



May 1 – 2, 2010

1 Thessalonians 4 – 5

“What Does the Lord’s Return Mean?” Part 2

Pastor Gary Hamrick

The major points we gleaned last week from the closing verses of the first three chapters includes: waiting for him to rescue us from the coming wrath ([1:10](#)); the joy of knowing and being reunited with friends and loved ones ([2:19–20](#)); and he will strengthen our hearts to be holy in his presence ([3:13](#)).

There is a real need for Christians to be able to read the signs of the Coming of the Lord. In [Matthew 24:36](#), Jesus said, *“No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.”* It’s true that we won’t know the exact moment of Christ’s return, however, we should be able to discern the season of his return based on the signs and clues found in the Bible. In fact, [1 Thessalonians 5:1–4](#) indicates *“that this day should surprise you like a thief.”*

The Second Coming of Christ is really a two-part event. The first part is when Jesus comes in the clouds to take Christians from the earth. The second part is when Jesus returns to the earth with all the Christians to reign on the earth for 1,000 years. These two events are separated by 7 Years of Tribulation.

In this study we’re going to look at the first part of Christ’s return; an event commonly referred to as The Rapture. The outline below includes the three points from last week’s study, plus two additional points: he will snatch Christians from the earth and he will sanctify us and keep us blameless until that Day.

Waiting For Him To Rescue Us From The Coming Wrath

1. The reason for God’s delay is because he desires as many as would believe to turn to him before it’s too late.
 - a. [Hebrews 9:28](#) – *“[S]o Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.”*

- b. **James 5:7-8** – *“Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord’s coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord’s coming is near.”*
2. Some believe the wrath spoken of in **1 Thessalonians 1:10** refers to Hell and others believe the reference is to The Great Tribulation.
 - a. Whether it’s one or the other, the point is that being rescued from any kind of God’s wrath is a good thing!
 - b. In the context of Christ’s 2nd Coming, it’s probably meant as a reference of God’s rescuing Christians from the Great Tribulation. (**1 Thessalonians 5:1-3, 9**)
 3. Why does the Lord delay in his coming?
 - a. **2 Peter 3:4** – *“They will say, ‘Where is this ‘coming’ he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.’”*
 - b. **2 Peter 3:8-9** – *“But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”*

The Joy Of Knowing And Being Reunited With Friends And Loved Ones

4. **1 Thessalonians 2:19-20** – *“For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? Indeed, you are our glory and joy.”*
5. Paul is saying that the Thessalonian Believers are his pride and joy, and that he has a great love for them.
6. These Christians are commended in Paul’s letter for their endurance in the face of suffering, their love and faith, and their model Christian lives; and one day there will be a glorious reunion and a joyful celebration in the presence of God!
7. The implication regarding the reunion is that we will all know each other, otherwise, how can Paul say that *“we will glory in the presence of the Lord because of you,”* if he won’t know them when they are in the Lord’s presence?
8. **1 John 3:2** – *“Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.”*
 - a. To be like him means to have a glorified body like he has, and to be recognized like he was by friends and loved ones.
 - b. On the Mount of Transfiguration, when Moses and Elijah appeared with Jesus, Peter was able to recognize them without ever having known them.
9. **1 Corinthians 13:12** – *“Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.”*

He Will Strengthen Our Hearts To Be Holy In His Presence

10. **1 Thessalonians 3:13** – *“May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.”*
11. Jesus warned in **Luke 21:34, 36**: *“Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation¹, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap... Be always on the watch and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man.”*
12. Jesus knows the pull of this world is strong – the cares, the anxieties, getting drunk, etc. – and he doesn’t want any of us to be pulled away by the world and miss his 2nd Coming.
13. Guard your hearts!
 - a. **Proverbs 4:23** – *“Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.”*

He Will Snatch Christians From The Earth

14. **1 Thessalonians 4:13–18** – *“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. 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. Therefore encourage each other with these words.”*
15. The first thing that happens is the dead in Christ rise, however, that doesn’t mean that Christians are asleep in the grave.
 - a. Remember, the saints are coming with the Lord, so this is a reference to their spirit.
 - b. The reference is to the glorified bodies that the spirits of those Christians coming with Jesus are to receive.
 - c. **1 Corinthians 15:49** – *“And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven.”*
16. It’s important to know that when your spirit goes to Heaven, your body remains in the ground until it is raised at the Second Coming as a glorified, imperishable body.
 - a. It doesn’t matter what the state of the body is, because the God who flung the stars into outer space and spoke the world into existence can pull together the molecular structure!

¹ Dissipation basically means a life lived with careless ease. <http://1828.mshaffer.com/d/search/word,dissipation> Dissipation – 1. The act of scattering; dispersion; the state of being dispersed; as the dissipation of vapor or heat. 2. In physics, the insensible loss or waste of the minute parts of a body, which fly off, by which means the body is diminished or consumed. 3. Scattered attention; or that which diverts and calls off the mind from any subject. 4. A dissolute, irregular course of life; a wandering from object to object in pursuit of pleasure; a course of life usually attended with careless and exorbitant expenditure of money, and indulgence in vices, which impair or ruin both health and fortune.

17. Those who are alive will be caught up.
- The Greek word is *harpazo*.
 - The Latin word is *raptus*.
18. Jesus gave a description of what would happen in [Matthew 24:37–41](#).
- “As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.”*
19. The “voice of the archangel”² will call and “the trumpet call of God” will sound.
- It’s possible the trumpet call is what God’s voice sounds like. ([Revelation 4:1](#))
 - [1 Corinthians 15:51–52](#) – *“Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed – 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.”*
 - The trumpet call is key to understand the rapture and the timing of the Second Coming of Christ.
20. There is an interesting picture of these events found in the Old Testament Feasts outlined in [Leviticus 23](#).
- Feast of Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread³ – Jesus was crucified on the exact day of Passover when the lambs were being slain on the Temple Mount.
 - [1 Corinthians 5:7](#) – *“Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast—as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.”*
 - [John 1:29](#) – *“The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”*
 - Jesus was without sin, a perfect and spotless sacrifice for our sins.
 - Feast of Firstfruits – Jesus rose from the dead on the exact day of Firstfruits.
 - This Feast takes place on the day after the Sabbath (Saturday) following Passover, which is Sunday; and the Bible tells us Jesus rose from the dead on Sunday!
 - [1 Corinthians 15:20–22](#) – *“But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.”*
 - Feast of Pentecost or Feast of Weeks⁴ – Jesus sent the Holy Spirit on the exact day of Pentecost. ([Acts 2](#))
 - This Feast was originally celebrated for the giving of the Law.
 - At this Feast you were supposed to use yeast, which is a picture of the sinners who are included on Pentecost (3,000 sinners believe!).

² Michael is the only archangel mentioned in the Bible. ([Jude 9](#))

³ Passover was one day and Unleavened bread was an additional seven days, making up the eight days of these concurrent Feasts.

⁴ This Feast takes place in May on our calendar.

- d. Feast of Trumpets⁵ – This is the next Feast on the calendar!
 - i. **Leviticus 23:23–24** – *“The LORD said to Moses, ‘Say to the Israelites: ‘On the first day of the seventh month you are to have a day of rest, a sacred assembly commemorated with trumpet blasts.’”*
 - ii. The Feast of Trumpets corresponds to the next event on the Church calendar – The Rapture!
 - iii. Today, the Feast of Trumpets is called Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year), and the first day this year falls on September 9, 2010.⁶
 - iv. Could it be that Jesus will come again on the exact day of this Feast?

21. **DISCLAIMER NOTICE** – Pastor Gary made it abundantly clear that he **was not** predicting Christ’s Second Coming on September 9, 2010.

22. **Colossians 2:17** – *“These [feasts, etc.] are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.”*

He Will Sanctify Us And Keep Us Blameless Until That Day

23. God not only makes us holy, but he is working to keep us holy.

24. **Philippians 1:6** – *“[B]eing confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”*

25. **Jude 24–25** – *“To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy – to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.”*

Discussion Questions

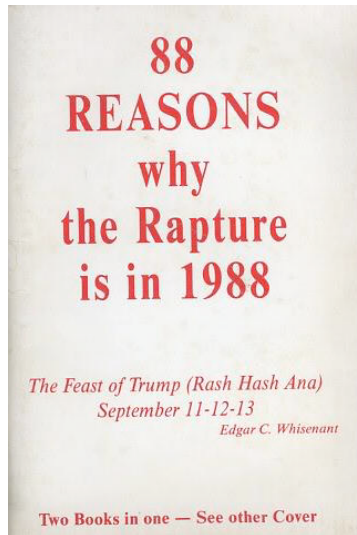
1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read **1 Thessalonians 4:13–18; 5:23–24** to provide an overview for this study.
3. Discuss the persons/groups who have predicted the Second Coming of Christ.
 - a. Use this link to read a brief overview of the Seventh Day Adventist Church and its founder William Miller, who made two predictions about the Second Coming of Christ, which did not happen as predicted (March 21, 1843 to March 21, 1844, and October 22, 1844). Some of his followers even went so far as to sell all their earthly possessions (I’m not sure what

⁵ This Feast takes place in the fall.

⁶ In the Jewish Year 5771, Rosh Hashanah begins at sunset Wednesday, September 8, 2010, and ends at nightfall on Friday, September 10, 2010. <http://www.jewfaq.org/holiday2.htm>

they thought they were going to do with the money!), while others donned white ascension robes and waited on rooftops, hilltops and mountaintops for Christ's return.

- b. http://www.religionfacts.com/christianity/denominations/seventh_day_adventist.htm
- c. In 1988, Edgar C. Whisenant, a former NASA engineer, predicted The Rapture would take place some time between September 11th and September 13th.



- d. Among a vast array of Web sites and books available today on the subject of the end of the earth or The Rapture, there's even a prediction that the end of the world will happen on Friday, December 21, 2012. This Web site even has a countdown clock!

<http://www.2012officialcountdown.com/?a=drpeter>



- e. What are the inherent dangers with predictions about dates and times that the Bible clearly teaches will not and cannot be discerned by man?
 - f. Do you think people who're not Christians believe there's any validity to these predictions?
4. Pastor Gary made reference to the fact that the Bible doesn't say how long the time gap is between The Rapture and The Great Tribulation.
- a. Allow time for discussion on this point.
5. Read and discuss [Matthew 24:37-41](#) and [1 Corinthians 15:51-52](#).

6. Read and discuss the Jewish Feasts in picture of these events found in [Leviticus 23](#).
 - a. Focus on the fact that all Old Testament Feasts point to Jesus.

7. Close your time in prayer by asking the Holy Spirit to; bring clarity to the facts of the Second Coming of Jesus to each person in the group; do a work in each person's life to make them holy and prepare them for the return of Christ of their "home-going," whichever comes first.