

## The Character of the Waiting Bride

Look up the following verses where we find instructions on how to conduct ourselves while we wait for our coming saviour.

📖 1 Thess 5:23 And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved \_\_\_\_\_  
**unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

📖 1 Tim 6:14 That thou \_\_\_\_\_ without spot, \_\_\_\_\_, **until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ:**

📖 Philp 4:5 Let your \_\_\_\_\_ be known unto all men. **The Lord is at hand.**

📖 James 5:8 Be ye also patient; \_\_\_\_\_: for the **coming of the Lord draweth nigh.**

Jesus desires that as we live our lives waiting for his return, that we obey his commandments, maintain a right testimony, be resolute in our faith, and guard ourselves in order to remain blameless until his coming. Paul echoed these desires in 2 Cor 11:2 where he shares his burden for the Corinthian church.

📖 2 Cor 11:2 For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ to Christ.

John had this same desire for the readers of his epistle. 📖 1 John 2:28 And now, little children, \_\_\_\_\_; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be \_\_\_\_\_ before him **at his coming.**

The soon return of Jesus Christ ought to be the motivation for us to live holy and blameless lives here on earth. Many Christians live as if they do not believe he will return at any moment. They are not abiding in Christ but in the world, wasting their time, money and affections on the vain things of this life.

If Jesus returned this moment would you be *ashamed before him* or could you meet him with confidence? The desire to answer this question right should drive us to live whole heartedly for him. Jesus could have, at any time, called his bride home, but has instead chosen to leave us here to do a work for Him. How have you chosen to occupy yourself until his coming? 📖 Write Phil 3:20 below.

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## Jesus, Our Returning Lord

In Biblical times when a marriage took place it was much different than the way in which we do things in the West. When a man chose his bride, he would purchase the right to marry her by giving her Father a dowry. At this time they would not immediately be married, but he would return to the place of his Father where he prepared a new home for he and his bride. Meanwhile the bride remained apart from her future husband and prepared herself for his promised return. Because only the groom and the Father of the groom knew the date of the marriage, the bride had to live each day as if her groom would return at any moment. When the day finally arrived, the groom would return to his bride with great fanfare and celebration. After this marriage celebration, the groom would receive his bride as his wife.

Now 📖 Look Up John 14:1-3, where Jesus uses this powerful imagery to illustrate our relationship to him.

**Q.** v2 Where did Jesus say he was going? \_\_\_\_\_.

**Q.** v2 Why did Jesus say he would go? \_\_\_\_\_.

**Q.** v3 Since Jesus is preparing a place for us, he also promised that he would do what?

In the above passage Jesus was clearly alluding to the marriage ceremonies of that day. He was illustrating what otherwise would have been a hard concept to understand – his return to earth to receive all saved people as his bride. In Rev 19:7,8 we read about this marriage reception.

📖 Rev 19:7 Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the \_\_\_\_\_ is come, and his \_\_\_\_\_ hath made herself ready.

📖 Revelation 19:8 And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of \_\_\_\_\_.

**Q.** Who do you think the *saints* are as referred to in Rev 19:8? (check 1 Cor 1:2) \_\_\_\_\_.

The bride of Christ in Rev 19:8 is made up of all *saints* or saved people. Since the scene in Revelation 19 takes place in Heaven we know that sometime between now and that day, Christ must return to collect his bride. This second coming of Jesus Christ is what we call *the Rapture* or *First Resurrection*.

## The Rapture Defined

The return of Jesus Christ to earth for his saints is what Christianity has commonly referred to as *the rapture*. The word "rapture" does not appear in the Bible but it shares a meaning with the greek word *harpazo* which is found in 1 Thess 4:17.

The Thessalonians knew that Jesus would return for them one day, in fact, they were so sure of it that they expected it to happen during their lifetimes. When this church began to see some of their members dying before the return of Christ, they became sorrowful and worried. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians to assure them that Christ would indeed return.

**Read** 📖 1 Thess 4:13-18. **Q.** What did Paul say the Lord would do?

**Q.** What will happen to the *dead in Christ* at this time?

📖 1 Thes 4:17 Then we which are \_\_\_\_\_ and remain shall be \_\_\_\_\_ together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

It is here in verse 17 that we see the phrase *caught up*. The greek word *harpazo* is used here. Our english word *rapture* shares a common definition with *harpazo*, and for this reason the event described in 1 Thess 4:17 (and elsewhere) has come to be referred to as The Rapture. For a clear definition of this word, let's look at other passages where it is used.

📖 Acts 8:39 And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord \_\_\_\_\_ Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.

📖 John 6:15 When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him \_\_\_\_\_, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone.

Each of the blanks above is translated from *harpazo*. We see that it carries with it the idea of being *caught up*, *caught away*, and *taken by force*. These are all descriptions of what will happen on that day when *the Lord himself shall descend from heaven* (1 Thess 4:16).

**Q.** v16. Who will *rise first* at the rapture? \_\_\_\_\_.

**Q.** v17. What will happen to those that are alive?

**Q.** According to this passage, do you think Jesus will set foot on the earth at the rapture? Why or Why not?

## The Imminence of His Return

Just like the groom in Biblical times, Jesus can return for his bride at *any time*. There are no events that must take place before He returns, nor are there any signs of his coming. Because the resurrection and rapture can happen at any moment, it is referred to as the *imminent* return of Christ.

📖 Matt 24:36-44. **Q.** v36. Who knows when Jesus will return?

**Q.** In light of Matt 24:36, what should we think of those who make predictions or set dates regarding the return of Jesus?

**Q.** Jesus compares his coming to the coming of the flood in Noah's day. Did the men of that day know that the flood was coming? \_\_\_\_\_.

**Q.** How were the people of Noah's day behaving immediately before the flood came?

**Q.** v44. At what hour did Jesus say he would return?

According to Jesus himself, no one knows the day or time that he will return. In fact, during his earthly ministry, Jesus himself did not avail himself to that information. The Bible teaches that men and women will be living their lives as normal, eating, drinking and marrying, with no knowledge of, or regard for the coming Christ.

Although the world lives like Jesus will not return, we as Christians are instructed to live as if he may return at any moment.

📖 Hebrews 10:37 For yet a \_\_\_\_\_, and he that shall come will come, and \_\_\_\_\_.

📖 James 5:8 Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord \_\_\_\_\_.

📖 Rev 3:11 Behold, \_\_\_\_\_: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.

God has chosen to leave the day of his Sons coming a mystery, but he has not left us here to sit idle waiting for his return. In a parable about his return, Jesus gave these instructions: 📖 Luke 19:13 And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, \_\_\_\_\_.

## The Rapture – Our Final Redemption

In a previous study we learned about Jesus, our Redeemer. In it, we saw that Jesus has redeemed our souls from the penalty of the law – death in Hell. We also learned that our redemption has past, present and future aspects. The resurrection and rapture at the return of Christ is what will usher in the final aspect of our redemption - that transforming of our mortal bodies.

📖 1 Cor 15:51-57. **Q.** v51. What will happen to *all* Christians?

**Q.** v52. How will the dead be raised?\_\_\_\_\_.

📖 1 Cor 15:53 For this corruptible must put on \_\_\_\_\_,  
and this mortal must put on \_\_\_\_\_.

**Q.** v54. What will be defeated at the Rapture?\_\_\_\_\_.

According to this passage, the rapture will happen quickly – in the twinkling of an eye. There will be the sound of a trumpet and all those who are saved, both living and dead, will have their mortal bodies transformed into immortal, glorious bodies. At this moment every saved man, woman, and child will overcome the power of death.

## The Rapture – Our Deliverance from Wrath

We have seen clearly that the return of Christ has been promised, but why has God chosen to *catch away* his church from the earth in this manner? For the answer to this, look up 📖 1 Thes 1:9,10.

**Q.** According to verse 10, what has Jesus delivered us from?

In Revelation 6 we read about this wrath. It is called the *wrath of the Lamb* and *the great day of his wrath*. It is also called the *great tribulation*. The rapture of the church and the resurrection of the saved dead is God’s way of delivering the church from the coming tribulation. These seven years of tribulation will come sometime following the removal of the church from the earth. 📖 1 Thes 5:9. **Q.** What has God not done?

## Conclusion

Jesus himself promised that he would return (John 14:3) and later told us it could happen at any moment (Matt 24:42). He desires that his bride, the church, remain pure and blameless until he comes. He is returning in order to deliver his church from the coming wrath. This truth has served as a comfort and hope for Christians for the last two thousands years (1 Thes 4:18, Titus 2:13). **T&D.** How is this truth a comfort to Christians?

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## Jesus – Our Coming Lord – Review

1. What does the word Imminent mean? (use a dictionary)
2. How might we live our lives in a way that shows we are expecting Christ's return?
3. How should the rapture change our view of death?
4. How should the rapture make us feel about our dead relatives who were Christians?
5. What would be strange about 1 Thess 4:18, if we were not going to be delivered from the wrath of the tribulation?

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