

THE LORD IS COMING SOON

ARE YOU READY?

TEXT: JOHN 14:1-4; I THESS. 4:13-18

INTRODUCTION:

1. It has been said that there are three mountain peaks in the New Testament: the first coming of Christ, the coming of the Holy Spirit, and the second coming of Christ.
2. This morning I would like to speak on the third “mountain peak” in the New Testament: the second coming of Christ.
3. Twice in John 14, our Lord says something wonderful: “Let not your heart be troubled” (John 14:1, 27).
4. It is not difficult to understand why the apostles were troubled. Our Lord had just announced that one of them was a traitor (13:21, 22). Also, He warned Simon Peter that he was going to betray Him three times (13:36-38).
5. Probably the most difficult announcement was our Lord’s statement that He would soon leave them (13:33). They did not understand where He was going, or when He was going, or why He was going.
6. As a matter of fact, they didn’t understand how He was going – they were perplexed. They were troubled (cf. 14:1).
7. Perhaps there are some folks here this morning who are troubled –troubled because of family problems, unsaved loved ones, money problems, etc.
8. Some people are looking for work; some are working too much and have no time for God. Poor health, financial pressures, conflicts at home or on the job, etc. Remember these words: “Let not your heart be troubled...” (14:1).
9. We should not be troubled because our Lord is coming back. I want to speak this morning about the rapture of the church.

10. Our English word “rapture” is not found in the Bible. It comes from the Latin word for “caught up.” This is how “caught up” in I Thess. 4:17 is translated in the Latin version of the Bible.

11. There are several popular views concerning the timing of the rapture. I believe the most literal view is the best, i.e., the pretribulational rapture.

12. Some hold to a midtribulational rapture, and then there are those who hold to the posttribulational rapture.

13. Also, there are some who hold to the “partial rapture” theory.

14. I have many reasons for holding to the pre-trib view. In Revelation 2 and 3, the focus is on the local church. Then in Revelation 4 and 5, the focus is on heaven. Then in Rev. 6 through 19 the focus is on the tribulation. It is significant that the church is not mentioned at all in Revelation 6 through 19.

15. Also, the promise to the church of Philadelphia is for all churches and for all Christians (cf. Rev. 3:10).

16. The tribulation period is a future seven-year time period (Daniel’s 70th week), when God will pour out His wrath upon this wicked world because it has rejected the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Rev. 6:12-17).

17. But the Bible says that God “hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ” (I Thess. 5:9; cf. 1:10).

I. THE IMMINENCY OF THE RAPTURE

II. THE PURPOSE OF THE TRIBULATION

III. THE PROPER OUTLINE OF BIBLE PROPHECY

I. THE IMMINENCY OF THE RAPTURE

1. The concept of the imminent coming of Christ necessitates a pretribulational rapture. Webster’s Dictionary says “imminent” means “likely to occur at any moment; impending.”

2. Therefore, since the rapture is imminent, it could take place at any moment and therefore must be pretribulation. If the church must go through seven years of tribulation before the rapture (or even part of the tribulation), then the rapture could not be imminent and the concept of imminency would be destroyed.
3. And there are many Scriptures which clearly teach the imminency of the rapture (I Cor. 1:7; 4:5; 15:51, 52; 16:22; Phil. 3:20; 4:5; I Thess. 1:10; Titus 2:13; James 5:7-9; I John 2:28; Rev. 3:11; 22:7, 12, 20).
4. I know of no greater motivation for godly living than the imminency of the return of Christ (cf. I John 3:2, 3).
5. The Bible speaks of a future one-world religion and a one-world government. The Bible tells us about the coming antichrist, and his false prophet, and the battle of Armageddon.
6. There are many fascinating prophecies in the Bible, and it looks like many of them could be fulfilled very soon (e.g., the “mark of the beast”).
7. However, the rapture is imminent, and these prophecies will be fulfilled during the tribulation period.

II. THE PURPOSE OF THE TRIBULATION

1. I have observed that many Christians have an inadequate understanding of the tribulation. And if Christians do not understand the tribulation, how can they warn their unsaved friends and loved ones? (Cf. Rev. 6:14-17; 9:6).
2. There are many church-goers who have never heard a message on the second coming of Christ (cf. II Thess. 1:7-9). The doctrine of the second coming of Christ is not palatable to modern man.
3. And God’s judgment upon sin is not palatable to modern man.
4. Those who do not study Bible prophecy are missing out on God’s blessing (cf. Rev. 1:3).
5. Here is another problem we face: Many Bible teachers allegorize or “spiritualize” Bible prophecy. Therefore, the horrors of the tribulation are

minimized and explained away. The Bible must be studied literally; otherwise there will be confusion and error.

6. The Bible does use figurative language. There are parables, metaphors, types, etc. There is plenty of symbolism in the Bible, but the symbols are usually easy to recognize and easy to interpret (cf. Rev. 17:1, 15).

7. A good principle to follow is: “When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense.”

8. Beware of preachers who allegorize Bible prophecy (for example, men like the late Harold Camping). Camping wrote, “there is sufficient evidence that we are in the final period of the earth’s history called the great tribulation.” He was wrong about that!

9. Anyone who knows Bible prophecy knows this cannot be true. In Matthew 24:15 our Lord said, “When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand).”

10. This prophecy refers to the antichrist defiling the temple and this prophecy has not been fulfilled. In fact, the temple has not yet been rebuilt. Therefore, we cannot be in the Great Tribulation (cf. Matt. 24:21, 22).

11. Another problem is that many Christians do not understand the purpose of the tribulation. Some think it is a time when God will purge His church. But this is not taught in the Bible.

12. The Bible refers to the tribulation as “the time of Jacob’s (Israel’s) trouble” (Jer. 30:7). It is not the time of the church’s trouble. The church is not referred to in Rev. 4—22.

13. We must be careful to distinguish between the church and Israel.

III. THE PROPER OUTLINE OF BIBLE PROPHECY

1. After the rapture, those of us who are saved will be ushered into the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. We will then stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

2. W. Graham Scroggie said he would rather go through the entire seven-year tribulation than be a carnal Christian standing at the judgment seat. Those are words to ponder!
3. The judgment seat will be for the church up in heaven. Meanwhile, here on earth the seven-year tribulation period will begin (cf. I Thess. 5:1-9; Rev. 6).
4. At the end of the tribulation period, Christ will return to judge the wicked and set up His kingdom in Jerusalem (Zech. 14:1-4; Rev. 19:11-16).
5. Then Christ will reign for a thousand years (Rev. 20:1-6; Isa. 2:1-4; 11:6-9).
6. This will be followed by what is usually referred to as “the eternal state” (cf. I Cor. 15:24-28).

CONCLUSION:

1. The Bible has much to say about the future coming of Christ. This morning we have barely scratched the surface.
2. Are you ready?
3. The hope of our Lord’s return presents an impelling challenge.
4. One preacher put it this way: “The task is large and the days are few. It is time for searching of heart and purification of life. It is time for prayer and devotion, for sacrifice and effort. Now is the time to preach the good news of a Savior who died for the sins of the whole world that all who believe might live. It is a time to press on through closing missionary doors, through opposition, unbelief, and indifference. It is time to remind ourselves of that searching evaluation of our life and labors that awaits us at the judgment seat of Christ. The coming of the Lord is as near as our next breath, the next beat of our hearts, the next word of our lips. While we wait, may we be ‘stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord’ (I Cor. 15:58)” (John Walvoord).