

Denies the bodily return of Christ to earth.

Identifies the coming of Christ as a continual advance of Christ in the Church.

Amillennial

Disowns the millennium entirely.

Denies the literal reign of Christ upon earth

The eternal state follows Christ's 2nd coming.

Denies the literal fulfillment of the covenants made to Israel. These covenants are fulfilled in the Church.

Postmillennial

Christ returns after the millennium.

The Church is in the millennium today.

The gospel will Christianize the whole world before the return of Christ.

Denies the literal reign of Christ upon earth

The eternal state follows Christ's 2nd coming.

Denies the literal fulfillment of the covenants made to Israel.

Premillennial

Christ will return to the earth before the millennium.

Christ will literally and bodily reign on the earth for 1000 years.

Premillennial Views of the Rapture

Partial Rapture

Not all believers will be taken in the rapture, but only those who are watching and waiting who have reached some degree of spiritual attainment.

Denies the sufficiency of the work of Christ to justify the sinner and make him acceptable to God.

Denies the unity of the body (1 Cor. 12:12,13; Eph. 4:3,4)

Denies the completeness of the resurrection ("we shall all be changed" 1 Cor. 15:51,52; 1 Thess 4:14)

Posttribulational

The Church in its entirety will remain on earth through the tribulation period and be raptured at its conclusion.

The Church will meet the Lord in the air on His way from heaven to earth to judge the ungodly and establish His earthly kingdom.

The rapture of the Church is at least 7 years away.

Midtribulational

The rapture is a separate event from Christ's 2nd coming.

The church in its entirety will be raptured in the middle of the tribulation - at the end of the first 3 ½ years.

The rapture of the Church is at least 3 ½ years away.

Pretribulational

The rapture is a separate event from Christ's 2nd coming.

The church in its entirety will be raptured prior to the tribulation.

The rapture of the Church is imminent!

The last 3 of these views will be reviewed in the next section.

Scriptural Reasons for a Pretribulation Rapture

1. The tribulation is part of God's program for Israel:

It is called "Jacob's trouble" (Jer. 30:7)

It is for Daniel's people (Dan. 9:24;12:1)

In the Church, there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile (Eph. 2). In the tribulation, Jew and Gentile are distinct companies (Rev. 7).

Satan's attention is focused on Israel, the woman who gave birth to Christ (Rev. 12)

Though we read of "saints" and "the elect" on earth during the tribulation, the word "church" (ekklesia) is not used during tribulation (Rev. 6-18; Matt. 24,25)

2. The Church looks for the imminent return of Christ.

"looking for that blessed hope" (Titus 2:13)

"we look for the Savior" (Phil. 3:20)

"wait for His Son from heaven" (1 Thess. 1:10)

The rapture and the 2nd coming are distinct events.

THE RAPTURE THE 2nd COMING

Removal of all believers Appearing of the Son

Saints caught up Christ returns to earth

For His bride With His bride

No preceding signs Preceding signs

A message of comfort A message of judgment

For the Church For Israel and the world

A mystery Predicted in the OT

John 14:1-4; 1 Cor. 15; Zech 14; Matt 24;

1 Thess. 4:13-18 Jude 14,15; Rev. 19

4. "I also will keep thee from the hour of trial" (Rev. 3:10).

The Lord does not promise to keep us in or through the hour or even from the trials of the hour. He promises to keep us from the hour.

God's people in the tribulation will not be kept from the trials: "a great multitude, which no man could number" will be martyred (Rev. 6:9-11).

5. The Church has been delivered from wrath:

"Jesus...delivers us from the wrath to come" (1 Thess. 1:10)

"God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. 5:9)

The Church "shall be saved from wrath through Him" (Rom. 5:9)

The church is represented in the 24 elders, which are in heaven throughout the tribulation (Rev. 4:4,10; 5:5-12; 7:11-17; 11:16-18; 14:3; 19:4):

Not angels (5:11;7:11)

Not tribulation saints (7:11-17)

From the nations of the earth (5:9)

A redeemed company (5:9-10)

Wearing golden crowns (4:4,10;2:10; 3:11)

Arrayed in white linen (4:4;19:7,8,14)

The Lamb is in their midst (5:6;1:13)

A kingdom of priests (5:10;1 Pet. 2:5,9)

They will reign over the earth (5:10; 2 Tim. 2:12)

The restrainer, the Holy Spirit, is removed prior to the revealing of the man of sin (2 Thess. 2:1-10).

The work of the Spirit is to "reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness and of judgment" (John 16:7-11)

"Remember ye not that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?" (vs 5) God has shown us the content of these things in the 1st epistle to Thessalonians. In no other book of the Bible, do we find more as to the removal of the saints from the earth (1:10; 2:19; 3:3; 4:13-18; 5:1-11,23)

The Church is sealed with the Spirit until the day of redemption (Eph. 1:13). The Spirit cannot be removed from the earth without removing the Church.

A posttribulational view leaves no one in earthly bodies for the millennium.

Both Jew and Gentile saints will enter the millennium (Isa. 19:21-25; Zech 14:11-16)

At the rapture, all believers will be changed and caught up (1 Cor. 15:51,52)

At Christ's 2nd coming, all unbelievers will be judged (Jude 14,15; 1 Thess. 5:3)

A pretribulation rapture allows 7 years for a new elect to emerge (Rev 7:4,9)

The judgment seat of Christ and the Marriage supper of the Lamb precede Christ's 2nd coming (Rev 19).

The Lamb's wife is adorned in a white robe, the righteousness of saints (vs. 8), before Christ's coming "to judge and make war" (vs. 11).

The marriage supper of the Lamb occurs in heaven where God is (vs 4) and the Lamb's wife makes herself ready (vs 7-9) before Christ bodily leaves heaven to return to earth (vs 11-16).

10. Christ appears to the world before He gathers His elect (Col 3:4; Matt. 24:29-31).

11. Unbelievers are judged before He gathers His elect.

unbelievers are taken into judgment while believers are left to inhabit the millennium (Luk3 17:34-37)

the tares are gathered first to be burned then the wheat is gathered into His barn (Matt. 13:30)

the wicked severed from the just (Matt. 13:49)

The judgment of the nations precedes the gathering of the Jewish remnant (Isa. 11:11,12; 27:12,13)

12. At the rapture, the Lord will take His Church to His Father's house (John 14:1-3)

13. John, representing the church, is called up to heaven (Rev. 4:1) after the church age (Rev. 2,3) but prior to the tribulation (Rev. 6-19)

The voice (1 Thess. 4:16)

The trumpet (1 Thess. 4:16; 1 Cor. 15:52)

"Come up hither" (S of S. 2:10)

14. In a parable, the Lord urges the Jewish remnant to "wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding" (Luke 12:36).

Practical Effects of a Pretribulation Rapture

Often the subject of the rapture is dismissed as being only theoretical with no practical impact on the Christian's life. This is not how the New Testament presents the subject. Every time Christ's coming for His saints is presented, a practical result is intended.

John 14:1-3: "Let not your hearts be troubled." To one with a troubled heart, the Lord's promise is very comforting and reassuring: "I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am there ye may be also".

1 Cor. 15:51-58: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." This stirring encouragement is based upon the knowledge that at the twinkling of an eye we shall be changed and caught up to meet the Lord.

1 Thess. 4:13-18: "Wherefore comfort one another with these words." This comfort stems from the knowledge that our loved ones who have died in Christ will be raised and we shall "be caught up together with them in the clouds and meet the Lord in the air."

Phil 3:20 - 4:1: "So stand fast in the Lord." This exhortation is based upon our looking for the Savior to come and "change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body."

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