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Shortly after Jesus ascended into heaven, two angels appeared to the apostles saying, “...this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11). Knowing that Jesus Christ is coming back is vital to the born-again believer’s walk. It gives us patience, endurance, and comfort. This is the believer’s Hope, and Biblically “hope” refers to that which is future.

There are two parts to the return of Christ. First, Christ returns *for* his Church—the saints, the born-again believers in the Body of Christ—at the gathering together. He will simply gather the dead and the living of the Church of the Body. Then, Christ returns *with* his saints, those whom he has gathered together, to take part in the events recorded in the Book of Revelation when there will be the resurrections of the just and the unjust. Let’s explore the order of events concerning Christ’s return *for* his saints—the born-again believers—at the gathering together.

According to I Corinthians 15:20, Christ is “...the firstfruits of them that slept,” referring to those who have died. He was the first person ever to be raised from the dead never to die again. Until Christ returns, everyone else is subject to die and corrupt in the grave. But those who have died in Christ, who have no consciousness, will be raised when Christ returns.

I Thessalonians 4:14:

For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep [are dead] in Jesus will God bring with him.

Knowing that God raised Jesus from the dead is key for our believing that God will raise us up when Christ returns.

I Corinthians 6:14:

And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power.

I Corinthians 15:23:

But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.

Jesus Christ got up first. After that, there's an order as to when the dead will be raised, and it will not start until Christ comes back. It does not happen the day you die. It happens according to God's timetable. The dead are dead until Jesus Christ comes back. We don't know when he is coming back; we just know that he is coming back.

Not only will the dead be raised when Christ returns, but there will be living believers present and they shall be changed.

I Corinthians 15:52,53:

In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

The Greek word translated "moment" is *atomos*, from which we get the English word atom, and it denotes the smallest possible portion of time; it happens very quickly. "Twinkling," when spoken of the eye, means a wink. A wink happens quickly also; the eyelid goes down and the eyelid goes up. Imagine the eyelid going down and the dead are raised and the eyelid going back up and the living are changed. This happens in a moment.

The bodies of the dead, which are corruptible, will be raised incorruptible with new bodies that will never die and decay. And at this time, those believers who are alive shall be changed—they will put on immortality.

I Thessalonians 4:16,17:

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:

Then we which 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.

Jesus was the first person ever to be raised from the dead to die no more. When Jesus Christ returns at the gathering together, the dead in Christ will be raised incorruptible and those born-again believers still alive shall be changed.

As born-again believers, we have this future hope of Christ's return *for* his saints—the gathering together. Knowing this is a vital motivation to our walk as believers. It gives us patience, endurance, and comfort. We look forward to that day!

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