

The Second Coming

Jesus Is Coming for You!

Begin the small group study with a time of fellowship. Have the students discuss the following questions. Use this lighthearted discussion as a lead-in to the study topic.

1. What are some situations in life when you're forced to wait? How do you normally feel in these situations?

(Life is usually hectic, and we have more than enough to consume our time and attention. Depending on the situation we might look for ways to avoid waiting, or simply walk away from a line if we don't see the task as important enough.)

2. How long would you wait in the following settings before complaining or leaving:

a.) at a fast food restaurant?

b.) at the doctor's office?

c.) at the airport when picking up a friend?

(Chances are we'd turn and walk out of a fast food restaurant if the line looked like it would take more than about ten minutes. Yet we often expect to wait 45 minutes or more at the doctor. And at the airport we'd almost certainly wait as long as it took for the plane to arrive. Even if we got a message that our friend had to come on a later flight, we wouldn't just shrug our shoulders and say, "Forget about him. I've got other things to worry about. Let him find his own ride." We would wait as long as it took.)

When Jesus left this world at the end of His life on earth, He promised that He would come again for us, at which point we would begin eternity with Him. Our responsibility is to watch and wait for Him, always prepared for the moment this event—called the rapture—will occur. This waiting can be hard; skeptics will scoff at us for believing such a thing. The concerns and pleasures of life will tempt us to focus on other, more visible issues. Yet the fact remains that Jesus is coming for His people at some unknown future moment. We must maintain our hope for His return, even as we live faithful to His plans for us here. Then we'll be ready to take part in this incredible event whenever it occurs.



SECOND COMING DISCUSSION

1. What will happen when Jesus returns? How do you think the world will respond to this event? (Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 21)

(This question gives opportunity to discuss the specific events surrounding the rapture: Jesus will return in an instant, those believers who have already died will rise to meet Him in new, glorified bodies fit for eternity, as will those of us who are living in Christ. The world's response is, of course, speculation. Undoubtedly, though, many will find an explanation other than that found in Scripture. Sadly, some unbelievers may be happy that Christians are gone. For a lot of those who know the teachings of Scripture, however, it will be a time of fear and regret.)

2. What are some ways in which we will be transformed when Jesus returns? Which of these "transformations" do you look forward to the most, and why? (1 Corinthians 15:51-57, Philippians 3:21, Revelation 7:16)

(Our new, glorified bodies will be fit for eternity. We will enter a state of rest in the presence of God. All the sickness, pain, corruption, death, and other restrictions of the physical world will no longer apply. We will from that moment on exist in a perpetual state of perfection and joy.)

3. How does the knowledge of Christ's return, and the reunion we will experience with loved ones as a result, affect the way we respond to the death of those close to us? How might it change how we look at our own death? (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, Revelation 21:4)

(Grief will always be a natural response to the loss of someone we love. Yet this grief is accompanied by the peaceful hope of knowing that we will be reunited with loved ones at Christ's coming. Such a promise can also soothe any anxieties we have at the thought of our own death.)

4. What do you think it means to be "watching" for Christ's return? What all is involved in watching? (Titus 2:12, 13; 2 Peter 3:10, 11; Mark 13:32, 33)

(Watching is active. We aren't supposed to take a passive attitude, living for today before everything changes in the world to come. God wants us to have our hearts set on where we are going, looking forward to Christ's return. It is accompanied by a keen sense of

purpose in our lives, knowing that each day is given to us so that we might accomplish eternal goals.)

5. How should our lives be impacted by the knowledge that Jesus could return at any moment?

(Scripture offers several important instructions. First, we must stand firm [James 5:8], rejecting false teachings about Jesus, salvation, and the end times. This may alienate us from others, who will call us intolerant, narrow-minded, and superstitious for believing that Jesus is the only way to know God and experience salvation. Second, we need to develop a vision for leading others to experience a transformed life through Christ. This happens when we embrace the Great Commission of Christ to reach out to all the world with the gospel—among the last words He spoke before ascending into heaven following His resurrection [Mark 16:15].

6. Why do you think the exact day and time of Christ's return is hidden from us? What would change if we knew when Jesus will return?

(This is a question we cannot answer with certainty. It is easy to imagine, however, that a sense of complacency could grip believers who knew the event was far off, perhaps not even during their lifetimes. The mystery helps us stay focused on preparing ourselves for eternity while encouraging others to do the same.)

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Revelation 7:16

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