

## **What Will Happen When Jesus Returns (& What Do We Do Until Then)?**

Romans 8:18-30

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*For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God.*

*For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.*

*Likewise, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. - Romans 8:18-19, 24-26, ESV*

Do you remember being really excited as a child?

I remember the first time my dad took me to the movies by myself. I believe we were going to see Superman 2. I was so excited that I couldn't stop bouncing around on the front seat of the car until I hit my head on the windshield.

These days, at the age of 46, it takes more than the promise of a new Superman movie to get me really excited. I was pretty thrilled in 2012 when the Orioles finally had a winning season and made the playoffs for the first time since 1997. But Orioles magic is nothing compared to the excitement I feel when I think about the coming return of the Lord Jesus!

Everything I have ever hoped for or longed for finds its focal point of expectation when I think about the return of Jesus. Romans 8 tells me that this is not just my own experience but the experience of all creation. The whole of creation groans in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed, which will happen when Jesus returns.

Too often, the expectation of Christians regarding eternal life is so thin and, frankly, a little boring. Too many believers never get beyond, "I know I'll be in a better place when I die." I have a friend who always heard this growing up and who wondered what "a better place" meant. Were they on a permanent vacation in the Caribbean?

The Bible gives us a more sure and exciting hope. When this life ends, we are immediately ushered into the presence of the Lord, free from pain and suffering and enjoying the glory of His presence forever. But ours is not just a personal, spiritual hope. God has a future for us in a resurrected body in the new heavens and earth, and this future includes redemption for all of God's creation.

Sam-wise Gamgee asks Gandalf, "Is everything sad going to come untrue?" The Bible's answer, [which Tolkien knew and believed](#), is a resounding "Yes!" The whole world will be remade, and all fallen, broken, sin-scarred ugly sadness will come untrue. As Jesus says, "*Behold! I am making all things new!*" (Rev. 21:5)

What does this mean? Practically-speaking, I think there's nothing good which you will miss when this life is over which will not, in the end, be restored to you, without any shadow of sin or sadness. Love, friendship, animals, work, play, exploration, worship, devotion, food and fun - all of these and more will be ours forever, given by the One who has been the Giver of every good and perfect gift!

Also, practically-speaking, we need to remember that we are not there yet! In this world, we suffer and groan in hope. *"Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience."*

How can we wait with patience? *"The Spirit helps us in our weakness."*

We need to make sure we don't place the expectations of eternity (everlasting fulfillment and joy) on the things of time. We need to make sure we are longing for what Jesus will bring when He comes again! Is that hard? Yes. Sometimes, we won't even know how to pray, but the Spirit helps us there, too.

How can we have assurance that we will make it to eternal joy? The Spirit's work within us is evidence that God has called us to Himself and given us a true love for Himself. This, in turn, is sure evidence that we were foreknown and predestined by God before the world began, and that our future in glory is secure in the plans and purposes of God.

*Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!*