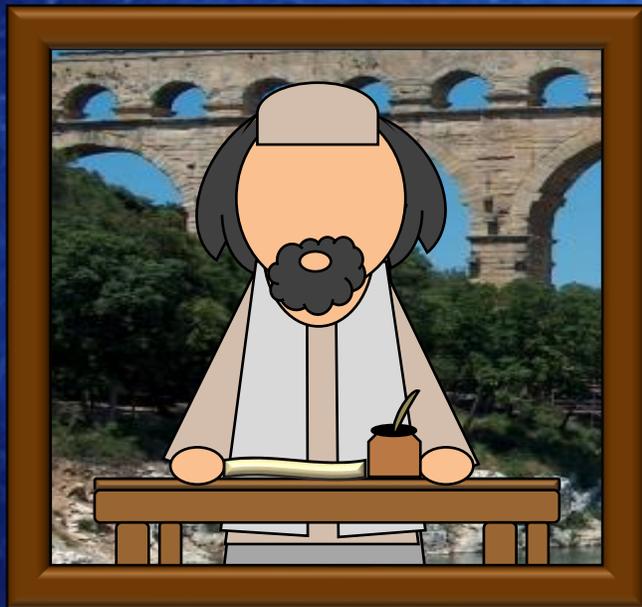
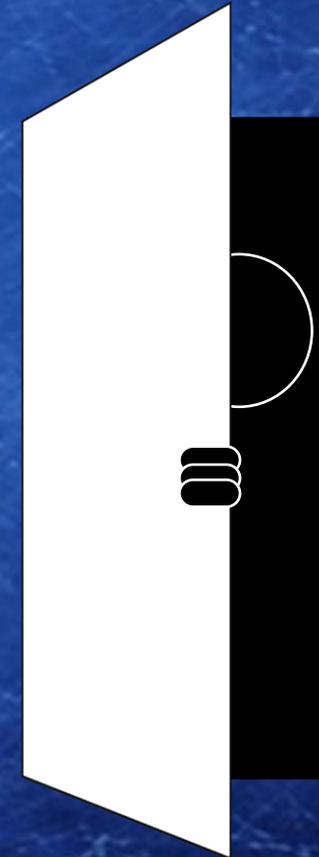


# A Thief in the Night

## 1 Thessalonians 3-5



*“And again, verily I say unto you, the coming of the Lord draweth nigh, and it overtaketh the world as a thief in the night—therefore, gird up your loins, that you may be the children of light, and that day shall not overtake you as a thief.”*  
D&C 106:4-5



# True or False

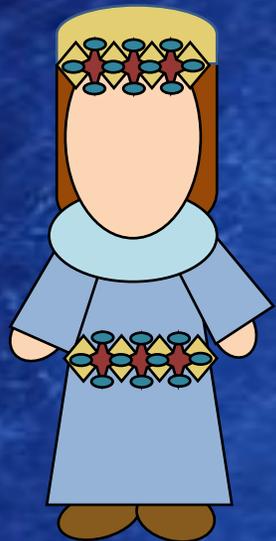
1. The faithful Saints who die before the Second Coming will not be resurrected until the end of the Millennium.

2. The faithful Saints who are alive at the Second Coming will be caught up to meet Christ when He comes.

3. The Second Coming will surprise everyone as a thief in the night.

Don't Answer Yet!

# Forced to Leave



While preaching the gospel for a short time in Thessalonica, Paul, Silas, and Timothy were forced out of the city by Jewish leaders.

Acts 17:5-15

Timothy reported to Paul that the Saints had remained faithful despite experiencing persecution.

Timothy also likely reported that the Saints had many questions about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

Paul wrote his epistle to the Thessalonian Saints to answer their questions.



# To Strengthen the Saints

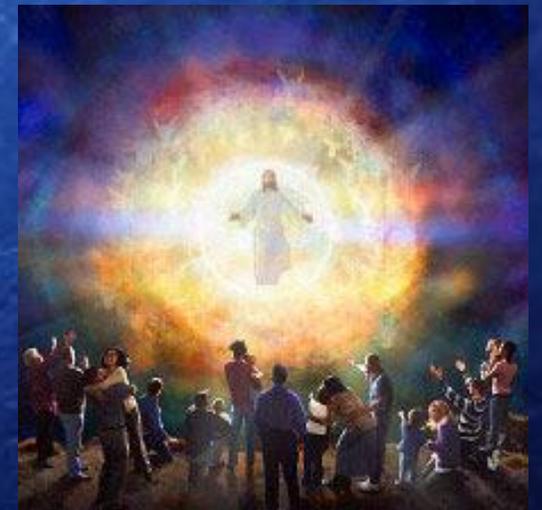
“perfect that which is lacking in your faith”

Paul reminded them that discipleship required consistent growth and improvement. He encouraged them to “increase and abound in love one toward another,” to “abound more and more” in their efforts to please God, and to “increase more and more” in love. (1)



“discipleship is to be lived *in crescendo*” (2)

In order for them to grow and increase they needed to better understand how to prepare for the Second Coming of Christ.

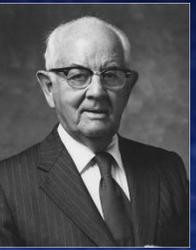


1 Thessalonians 4:2-

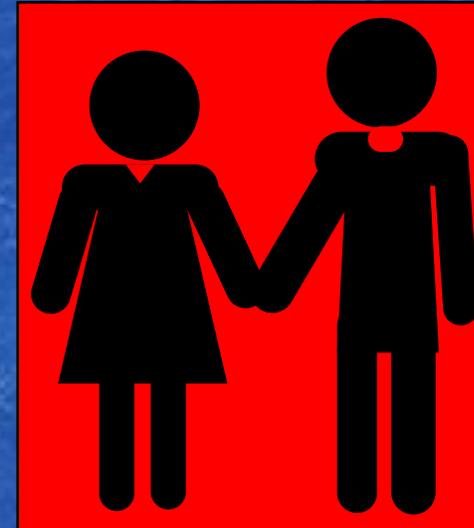
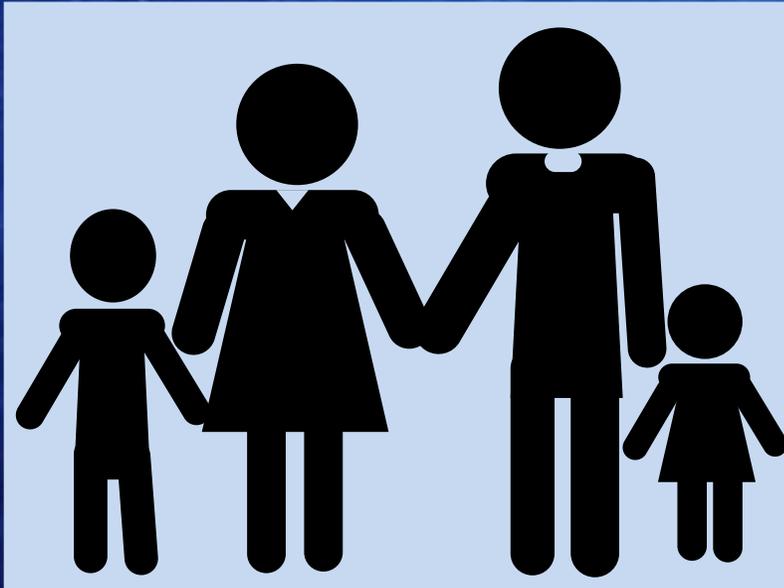
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# To Prepare

## Abstain from Fornication



"The world may countenance premarital sex experiences, but the Lord and his church condemn in no uncertain terms any and every sex relationship outside of marriage.

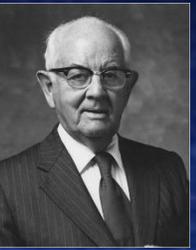


"Wholesome family life with children was set up as the perfect way, thousands of years ago. If all the world should devise some other sort of relationship, it would be wrong even if the voting were 3 1/2 billion to one." (3)

# To Prepare

1 Thessalonians 4:6-8

God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness



*He that hath clean hands, and  
a pure heart; who hath not lifted  
up his soul unto vanity,  
nor sworn deceitfully.*

*Psalms 24:4*

"In our journey toward eternal life, purity must be our constant aim. To walk and talk with God, to serve with God, to follow his example and become as a god, we must attain perfection.

In his presence there can be no guile, no wickedness, no transgression. In numerous scriptures he has made it clear that all worldliness, evil and weakness must be dropped before we can ascend unto 'the hill of the Lord.'

The Psalmist asked: 'Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place?'

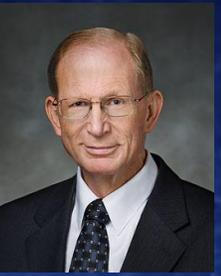
(3)

1 Thessalonians 4:9-

12

# To Prepare

Increase In Love for One Another and Study to  
be Quiet



“Personal prayer, study, and pondering are vital to the building up of the kingdom within our own souls.

It is in quiet moments of contemplation and communion with the Almighty that we come to know and love Him as our Father”  
(4)

# Resurrection

The Thessalonian Saints misunderstood certain aspects of the Second Coming. They worried that Church members in Thessalonica who had died would not be able to experience the blessings of the Second Coming.



1. The faithful Saints who die before the Second Coming will not be resurrected until the end of the Millennium.

False

# Asleep

The faithful Saints who are resurrected at the Second Coming will be caught up to meet Jesus Christ and will descend with Him in glory.

***And they who have slept in their graves shall come forth, for their graves shall be opened; and they also shall be caught up to meet him in the midst of the pillar of heaven—***



***They are Christ's, the first fruits, they who shall descend with him first, and they who are on the earth and in their graves, who are first caught up to meet him; and all this by the voice of the sounding of the trump of the angel of God.***

***D&C 88:97-98***



# Caught Up

The Joseph Smith Translation replaces *we* in these verses with *they*, reflecting that the Second Coming would not occur in Paul's day.

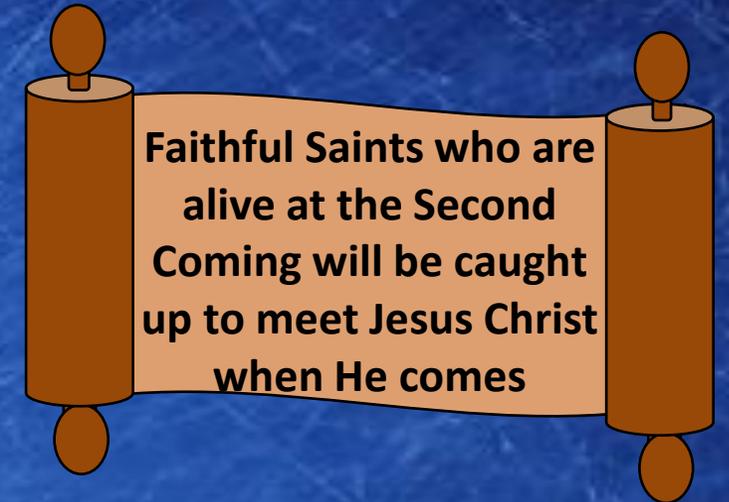
"Then *they who* are alive, shall be caught up together *into* the clouds *with them who remain*, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we be ever with the Lord" *JST 1 Thessalonians 4:17 footnote a*



rapture

Many Christians use the word *rapture* (from a Latin term meaning "caught up") when referring to the time when the righteous will be caught up to meet the Savior at His coming. (1)

2. The faithful Saints who are alive at the Second Coming will be caught up to meet Christ when He comes.



Faithful Saints who are alive at the Second Coming will be caught up to meet Jesus Christ when He comes

# Doctrine and Covenants

*And then they shall look for me, and, behold, I will come; and they shall see me in the clouds of heaven, clothed with power and great glory; with all the holy angels; and he that watches not for me shall be cut off. D&C 45:44*

*And the saints that are upon the earth, who are alive, shall be quickened and be caught up to meet him. D&C 88:96*



*And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of my Spirit, which I will pour out upon you, and my word which I reveal unto you, and be agreed as touching all things whatsoever ye ask of me, and be faithful until I come, and ye shall be caught up, that where I am ye shall be also. Amen.  
D&C 27:18*

*Last of all, these all are they who will not be gathered with the saints, to be caught up unto the church of the Firstborn, and received into the cloud. D&C 76:104*



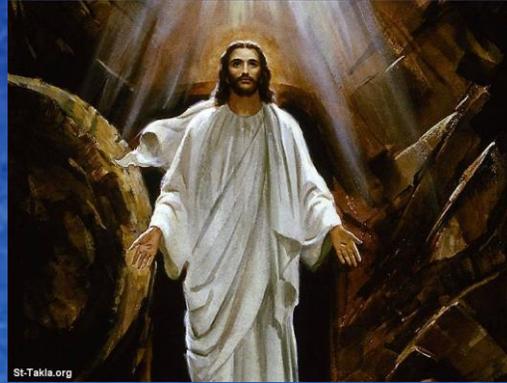
# The Second Coming---Read D&C 45:47-59



v.48



v. 50



v. 51-54



V. 58



v.55



V. 56



V. 59

# A Thief in the Night

**“unexpectedly and without warning”**

Paul taught that if the followers of Jesus Christ “are not in darkness” they will not be caught off guard by the Lord’s return.

Children of the Night = *These are the people of the world who dwell in darkness. Therefore they will not “see” the signs which herald the approach of this great event. The “day of the Lord” shall be a dreadful day for them.*

Children of the Day = *These are those who dwell in light and truth. They “see” the warning signs and therefore are spiritually prepared for the coming of Jesus. For them, the “day of the Lord” shall be a great day.*

I, the Lord God, have spoken it; but the hour and the day no man knoweth, neither the angels in heaven, nor shall they know until he comes.

D&C 49:7



# We Do Not Know...



"I am called as one of the Apostles to be a special witness of Christ in these exciting, trying times, and I do not know when He is going to come again. As far as I know, none of my brethren in the Council of the Twelve or even in the First Presidency knows. And I would humbly suggest to you, my young brothers and sisters, that if we do not know, then *nobody* knows, no matter how compelling their arguments or how reasonable their calculations. . . .

I believe when the Lord says 'no man' knows, it really means that no man knows. You should be extremely wary of anyone who claims to be an exception to divine decree." (5)

"I do not know when he is going to come. No man knows. Even the angels of heaven are in the dark in regard to that great truth.

But this I know, that *the signs that have been pointed out are here*. The earth is full of calamity, of trouble. The hearts of men are failing them.

We see the signs as we see the fig tree putting forth her leaves; and knowing this time is near, it behooves me and it behooves you, and all men upon the face of the earth, to *pay heed to the words of Christ, to his apostles and watch*, for we know not the day nor the hour. But I tell you this, it shall come as a thief in the night, when *many of us will not be ready for it.*" (6)

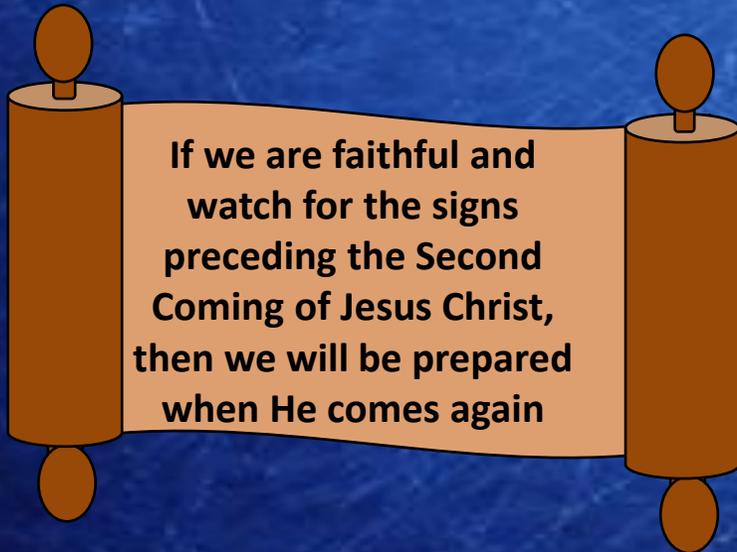
# A Woman With Child

“She does not know the hour or the minute of the child’s arrival, but she does know the approximate time.” (6)



Based on this analogy, we might also consider how trials preceding the Second Coming are similar to labor pains.

But just as the arrival of a baby is wonderful, so will the Second Coming be wonderful to the righteous.



3. The Second Coming will surprise everyone as a thief in the night.

False



# Quench Not The Spirit

To not extinguish or stifle the influence of the Holy Ghost in one's own life

"If something we think, see, hear, or do distances us from the Holy Ghost, then we should stop thinking, seeing, hearing, or doing that thing.

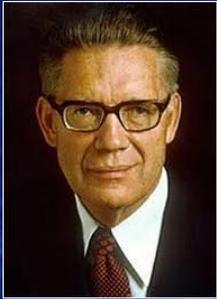
If that which is intended to entertain, for example, alienates us from the Holy Spirit, then certainly that type of entertainment is not for us.

Because the Spirit cannot abide that which is vulgar, crude, or immodest, then clearly such things are not for us. Because we estrange the Spirit of the Lord when we engage in activities we know we should shun, then such things definitely are not for us...



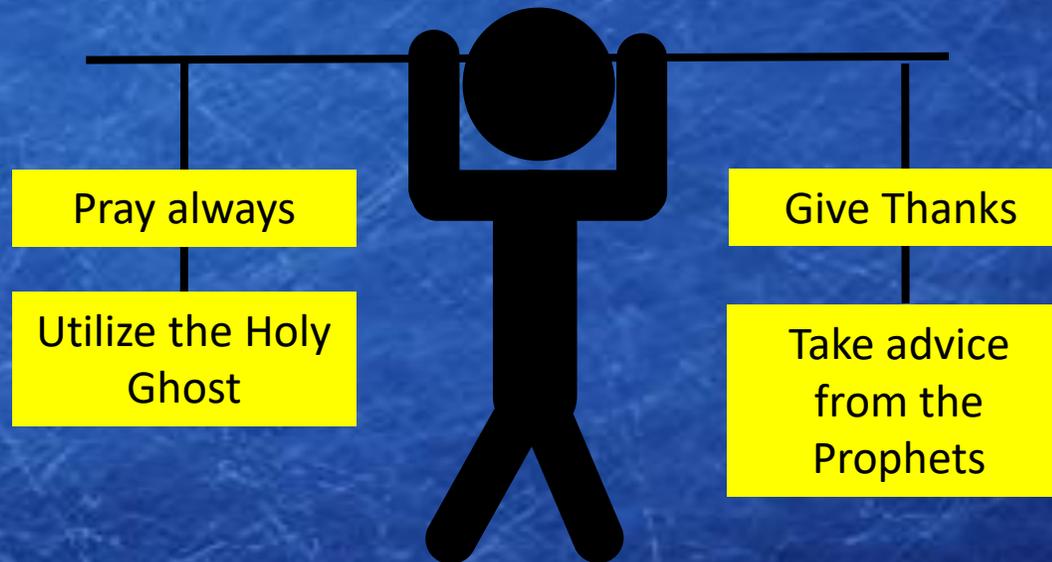
"... As we become ever more immersed in the Spirit of the Lord, we should strive to recognize impressions when they come and the influences or events that cause us to withdraw ourselves from the Holy Ghost."

# Hold Fast To That Which is Good



Paul Speaking to the Thessalonians:

‘Now that you are members of the Church, that you have come in at the gate of repentance and baptism, press forward to the end and do the things that will enable you to be saved in the everlasting kingdom of the Father’” (6)



# Abstain From the Appearance of Evil

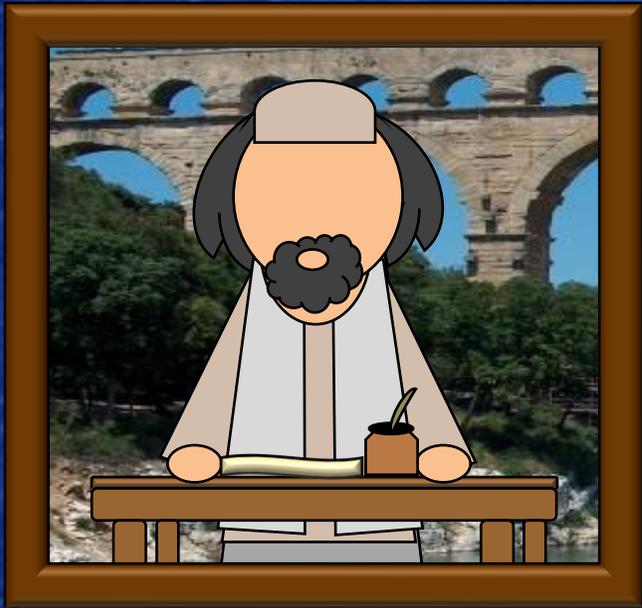


“I strongly urge you that if there is any question in your minds or hearts about whether your personal conduct is right or wrong, don’t do it.

It is the responsibility of the prophets of God to teach the word of God, not to spell out every jot and tittle of human conduct.

If we are conscientiously trying to avoid not only evil but the very appearance of evil, we will act for ourselves and not be acted upon.” (10)





*Paul's promise is that if we do this, then God will sanctify us. Such sanctification, or cleansing, then makes it possible for our "whole spirit and soul and body [to] be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

Sources:

Suggested Song: When He Comes Again Primary Children's Songbook

Video:

**Preparation for the Second Coming (2:14)**



1. New Testament Institute Student Manual Chapter 46
2. Elder Neal A. Maxwell ("Premortality, a Glorious Reality," *Ensign*, Nov. 1985, 15).
3. President Spencer W. Kimball (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, edited by Edward L. Kimball [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982], 265.); (*Miracle of Forgiveness*, chap. 2)
4. Elder Bruce D. Porter ("Building the Kingdom," *Ensign*, May 2001, 81).
5. Elder M. Russell Ballard (Leon R. Hartshorn, Dennis A. Wright, and Craig J. Ostler, eds., *The Doctrine and Covenants, a Book of Answers: The 25th Annual Sidney B. Sperry Symposium* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1996], 207-208.)
6. Elder Bruce R. McConkie (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:54). *Doctrines of the Restoration: Sermons and Writings of Bruce R. McConkie*, ed. Mark L. McConkie [1989], 347
7. President Joseph Fielding Smith (*Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. [1954–56], 3:52–53).
8. *Life and Teachings of Jesus Christ and His Disciples* Chapter 33
9. Elder David A. Bednar ("That We May Always Have His Spirit to Be with Us," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2006, 30).
10. President James E. Faust ("The Devil's Throat," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2003, 51). Paul offered similar counsel in 1 Corinthians 8:9–13.

THE FIRST AND SECOND LETTERS OF PAUL TO THE SAINTS AT  
THESSALONICA, CA. A.D. 52–53  
WRITTEN FROM CORINTH DURING PAUL’S SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY  
(1 THESSALONIANS)

Timothy’s Mission to Thessalonica	3:1–13
Live in Holiness and Charity	4:1–12
The Saints Saved at Second Coming	4:13–18
Saints Know Season of Second Coming	5:1–11
Be Considerate Saints	5:12–28

Life and Teachings of Jesus and His Apostles Chapter 33

**Increase 1 Thessalonians 3:12**  
“As the forces around us increase in intensity, whatever spiritual strength was once sufficient will not be enough. And whatever growth in spiritual strength we once thought was possible, greater growth will be made available to us. Both the need for spiritual strength and the opportunity to acquire it will increase at rates which we underestimate at our peril” President Henry B. Eyring (“Always,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1999, 9).

**Vessel 1 Thessalonians 4:3-4:**  
The word *vessel* in this passage has been interpreted to mean “body.” Men and women are to control their bodies, to respect their bodies as temples of God, and to treat them with honor. They are not to use them as instruments for lustful self-gratification.  
“To be sanctified is to become clean, pure, and spotless; to be freed from the blood and sins of the world; to become a new creature of the Holy Ghost, one whose body has been renewed by the rebirth of the Spirit. Sanctification is a state of saintliness, a state attained only by conformity to the laws and ordinances of the gospel. The plan of salvation is the system and means provided whereby men may sanctify their souls and thereby become worthy of a celestial inheritance.” (McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 675.)

**Being Chaste 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5:**  
“The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has a single, undeviating standard of sexual morality: intimate relations are proper only between a man and a woman in the marriage relationship prescribed in God’s plan. Such relations are not merely a curiosity to be explored, an appetite to be satisfied, or a type of recreation or entertainment to be pursued selfishly. They are not a conquest to be achieved or simply an act to be performed. Rather, they are in mortality one of the ultimate expressions of our divine nature and potential and a way of strengthening emotional and spiritual bonds between husband and wife. We are agents blessed with moral agency and are defined by our divine heritage as children of God—and not by sexual behaviors, contemporary attitudes, or secular philosophies” Elder David A. Bednar (“We Believe in Being Chaste,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2013, 42).

**Holiness 1 Thessalonians 4:5-7:**  
“Holiness ... comes by faith and through obedience to God’s laws and ordinances. God then purifies the heart by faith, and the heart becomes purged from that which is profane and unworthy.” President James E. Faust (“Standing in Holy Places,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2005, 62).

**Caught Up 1 Thessalonians 4: 16-17:**  
The Second Coming of Christ will not be complete until Jesus gathers to himself a celestial gathering. This grand meeting amidst the clouds will involve three different groups of saints. The first group are described as 'all the holy angels' (DC 45:44). They are those who were resurrected at the time of Christ (Matt 27:52-53, 3 Ne. 23:19-13). They are not an assembly of angels which do not belong to this earth, for 'there are no angels who minister to this earth but those who do belong or have belonged to it' (DC 130:5). The second group are those saints who have died since the resurrection of Christ. This group was a concern to the Thessalonian saints (v. 13-14), but Paul promised that they would be caught up as well. The third group are those mortals who are worthy of a celestial glory. The scriptures clearly promise that these three groups will be part of the heavenly throng:  
'...behold, I will come; and they shall see me in the clouds of heaven, clothed with power and great glory; with all the holy angels; and he that watches not for me shall be cut off.  
But before the arm of the Lord shall fall, an angel shall sound his trump, and the saints that have slept shall come forth to meet me in the cloud.  
Wherefore, if ye have slept in peace blessed are you; for as you now behold me and know that I am, even so shall ye come unto me and your souls shall live, and your redemption shall be perfected; and the saints shall come forth from the four quarters of the earth.' (DC 45:44-46)  
  
'And the saints that are upon the earth, who are alive, shall be quickened and be caught up to meet him. And they who have slept in their graves shall come forth, for their graves shall be opened; and they also shall be caught up to meet him in the midst of the pillar of heaven-  
They are Christ's, the first fruits, they who shall descend with him...' (DC 88:96-98)  
gospeldoctrine.com

**“When Christ appears again, will people actually be ‘caught up’ to meet him, actually lifted up from the earth like the people in the city of Enoch?” 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17:**

The answer to this question is a simple yes. Let me illustrate it with a few citations from scripture. In the Doctrine and Covenants, in a context dealing with our Lord’s second advent, notice these words:

“And the saints that are upon the earth, who are alive, shall be quickened and be *caught up* to meet him.” (D&C 88:96. Italics added.)

Notice also these words in Doctrine and Covenants 27:18:

“... and be faithful until I come, and ye shall be *caught up*, that where I am ye shall be also.” [D&C 27:18] (Italics added.)

In another passage of scripture, in some respects even more remarkable for its clarity, the Apostle Paul makes this observation concerning the second coming of the Savior:

“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.” (1 Thes. 4:16–17. Italics added.)

Although it thus appears perfectly clear that there will be people literally “caught up” to meet the Lord at his coming, it does not follow that all people on the rolls of the Church will have this blessed privilege. Even as those who are heirs of telestial glory “will not be gathered with the saints, to be caught up unto the church of the Firstborn, and received into the cloud” (D&C 76:102), so a large proportion of Church members will not be “caught up.” Such is my opinion and for the following reasons. First of all, notice these scriptures:

“And at that day, when I shall come in my glory, shall the parable be fulfilled which I spake concerning the ten virgins.

“For they that are wise and have received the truth, *and have taken the Holy Spirit for their guide, and have not been deceived*—verily I say unto you, they shall not be hewn down and cast into the fire, but shall abide the day.” (D&C 45:56–57. Italics added.)

“... in the day of the coming of the Son of Man.

“And until that hour there will be foolish virgins among the wise; and at that hour cometh an entire separation of the righteous and the wicked.” (D&C 63:53–54.)

As the parable of the Ten Virgins (Matt. 25) makes clear, many members on the rolls of the Church will have no oil (or very little) in their lamps when the bridegroom comes, and they will not be in a spiritual condition suitable to be caught up to meet him.

Finally, it should be noticed that the Lord says that those who are of the Church of the Firstborn (D&C 76:54) are “they whom he shall bring with him, when he shall come in the clouds of heaven to reign on the earth over his people” (D&C 76:63). Isn’t it therefore reasonable to believe that only the most spiritual and righteous of the Saints on earth will be worthy to be caught up into the heavens and return to the earth with the Lord’s Church of the Firstborn? As a matter of fact, relatively few Saints have been sealed up unto eternal life, thus to become members of the Church of the Firstborn. Nevertheless, there are many who are keeping holy covenants made with the Lord, Saints who, if they remain faithful, will eventually become members of it. The Lord may permit a goodly number of these to be caught up to meet him. Our knowledge is incomplete in this respect.

Sidney B. Sperry Professor Emeritus of Old Testament Languages and Literature Brigham Young University

Questions and Answers: May 1973 New Era