

What Does God's Word Say About... Jesus' Return

There has been much false teaching concerning the return of Jesus, which Paul explained this way: "But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep [dead]. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming; then comes the end when He [Christ] hands over the kingdom [church] to the God and Father, when He [Christ] has abolished all rule and all authority and power. For He [Christ] must reign [present tense] until He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be abolished is death" (1 Cor. 15:20-26). Death came as the result of sin and is an enemy of God and man. So long as man sins, he must die; but when all sin and rebellion shall have been destroyed, then death as the last enemy shall be abolished. While Jesus conquered physical and spiritual death on the cross, He still permits both to exist as the punishment for sin. When Christ returns, the sting of death and sin will be swallowed up in victory through His appearance (1 Cor. 15:54-57). At that time Jesus will hand over the kingdom [church] to God the Father!

When Jesus returns only Christians who are IN Christ and are asleep [in the grave] and those IN Christ who are alive will be caught up in the air to meet Him. This event could be called "the rapture" but is not secretive or silent! The Latin word for "rapture" is "to be caught up." It is common today to see bumper stickers on cars such as: "In case of rapture, this car will be unoccupied." The rapture theory is taught by many who suggest that Christ's return will silently remove, from this world, the righteous, and will occur just before a seven-year tribulation on the earth. This alarmist doctrine portrays a grand drama. Families will be shocked by the strange disappearance of a mother, father, or child. Driverless cars will collide in the streets. A husband and wife will be in bed...she turns her head and he is gone. Planes crash without their pilots.

To refute this false doctrine one needs to understand what the word of God says. Revelation 1:7 says, "Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and EVERY eye shall see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen." First Thessalonians 4:16-17 says, "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. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord."

According to God's word there is but one resurrection and that will include both the good and the evil: "Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which ALL who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment" (John 5:28-29).

The apostle Peter wrote, "But the day of the Lord [Christ's] return will come like a thief, in which the heaven will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up" (2 Peter 3:10). This leaves out the false teaching that Christ will set up a physical kingdom for a millennium since the earth will no longer exist. Christ's kingdom is not future and has been in existence since Pentecost. Jesus stated, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). Christ promised Peter in Matthew

16:18-19 that he would open the door of the kingdom, and this the apostle exercised in Acts 2:38-47. John, the apostle, stated in Revelation 1:9 that he was a "fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance which are in Jesus." Jesus said in Mark 9:1 that "there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God come with power." This kingdom came [past tense] with power on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:38-47).

Jesus said, "But of that day [Jesus' return] and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. Therefore, be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming. For this reason you must also be ready; for the Son of man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will." (Matthew 24:36, 42, 44). Again, at that time the kingdom [church] will be handed over to God the Father (1 Cor. 15:24). Jesus is "the Savior of the body; which is the church" (Eph. 5:23; Col. 1:24). How can we be added to the kingdom, the body, which is the church? Acts 2:38-41, 47; Romans 6:4-5; Galatians 3:27; Col. 2:11-12

Only IN Christ can one be saved!