

RAPTUREFAQ.NET

Laurie b. Frankel

~Believers Helping Believers Believe~
presented by Matt and Shirley Kessel

About RaptureFAQ.net:

Matthew and Shirley Kessel met twelve years ago while Matt, a sergeant in the Army Special Forces, was on leave on the island of Oah'u. Shirley worked the front desk of the Waikiki Sand Villa Hotel. They have twin boys, Tull and Roland, age six. Together, four years ago, they founded RaptureFAQ.net. The Kessels extend a warm thank you to all who attend their local meetings and write in. New Q&As are posted every Monday.

Q1: May 21, 2011 came and went and, as my step-grandmother used to say, bupkis! What happened?

A (Shirley): Yes, what a great disappointment. But everything in its own time, right? To illustrate, a couple months ago Matt, my personal savior second only to JC, promised the twins we would all go to Legoland and well, wouldn't you know it, life got in the way. Turned out Melinda Samuelson blew out a tire by the SpeedyMart on the 12 past Escondido. She just moved to town and didn't know

anyone so, of course, she texted Matt as we had all exchanged information at the PTA meeting. What's the point of community if we're not there for each other, right? And then I thought, and gosh darn it if I didn't say it out loud, *What about AAA?* I felt terrible the minute the words left my mouth. Matt was so concerned about disappointing the boys he insisted we go without him *and* treat ourselves to a DQ, bless his heart. And good thing because it turned out he was tied up a lot longer than either of us expected and there was no getting a hold of him. I was thinking since when did it take five hours to change a tire? Later, I joked at that rate AAA would be triple out of business. Anyway, a couple weeks ago we all went to see *Speed Racer* together and had a wonderful time so my point is, good things come to those who wait and so it shall be with Rapture. Hang in there and know Jesus loves you.

A (Matt): I have nothing more to add except that Melinda managed to blow out three tires that day (glass truck accident just before she hit the stretch) which is why it took so long. Shirl was a trooper that day. I felt terrible about leaving the cell phone in the car.

Q2: When is the next Rapture?

A (Shirley): That's like asking when will single women learn to call AAA? Oh, I'm just kidding—laughter is the best medicine. The next Rapture is predicted for

October 21, 2011. Are you ready? If not, come join us. Here is a sampling of sessions we offer:

- *Rapping on the Rapture* featuring local Christian rock band, *The Sinners*
- *American Idolatry*—voting for your one and only God
- *God Carries a Man Purse*—helping men get closer to God

Q3: Why is who will Rapture a secret?

A (Shirley): Imagine if Oprah told everyone ahead of time that all audience members were going to receive a car or a trip to Australia? Matthew and I share just about everything with each other like couples do, but there is a sacred space between us that is just his. Of course, that space would exist for me, too, if I wanted it—I don't. But God made men and women just alike enough to come together through this miracle called love and then different enough to make the coming together endlessly...fascinating. Respecting this space, this limit, this secret if you will, of Matthew's, is a challenge—my cross to bear. I gave my word before the pastor and God I would serve my husband and so I shall. I want to succeed...no, I want to excel! as a wife and partner. Sometimes when I feel unusually challenged, when Matt is on assignment or helping others in our community I close my eyes and pray and when that doesn't work as well as I'd like I count backwards from fifty and visualize a thunderous waterfall and

concentrate on turning all of my poorly-focused energy into something fruitful like making snickerdoodles for the school bake sale or thinking about how I can be a better neighbor to Mrs. Nesbit now that her leg is gone (diabetes.) So to your question, it's not always for us to know the answer to a secret but rather to understand ourselves in the face of them.

A (Matt): How we deal with the not knowing can be just as important, if not more so, than actually knowing.

A (Shirley): Don't I know (or not know actually ☺)

Q4: I am a true believer but, pardon me, I am quite frustrated at this point as Rapture has been predicted many times and has not yet occurred: March 21, 1843; March 21, 1844; October 22, 1844; 1914; 1918; 1925; 1942; 1981; 1992; 1995; October 28, 1992; May 21, 2011 and now October 21, 2011. While I am thrilled the next prediction is so close, with all due respect, why can't anyone get the date of Rapture straight?

A (Matt): I have four words for you: old testament, new testament. Add to that BC and AD and, like an undercover recon operation, things get very complicated very quickly.

A (Shirley): I like to think of these various delays as providing additional time to reflect, seek forgiveness from our savior and, as necessary, work out any issues with those we love while there's still time.

Q5: My husband and I attended The Rapture planning meeting and didn't Rapture. Why not?

A (Matt): No one did. Besides, if rapturing were that easy everyone would attend and this last meeting only twenty-seven signed in.

A (Shirley): Thank you for attending and obviously you are not a Mavericks fan. Note to Matt and myself: Do not schedule meetings during the playoffs! I trust you found our session useful and with the next Rapture right around the corner we hope to see you again soon. We meet the second and third Tuesdays of every month. First-time meetings are free and donations are always welcome.

A (Matt): We have larger group meetings that Shirley and I run together and several, more intimate workshop-type "groups" we run separately (we will run these groups with as few as one person). If you are in the Oceanside area please visit our web site RaptureFAQ.net for our scheduled dates and times.

A (Shirley): We look forward to meeting you and your husband. We love welcoming committed married couples devoted to each other and family.

Q6: What do I need to pack for The Rapture? Do I need to bring toiletries such as towel and soap or are basics provided?

A (Shirley): I always like to carry my own basics like wipes and band-aids for the kids, a clean pair of underwear, sunscreen, water, Ambien and anti-biotic ointment, because you never know.

A (Matt): And I would add bungee cords and cash.

A (Shirley): And don't forget your cell phone ☺

Q7: How does God know if you're a believer or you are just saying you're a believer in order to be saved?

A (Matt): Imagine the CIA, the FBI, the Mafia, the Navy Seals, the Republican party and Oprah and all rolled into one times one-hundred thousand. That is the rolodex of God and Jesus—they know.

A (Shirley): Like a woman's intuition (which may get sidetracked but is rarely wrong) God knows your heart. Even when you're hiding the truth from yourself or others He is onto you. But everything in its own time, right? By the way, the waterfall I usually picture in my mind is Havasu Falls in the Grand Canyon. Matt and I and the boys had a wonderful vacation there several years ago. We spread the word of God to some of the locals who allowed us to leave some literature at the check-in center and the donkey water stop.

Q8: My girlfriends and I have an ongoing debate regarding what to wear to Rapture. I think of the occasion as formal as a wedding, confirmation or baptism therefore I'm thinking dressing on the level of black tie. Tanya, my best friend since grade school, thinks it could be an arduous journey and so she's planning on REI-type outdoorsy gear while Grace wants, and I quote, "to look sexy for my maker." Can you help us out here?

A (Shirley): Should you be chosen to Rapture (and I'm not trying to appear exclusive or condescending, it's just that less than 1% of all humans will be chosen so like earning over \$200,000/year or getting into an Ivy League college the chances are slim but not impossible) I recommend business casual—respectful, tidy, comfortable including sensible shoes. While ascension requires no physical effort you will eventually arrive and then there will be a lot of running around in order to get properly situated. No heels please. Even if you wouldn't think of leaving the house without lipstick, mascara and strappy sandals like some new-to-town women around here trust me on this one—sunscreen and flats are all that's needed.

A (Matt): God gave "man" the capacity to self-embellish and some he even embellished himself by making them unusually beautiful like my Shirley when we met, no other way to say it. Therefore, I interpret this to mean that yes,

present yourself in a positive, and I'll even go so far as to say attractive, manner.

Be practical and know self-confidence is not a sin.

A (Shirley): You never think it will happen to you and then Father Time pays a visit and gosh darn it if he doesn't leave. I remember momma saying how she just couldn't keep up with those "young things" and now unfortunately I know what she was talking about.

Q9: How will I know if I've raptured?

A (Matt): How will you not know is the better question! The first sign of Rapture is levitation, literally floating up off the earth. It's unmistakable. If you don't lift off precisely at the specified time, don't kid yourself that some grave error occurred or your watch is slow. If others are rising up and you aren't, best to just enjoy your latte knowing it will be your last and prepare for immediate annihilation or a really bad prolonged existence (see *The Road* by Cormac McCarthy.)

A (Shirley): And while this is a difficult concept to wrap your head around, know: life is suffering and try and exult, as it were, in your annihilation. I remember, I must have been nine or ten, about two weeks after it was clear daddy had finally gone for good, momma just up and quit her crying like a faucet was turned off. When my little sister, Jenna and I got home from school

the house was cleaned up, all of Daddy's things were in a neat pile by the wood chipper, she had a pot roast in the oven and told us it was game night with klondike bars(!) and, whether she was faking it or not, from that moment on that woman praised God for what she did have and let go of what she did not. I try to follow her example when I can and forgive myself when I cannot. And a klondike bar (or two) now and then never hurts.

A (Matt): Everything in moderation.

Q10: Where is the best place to be during the Rapture? I've heard terrible stories of ascending straight to the ceiling of Macy's and then bam!

A (Matt): At the time of Rapture you want a straight, unobstructed path toward the heavens. Be outside away from power lines and as far as possible from tall trees. City dwellers go to rooftops or, as possible, stand in the street.

A (Shirley): I'm planning on being in Barstow Park with Matt and the boys far from the giant weeping willow and power lines.

Q11: How fast is ascension? I tend to get motion sickness. Should I take Dramamine or wear an acupressure bracelet?

A (Matt): Rapture is so named for the all-encompassing, thrilling feeling that psychically accompanies the event. It is not something you will experience

rationally or physically therefore no medication is required. Some people who have used psychotropic drugs in the past claim to have raptured but that is simply the synthesized grain fungus talking.

A (Shirley): Speaking of drugs I guess now's as good a time as any: when I first met Matt I abused illegal substances. I'm not ashamed to say it because the truth sets you free and my hope is that my sharing will help others. So yes, I was an occasional pot, meth and cocaine abuser for a short period of my life. But with Matt's love and guidance and military background (ten-hut!) he very quickly got me sorted out. I am and will forever be indebted to Matt and our Savior for that.

A (Matt): PS Cold turkey is the way to go.

A (Shirley): As for Rapture not being physical Matt and I lovingly agree to disagree on this issue so again look for us in the Park far from obstacles.

Q12: I'm diabetic. When I Rapture will I be cured like going to Lourdes, Tepeyac, Fatima, Bethsaida, San Giovanni Rotondo and the like?

A (Shirley): Rapturing is akin to rebirth in most senses of the word. While you don't literally turn into a baby, you do start over from a physical health perspective. If you are selected you will be healed of all acute and chronic diseases. If you are twenty-one or older your biological clock will be set back to that of an eighteen year old.

A (Matt): Shirley was eighteen when we met. I was thirty. Eighteen is truly a magical age. I can still remember laying eyes on my little waif that first time, a phone in one hand and a guest key in the other. Her hair was falling out of the barette in ringlets and her sweet neck and face were dewy from the heat. She was a sight to behold. Angel, I thought.

A (Shirley): I don't want to romanticize drug use but boy did it curb my appetite. I guess you could say using has its benefits.

Q13: Post Rapture do we resume something resembling our current existence or what?

A (Shirley): You will be a different person after the Rapture. You will certainly remember who you once were, but the bridge to your former self will be forever severed. It's like after you meet The One, have a child or feel betrayed—you are no longer who you once were.

Q16: I do not believe in God but am a good person—I volunteer my time, am a loyal and loving husband and a responsible father to three wonderful boys. Is there a caveat or fine print for people like me?

A (Matt): Sorry, no.

A (Shirley): But rejoice as there is time to become worthy of Rapture. It's as easy as praying with humility: *Lord Jesus, I know I am a sinner and ask you to forgive me of my sins and prepare for me a new heart. I surrender my life to you.*

A (Matt): At certain times I find it helpful to remind myself I am a man and I am a weak man at that and while yes, I am responsible for my actions, occasionally I make a misstep. Therefore, I take the opportunity to surrender my life to God again and again.

A (Shirley): And again! That's right. Our next new beginning is Tuesday, June 21: Reach your highest level of self-realization while here on earth (please note: attendance does not guarantee ascension). Matt, the boys and I hope to see you there. Remember: *all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted* (Luke 14:11). In other words, even in the face of what feels like the end there can be a new beginning.