



Prophecy in Perspective

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An email newsletter

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The Next Prophetic Event: The Rapture

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope (1 Thessalonians 4:13, NASB). It is the worst possible situation for the believer and for the church in these latter days to be "uninformed," in general about biblical truth, let alone being uninformed and misinformed about the events of the end times. Because of the great lack of clear teaching on Bible doctrine and theology in pulpits and through books being currently published on popular, but unscriptural topics, people are hungering for some new teaching not found in the Bible. Along with this theological "malnutrition" among American Christians today is the current disinterest among Christian leaders on the coming of the Lord. In this passage from 1 Thessalonians, we can see that the Apostle Paul believed that the teaching of the imminent coming of the Lord for the church was important to encourage Christians in their daily walk.

For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus (1 Thessalonians 4:14, NASB). Believers were dying and the Lord had not yet returned, so Paul encouraged the Christians of his day with truth on the return of Jesus Christ. The Apostle states that our loved ones who have died will be brought back from heaven with the Lord. He knew that the doctrine of the coming of Christ was a hope that would help to keep them firm in their faith even under the growing pressure of persecution. There were also pressures from other "Christians" who did not believe in the coming of the Lord, but who promoted unscriptural and pagan teachings. Paul states that we believe that "Jesus died and rose again," which is the heart of the gospel. He taught that anyone may believe that Jesus died for them and rose again and could be saved, for Jesus died for all (1 Timothy 2:6). This is an important teaching that is under attack in many of our Baptist churches today.

For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep (1 Thessalonians 4:15, NASB). Sound teaching on the coming of the Lord will bring comfort. Paul is telling the living Christians that their dead loved ones, alive and well in heaven with the Lord, will return with Him and their bodies will be raised up to meet them in the air first, and then we will be taken up to the Lord immediately after them. Paul says this "***by the word of the Lord,***" which Jesus promised in John 14:1-4. Today the "word of the Lord" is being added to through false writings propounding to be the very words of Jesus! And books and movies like, "The Shack" have gone far beyond the "word of the Lord," into false religion entirely! The author of "The Shack," William Young, rejects the doctrine of substitutionary atonement, that Jesus died in place of sinners, he also believes that "the God of evangelical Christianity is a monster," because He will judge unbelievers. Truly, this book and movie is loaded

with false representations of God, the Trinity, and the person and work of Jesus Christ. People are drawn to "The Shack" to find comfort, but the greatest comfort is to be found in the Bible as the "Word of the Lord." (See Lighthouse Trials Research Project, June 2010 interview with William Paul Young.)

The Word of God teaches Christians to seek healing. But it also warns that there are false sources of power, namely, demons, that we are warned to avoid. The need for healing should not lead us into biblical error to achieve it. We should be sure to seek answers to our needs from the One true God of the Bible. In "The Shack," William Young sets forth a serious misrepresentation of the Triune God by advancing the false idea of "Trithesim," which teaches erroneously that the Trinity consists of three different Gods.

As taught in the Bible, however, The Triune God of the Bible exists as three distinct co-eternal and co-equal Persons, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Again, the Trinity is revealed as consisting of three distinct Persons of the same essence as the One and true God (Matthew 3:19). I believe that the three strange supernatural beings which are presented in "The Shack" as three gods, two of them as women, are actually three spirit guides that are not of God. Remember that demons lie, and Christians who listen to them as though they speak truth risk coming under their oppression in their lives. (See Jim Logan's book, Reclaiming Surrendered Ground, Moody Press). Everything that is taught of a spiritual nature may and should be proved by the Bible. Paul said in 2 Thessalonians 5:21, "**Prove all things; hold fast that which is good (KJV).**" If we practice testing all teachings or man's opinions by the Bible, then we will not be "**tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive**" (Ephesians 4:14, KJV).

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first (1 Thessalonians 4:16, NASB). Our comfort of victorious Christian living is not found in the current gnostic mythologies being invented by man (with demonic help). Our comfort and personal assurance is found in the Holy Spirit inspired, inerrant Word of God, the Bible. The central truth of the Scriptures is that we are sinners in need of salvation and God was glorified to send His Son to die upon the cross for us and to rise again from the dead. If we believe in Jesus Christ as our personal Savior, then we accept these gospel truths about Him and we need to ask Him personally to save us (John 1:12). We also believe in and depend upon His promises to be with us, to empower and comfort us by His indwelling life, and by His coming again to rapture us to heaven and to be with Him forever! (John 15:1-8; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

I will continue this look at the Rapture of the church in the next edition of *Prophecy in Perspective*.

NOTICE: For those of you in the Atlanta area, Dr. Downing is conducting a Bible study entitled "God's Unfolding Purpose" on Sunday afternoons from 4:30 to 6:00 p.m. in room 1370 at First Baptist Atlanta, which will conclude April 30th. Hope to see you there!

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