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Chapter 1 DVD Session 1

The King Returns for Us

A Summary from the Book

FOR MANY OF US, the return of Jesus often seems theoretical, far off, and quite irrelevant to our daily lives. We think that prophecy is something that can only be understood by mature Christians, and that new believers need other kinds of doctrine.

But Paul the apostle strongly disagreed with that notion. Instead, he taught that *prophecy is intended for every believer because the return of Jesus is to be our focus and hope*. When Paul spoke to new believers, he taught them about the return of Jesus. For this church planter, prophecy was the heartbeat of his life and ministry.

In 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18, Paul taught them (and us) that there would be an entire generation of Christians alive at the return of Jesus. He described this event in 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." When he wrote that we shall not all sleep, he was referring to death: not all Christians will die, they will be instantly translated

into heaven when the rapture happens.

The Latin word for "caught up" is *rapturo*, from which we get the word "rapture." The day is coming when living Christians, like iron filings attracted to a magnet, will be "caught up" to be with the Lord and each other forever. The return of Jesus will draw only those who know Him into the clouds to meet Him in the air.

Paul also wrote that when Jesus comes in the rapture, He will bring with Him "the dead in Christ"—the souls of all those who have died and are presently in heaven will return with Him. The apostle taught this because there were believers who were worried about whether their dead loved ones would be disadvantaged, or miss out, at the return of Christ.

But in fact, the dead have a slight advantage over the living. They will be the first to be raised, then the living will be transformed, and *together* we will all go to meet King Jesus. "After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together [raptured] with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever" (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

The Lord is going to return from heaven, the believers will be snatched away, and the dead in Christ will rise. The implications for us are momentous. As we progress in our study, we will learn what happens to those who are left behind, and that the difference between the "two eternities" is beyond human imagination.

ENGAGINGTHETOPIC

Complete the statements on the next page after reading the book and the above summary. Then, during your class or small-group meeting, watch the DVD, session 1.

Chapter 1: The King Returns for Us

- 1. Prophecy is intended for every believer because the return of Jesus is to be our _____ and _____.
- 2. The Latin word for "caught up" is *rapturo*, from which we get the English word _____.
- When Christ returns for His church, the souls of the dead in Christ will be joined to their newly _____ bodies.
- 4. For Christians, deaths on Earth are never _____.
- 5. Paul taught that there would be an entire _____ of Christians who would be _____ at the return of Jesus.
- 6. The anticipation of Christ's return should motivate the believer to ______ living.
- The return of Jesus also should motivate us to be busy ______ the Lord.

THE KING IS COMING STUDY GUIDE

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Why should Christ's return be important to us? What makes it relevant to our existence in today's world? How prepared are you for Christ's return?

 Read 1 Corinthians 15:51–52 and 1 Thessalonians
4:13–18. What is Scripture teaching us here with regard to the rapture? Why did Paul feel a need to provide these words of encouragement to his readers? Chapter 1: The King Returns for Us

3. Paul teaches that not only will those believers alive at the return of Jesus be "caught up," but also that the dead in Christ will be raised as well. Discuss the sequence of events as revealed in the passages from question 2 above. How quickly will all of this happen?

4. Read Dr. Lutzer's explanation of the expression "dead in Christ." Who are included in this group, and who are not? When will those not included be raised?

THE KING IS COMING STUDY GUIDE

5. Discuss the expression "the last trumpet" mentioned in 1 Corinthians 15:52. What is the significance of this trumpet call, also mentioned in 1 Thessalonians 4:16?

6. The apostle Paul teaches that believers will be caught up together with Christ "in the clouds" (1 Thessalonians 4:17). Based on Dr. Lutzer's discussion in this chapter, to what might these "clouds" refer?

Chapter 1: The King Returns for Us

 Dr. Lutzer explains that there are two comings of Jesus: the rapture and the glorious return. Read Zechariah 14:1–4; Matthew 24:15–35; 2 Thessalonians 1:5–10, Revelation 19:11–21, and compare those passages with Paul's discussion of the rapture as described in 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18). How do we understand these as being two different events?

8. In the book, under the section "What This Means for Us" (pages 32–34), Dr. Lutzer suggests implications about Jesus' return for His church. Discuss those implications. As believers, what should be our posture as we await Christ's return for His church?

THE KING IS COMING STUDY GUIDE

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Jesus will return as He promised: "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am" (John 14:3). This is a future promise from our Savior and King that we may lay hold of today. To leave our earthly realm and enter the eternal realm will be an experience beyond our greatest expectations. What a time of reunion that will be!

How much thought do you give to Jesus' return? When Jesus comes for His church, we will meet Him in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:17). For the first time, those of us living on Earth will see Jesus in all His glory. Paul said that a special reward was awaiting him and all those who long for the Lord's appearing (2 Timothy 4:8). As a believer, how prepared are you to meet your Savior?

"All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure" (1 John 3:3). John presents the return of Christ to change us, to help us reorder our priorities. It is a motivation to holiness, a motivation for us to be busy serving the Lord, doing those things that please Him. Our anticipation of this event should motivate us to holy living. "The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever" (1 John 2:17).

Engaging the Topic answers

1. Focus, hope 2. Rapture 3. Resurrected 4. Permanent 5. Generation, alive 6. Holy 7. Serving