

THE RECLAIMING...THE RAPTURE...THE RETURN!

Our Jesus Will Make Sure His Promises Come True!

"And He died."

A statement echoed eight times throughout the 5th chapter of Genesis. It is a reminder of sin's deadly price.

The voice of hope...Enoch did not die "for God took him" (Gen. 5:24).

Early in God's dealing with mankind, the scriptures teach of a way to escape the curse of death and dust (Gen. 2:17; 3:19).

- Enoch "walked with God" (Gen. 5:22) and eluded the curse of physical death.
- Elijah "went up by a whirlwind into heaven" (2 Kings 2:11)

These two men foreshadow an entire generation of believers who will enjoy the unique blessing of instant transferal into God's presence.

Today's generation (most) look at this as science fiction.

To skip the normal process of dying and death seems quite farfetched.

Yet this is what the Scriptures clearly present.

God's people have always believed in the ultimate hope beyond the grave. New Testament Christians have clung to a further promise held out to every generation of believers in Messiah Jesus-He may come today and take you to heaven in an instant!

FIRST, THERE HAS TO BE A RECLAMATION!

Reclamation = a reclaiming; a recovery or restoration to a better or useful state; the process of obtaining useful materials from waste products.

Hallelujah...Jesus has reclaimed us with His blood...

From waste to a useful resource...Isn't God good!

How does the reclaiming take place?

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only Begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him shall never perish but have ever lasting life."

From WASTE TO AN ETERNAL PRODUCT.

Reclamation is done through the process of Redemption.

- **Redemption is found in Christ:**

"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding." Ephesians 1:7
"Christ redeemed us from the curse." Galatians 3:13
"He (Christ Jesus) entered the Most Holy Place once for all by His own blood, having obtained eternal redemption."

- **How can we know that we have been redeemed/reclaimed?**

"If you will confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Romans 10:9

"It is by grace you have been saved through faith-and this is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God-not by works, so no one can boast." Ephesians 2:8, 9

JESUS CAME TO RECLAIM ALL OF US...BUT SOME CHOOSE TO NOT ACCEPT THIS GIFT. THEY ARE LOVERS OF PLEASURE AND DARE NOT GIVE IN TO SOMEONE ELSE... (YOU MUST CHOOSE TO SERVE)...AND YIELD SELF AND SELFISHNESS TO THE AUTHORITY OF JESUS CHRIST.

RAPTURE AND RECEIVING

- **We Will Be Received By Jesus!**

Jesus reassured His followers in the upper room that His own departure from this life involved the preparation of a place for them. "Don't let your heart be troubled...John 14:1.

"In my Father's house are many mansions; I go to prepare a place for you." (v.2)

These mansions (dwelling places) would become their new homes someday.

Then...Jesus promised to return for them.

"I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also" (v.3)

The early followers of Christ kept that promise alive...and, We believe that promise, too...and, incidentally, we think it is imminent.

Note: Nothing is said here of their death, of His return to the earth, or of any events that need to occur before He takes believers home with Him. The promise is simple and clear- Jesus will return to take His people to heaven.

- **We Will Be Changed By God** (1 Corinthians 15:51-54), *"Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed- 52 in*

a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. 53 For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. 54 When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory."

"Behold I show you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed" (v. 51)

"Mystery" describes something formerly hidden but later revealed. Some truths about Jesus' (the Messiah's) return were not revealed in the Old Testament but were made known through Jesus and His apostles in the New Testament.

- **Two (2) Truths:**

1. **At our Lord's return, believers' bodies will not "sleep" (experience physical death) but be instantly transformed.**

This spectacular moment will happen in "a moment in the twinkling of an eye" (v.52)

After Jesus returns to receive his bride (all born-again believers), only those who have not trusted in His gift of salvation will be left on earth.

They will be left here and go through a 7 year period of great tribulation that will be the time of God's wrath.

2. **The deceased believers in Christ will be raised at Jesus' coming.**

This transformation will occur "at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible" (v. 52a).

The curse of death will be reversed for them, and believers living at that time "shall be changed" as well (v. 52b)

All these people will receive new bodies that will not be subject to sickness, pain, or death. Paul quotes the prophet Isaiah (25:8) at the end of verse 54;

"So, when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory."

What God desired in the Garden of Eden and what He graciously gave to Enoch and Elijah is what an entire generation of believers will one day experience-instant transfer to heaven.

At the same time, those believers who have died will experience complete victory over death.

- **We Will Be Caught Up With Jesus** (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, *Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. 14 For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. 15 According to the Lord's word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. 18 Therefore encourage one another with these words.) While believers sorrow over death, it is not an empty grief. Paul wrote so "that ye sorrow not, even as others who have no hope" (v. 13). Hope transforms sorrow into joy.*

Paul thought that Jesus would return in his own lifetime. Jesus himself taught that the time of His return is unknown to all but the Father.

Therefore, Believers must constantly be ready (Matthew 24:36, 44; 24:13)

The hope of Jesus' imminent appearing is found throughout the New Testament (Romans 13:11; 1 Corinthians 16:22; Philippians 4:5; James 5:7-9; 1 Peter 4:7; Revelation 22:20).

Details: Paul describes---

- **Jesus will come down from His present home.**

"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first" (v. 16)

▪ **All Christians who are alive will be caught up (Raptured)**

"..we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (v. 17)

Rapture = Latin "Rapto" meaning "to pluck up, to snatch away" (describing this momentous event).

Just as Enoch and Elijah were raptured by God, so will a future generation of Christians avoid the walk through the valley of the shadow of death.

▪ **Immediate hope...for all Christians, "Comfort one another with these words" (v. 18)**

Don't worry...you have never known where God or His Son disregarded their word... "They don't lie."

Expect...and look forward to being with Jesus...Be ready!

THE RETURN OF CHRIST TO EARTH...WITH HIS BRIDE.

The Promise of the Rapture and the Return of Jesus to Earth (Two Different Events)...This parallels with ancient Jewish marriage customs.

- *The betrothal of a bride and her bridegroom first required the young man to pay a negotiated price for his fiancée. The paid dowry formalized the marriage covenant, and the couple became man and wife.*
- *Then the bridegroom returned alone to his father's house and spent about one year preparing a dwelling place for his bride.*
- *When the abode was ready, he secretly returned at night to take his bride home with him.*
- *The reunion involved many attendants and festivities to celebrate the consummation of the marriage.*
- *The couple remained secluded from the guests for 7 days, after which both the bridegroom and the unveiled bride came out to greet the public.*

The analogy is clear:

- *Jesus left heaven to seek His bride and pay for her with the price of His sinless life, death, and resurrection.*
- *The church is presently separated from her betrothed, ever guarding her purity, while He prepares to return.*
- *Some day Jesus Christ will snatch His bride from the earth.*

- *The earth will go into complete rebellion (7 years).*
- *The Lord Jesus will return after the tribulation with "great power and glory" (Mt. 24:30; Rev. 19:7-16).*
- *This return will be unlike the rapture when He comes for His bride. At His 2nd coming, Jesus will return to the earth with His bride to judge the world and establish His Kingdom on earth.*
- *The love of the Bridegroom for His bride will someday be seen visibly in the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.*

**MY PRAYER AND THE PRAYER OF THE
BRIDEGROOM:
MAY BELIEVERS IN MESSIAH JESUS
CONTINUE TO BE FAITHFUL,
LOVING, AND DEVOTED TO THE ONE WHO
DIED, ROSE, AND IS
SOON COMING FOR HIS BRIDE.**

Note: This devotion is based on the book, "When Christ Comes" By Max Lucado.