

Date : 11 December 2022
Theme : The return of Christ Jesus
Topic : The Joy of the Rapture
Passage : Matthew 25:14 - 23
Key verse : *...enter into the JOY of your Lord... Matthew 25:21, 23*

Introduction

In the past weeks we have addressed questions such as the time line of Jesus' Second Coming and how to prepare ourselves, like the 5 Wise Virgins who have kept their lights burning. The Rapture simply means the act of being snatched up – just like an eagle swooping and snatching something on the ground.

Today we will conclude this series by looking at the great benefits for those who will be raptured. What kind of joy will the redeemed enter into? Scriptures give different capacities of joy at different levels – exceedingly great joy, unspeakable, full joy etc.

...before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy... Jude 1:24

...though you see Him not, yet believing...you rejoice with joy unspeakable... 1 Peter 1:8

...in Your presence there is fullness of joy... Psalm 16:11

1. Why does Jesus' coming bring joy to those who will be Raptured?

- a) They have crossed the shoreline from earth to heaven.
- b) Attained the resurrection body which will never die.
- c) Entered into Jesus' rewards, the unimaginable good things God has prepared for those who love Him.

- a) Crossed the shoreline from earth to heaven.

This crossing to heaven simply means that the long journey on earth has ended. Think of the journey by the children of Israel from Egypt to the Promised Land. It was a long and difficult journey but when they arrived, they entered the land of milk and honey. For us, we will cross the shoreline together with fellow travellers. Until the crossing we are called the 'elect'.

To understand why escape from hell will bring joy, we need to know 3 things about eternity.

- i) The greatest difference in eternity is heaven and hell. Arriving in heaven exempts one from hell. Jesus said deliverance from hell should produce great joy for those who have escaped this place of torment. Surely gratitude must fill our hearts, and gratitude gives rise to joy.
 - Some people say hell is not real and they do not believe it.
 - Our Lord Jesus spoke of hell more than heaven and described it vividly. He did not just make reference to it but spoke of it in great detail, like...
 - ...people gnash their teeth in anguish and regret... Matthew 13:42*
 - ...a place of outer darkness... Matthew 25:30*
 - ...unquenchable fire... Mark 9:44*
 - ...the worm does not die... Mark 9:48*
 - ...no return to earth to warn loved ones... Luke 16:16,17*
 - ...eternal torment... Luke 16:23*

Jesus knew, believed and warned about the absolute reality of hell.

This is one truth the Lord Jesus spoke about and warned as of paramount importance.

- ii) People in hell will ask for little but get nothing. Why do you think it is so?
Like, the Rich man Jesus told in *Luke 16:22*. He asked for a drop of water but got nothing. God called another rich man a *fool* because he had great success in his earthly harvest but gave no thought to his eternal welfare.
- iii) Who will be there?
The cowardly (timid), the unbelieving (faithless), adulterers, idolators, etc *Revelation 21:8*.
Ultimately, it is what we have done with Jesus' commands while on earth that will determine our eternal destiny.
- b) Attained the resurrection body.
The resurrection body you will receive at the Rapture is matchless. There is nothing like it before. You will have the best version of yourself. Physically, you will be a matured young man or woman with a perfect physical body, a mind renewed and attitudes transformed with a brand new capacity to enjoy yourself. Only the redeemed will inherit this blessing.
- c) Entered into your rewards.
The greatest reward is the joy of Jesus Himself.
The good things God has prepared are beyond human imagination and there is no vocabulary to describe them. *1 Corinthians 2:9*
These rewards last for eternity so will the joy.
Jesus said *...Enter into the joy of the Lord... Matthew 25:21, 23.*

2. What key elements are needed to enter into the joy of our Lord? (How do we validate ourselves?)

- a) The first element is to be *...well...* (before we can receive Jesus' *...well done...*).
To validate your wellness, check against *Deuteronomy 5:29...Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear Me and keep all My commands always, so that it might go well with them and their children forever!* To be *well*, the Lord desires that we fear Him, keep all His commandments always. When we are *well*, it affects our children's wellness too. It is wholeness, free from curse and sickness.
- b) Second, we need to validate our goodness. Goodness has to do with the integrity of heart. Man looks at the outward appearance, God looks first at our heart, not our performance.
 - If we look at Abraham's outward performance in the Genesis account, he failed miserably. Even Abraham struggled twice with selfish cowardice to protect himself and his wife (before Pharaoh and King Abimelech *Genesis 12:12; 20:2*), yet tried to remain faithful to God in the midst of a broken world, much like you and I today. Although the purpose of God's covenant is to bless the whole world through Abraham's family, we see the task is beyond Abraham's own abilities.
 - Time and time again, he fell into self-reliance, lies and causing others to err – indeed every other malady to which fallen people are apt.
 - Yet God honoured Abraham's submissive relationship to Him, as Creator, when God first called him to leave Ur, his home town, to an unknown destination. God asked Abram (later Abraham) to respond in obedience to something that seemed to have no reason or logic behind it. At a time when there was no temple or law, Abram's relationship with God flowed out of a response of love rather than obligation. The test to offer his son Isaac to God showed that Abram chose to trust God and follow His instructions without knowing what the result might be.

- Abraham is known as the father of faith. Despite Abraham's failings, God saw his faith for without faith no one can please God. Faith is important for our Christian walk, so we look to Abraham as our model.

By God's grace, he retained a core of faithfulness to the covenant and God still worked through him, beset with faults no doubt, to bring unimaginable blessings to the world.

c) Third, we validate our faithfulness in service.

Faithfulness is covenant keeping.

Unfaithfulness is covenant breaking.

As servants, our faithfulness is validated by our intention to serve our Master absolutely.

i) Serving the Lord Jesus in covenant relationship.

A faithful servant does not short change His Master in terms of time and resources.

Instead, he seeks to multiply whatever resources have been assigned to him. The 5 Talent man traded and got 5 more. But the one Talent man, by laziness and excuses, squandered the precious resource entrusted to him. God could not entrust him with wealth for he chose to be unproductive and unprofitable.

ii) Serving with loyalty to Jesus over every human relationship or earthly pursuits.

It is about our priority and getting rid of competing loyalties. Only one love matters all the days of our lives, not just for a few hours. A sincere heart will never deny Jesus. He comes first in everything. God is honoured above all.

iii) Serving as sons, not just as servants.

The Lord wants us to know that we are more than servants. We are sons. Sons have a greater standing in the Father's Kingdom. Sons strive at all costs to care for his father's resources.

The Lord tells the story of the Prodigal Son *Luke 15* – 2 brothers both with a confused sense of identity. It is tragic that the Prodigal left as a son but came back hoping only to be a servant. While the elder son never felt himself a son all the time in his father's house. Result: Both sons had confused vocational status.

How do we progress in serving Jesus as sons, servants, friends.

- Sons are disciplined

We begin our relationship with Jesus as sons by the Spirit of adoption.

*...you are all **sons** of God through faith in Christ Jesus... Galatians 3:26*

...you received the Spirit of sonship (adoption). And by Him (the Spirit) we cry Abba Father. The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children

...then heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in His sufferings...

Romans 8:14-17.

Indeed, our deepest identity is not that of a servant, but as a beloved son / daughter of Abba, Father. *...how great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called sons of God... 1 John 3:1.*

- Servants are disciplined

We serve Him in covenant relationship with others in the body, those with whom we are in covenant partnership.

...you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household... you are being built together... Ephesians 2:19, 22

- Servants are learners (Greek *mathetes* = disciple). Servants are expected to obey, trusting in the Father even when their knowledge and understanding are incomplete. They do not yet know their Master's business but serve as apprentices and sometimes by trial and error. At times, they hit the bull's eye and enjoy the fulfilment as a servant.
- There is a progression of serving Jesus from servants to friends.

*...I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know His Master's business. Instead I have called you **friends**... John 15:14, 15*

Servants	Friends
◦ Characterised by duty	◦ Characterised by love
◦ Do what is required	◦ Do whatever it takes

- Friends are devoted

We progress to friends of Jesus when we obey Jesus and serve out of love (not duty), giving of ourselves to one another in an obedience of love.

...My (Jesus') command is this: love each other as I have loved you John 15:12

...You are My friends if you do what I command. John 15:14

- Friends of Jesus are true sons
- Empowered by the Spirit
...those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God... Romans 8:14
- About the Father's business *...I must be about My Father's business... Luke 2:49*
- Serve His household
...how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household... 1 Timothy 3:15

What a privilege the Father has bestowed upon us!

Is it too hard a matter to be a faithful son?

Application

1. First of all, when the roll is called at the Rapture, do you wish to be there?

If so, to what extent will you be willing to pay the cost to be there?

- guard wellness – fear God... keep all His commands
- live out goodness – integrity of heart
- be faithful in service, like 5 and 2-Talent men
- progress as sons, servants, friends of Jesus.

2. Considering the benefits you will receive at the Rapture, what difference will it make for you to be raptured or not?