

The Returning Christ and the Disciple

By Richard Ross

Pre-Session Assignments

One week before the session, participants will take the following assignments.

Assignment One

Study Hebrews 13:8. With that truth in mind, prepare to share your answers to the following questions: On the day of His second coming, will Christ become something new or different? Or is the Christ who will appear in His second coming exactly the same Christ we worship, talk with and walk with today? How could these answers change how we see and relate to Christ?

Assignment Two

Ask yourself: How much of my discipleship do I live in anticipation of Christ's second coming and my life with Him in heaven? When your group meets, plan to ask them the same question. After several share their thoughts, ask these follow-up questions: How does the way you see Christ today compare with the way you will see Him when He returns? How does the way you worship Christ today compare with the way you will worship Him in heaven? How does the way you serve Christ today compare with the way you will serve Him in heaven?

Assignment Three

Study 1 Thessalonians 4:16–17 and then study Revelation 19:7–9. Prepare to ask the group three questions: When you see Christ descending to earth in His second coming and the sky is full of angels and graves are opening, what are some emotions you think you will experience? When Christ and the Church are “married” at Christ's second coming and you become one with Him, what are some of the emotions you will experience? Will it be possible to have such opposite emotions (awe and intimacy) at the same time?

Scripture to Memorize

Therefore, beloved, since you look for these, be diligent to be found by Him without spot or blemish, and at peace. 2 Peter 3:14

Session Goal

Consistent with God's Word and in the power of the Holy Spirit—by the end of this session, disciples will have a greater heart desire to be a disciple of Christ because of new insight into His power and glory as revealed in His second coming to earth.

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Richard has written or compiled twenty-four books for youth leaders and parents. His most recent book is *The Senior Pastor and the Reformation of Youth Ministry* (lifeway.com). You can connect with Richard through RichardARoss.com, [Facebook.com/rossrichard](https://www.facebook.com/rossrichard), and Twitter @richardaross.

It's in the Book

30 minutes

Real-Life Scenario

Christian leader David Bryant reports that: "When I was 11, I received an illustrated Bible. The two-page spread picturing Revelation 19—showing a Conqueror clothed in regal robes, seated on a white stallion, surrounded by armies of saints—stunned my unsuspecting heart. This incomparable King was piercing the clouds with the overwhelming radiance of His face, putting His earthly enemies to flight. I felt something like an electric shock that seemed to travel from head to foot. From that moment the reality of Christ's supremacy, waiting to be decisively displayed in the final battle, molded both my ambitions and my decisions."

Would you say that a vision of the second coming has ever rocked your world and caused you to think of Christ in a new way?

Introduction

Many believers who embrace Scripture agree with the following statement: "God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring the world to its appropriate end. According to His promise, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth; the dead will be raised; and Christ will judge all men in righteousness. The unrighteous will be consigned to hell, the place of everlasting punishment. The righteous in their resurrected and glorified bodies will receive their reward and will dwell forever in heaven with the Lord."

According to Revelation 1:7–8, Christ "is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him." He is "the Alpha and the Omega . . . who is and who was and who is to come."

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:16–17 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Verse 16. Cry of command. This Greek word refers to a war shout. Jesus will return as a victorious King, giving the word of command to the hosts of heaven at His final triumph over sin, death and Satan. **trumpet.** In Scripture, the trumpet often accompanies appearances of God's glory. Here the trumpet is sounded to gather the people of Christ one final time.

Verse 17. in the clouds. After the resurrection, Christ ascended in the clouds. In His return, He will descend in the clouds. The dead in Christ will return with Him in the clouds, and the believers alive at that time will rise to that same, grand meeting place.

On Your Own

Circle A, B, or C below. When you pray, in your mind's eye, do you tend to see Jesus:

- A. Looking similar to the way He is pictured in the Bible pictures at church.
- B. Looking like a little buddy sitting next to you.
- C. Looking like a regal King, enthroned in heaven or descending to earth in His second coming.

Discussion Question

Allow one group member to demonstrate how a person might pray to a distant Jesus who lived back in Bible times. Allow another group member to demonstrate how a person might pray to a Jesus who only is a little buddy. Allow another group member to demonstrate how a person might pray to a Jesus who is as glorious as He will be in His second coming. How are the three

prayers different?

Assignment One Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment One** during the week can now explain to the group how a proper understanding of Hebrews 13:8 can change how we see and relate to Christ today.

Read 2 Peter 3:10–14 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Verse 10. the day of the Lord. This phrase in Scripture refers to the events surrounding the second coming of Christ. **heavens will pass away . . . roar . . . heavenly bodies will be burned up . . . dissolved.** All these refer to the events of the second coming.

Verse 11. Since all these things. Peter believed the reality of the second coming should impact the lives of believers. **holiness and godliness.** This expression includes righteous behaviors toward man and godliness toward God.

Verses 12–14. Waiting for . . . waiting for . . . waiting for. Those who know their true citizenship is in heaven have a gaze and focus that is heavenly. They choose to live consistent with that world rather than with the current world.

Verse 14. to be found by Him. Disciples live the way they want Christ to find them when He appears unexpectedly. **At peace.** At peace with God and at peace with one's fellow man. This may also refer to believers experiencing inner peace as the second coming approaches.

Without spot or blemish. No believer lives perfectly, but God will welcome every believer to heaven without spot because Christ has clothed believers in His righteousness and has washed every believer in His blood.

Discussion Question

Allow each group member to choose and then discuss response A or B below.

Knowing Christ will wrap me in His righteousness when He takes me to heaven:

A. Motivates me to do more wrong things on earth since I know they will be covered by the blood of Christ.

B. Motivates me to live more righteously on earth because I am so grateful my sins are covered by Christ.

Assignment Two Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Two** during the week can now ask the group questions concerning discipleship as anticipation of the return of Christ.

Read Revelation 19:7–9 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Verse 7. marriage . . . Lamb . . . Bride. The Lamb is Christ, and the Bride is the Church (all the believers of all the ages). To say the Church will be married to Christ means believers will have perfect union with Him. They will fully participate in His holiness, joy and kingdom.

Verse 9. marriage supper. According to David Bryant, this term originally was related to a special occasion at the climax of a week of wedding festivities. It was the moment when the veil of the virgin bride was lifted so that the groom and all the guests could finally look upon her beauty. This always took place immediately before the couple slipped away to the honeymoon suite to consummate their marriage in sexual union. The “marriage supper of the Lamb” points us toward that moment when, at Christ’s return, we will be ravished together by what lies “behind the veil.” Out of this unprecedented revelation of God’s glory to us and Christ’s finished work in us, we will enter into greater intimacy with the risen Redeemer than we ever dreamed existed.

Assignment Three Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Three** during the week can now ask the group to respond to three questions.

Discussion Question

How does this lesson help prepare you for a year of discipleship study?

Heart and Hands

8 minutes

Read again the **Real-Life Scenario** near the beginning of the lesson. Consider whether your answers have changed during the session.

Be silent for two or three minutes. Thank Jesus for His sacrifice and for the gospel. Adore Him for His glorious reign on the throne of heaven. Then ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you:

1. A way the Scriptures you studied today will change your heart for the glory of Christ.
2. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to stop doing something for the glory of Christ.
3. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to do something for the glory of Christ.

Write what the Spirit reveals to you below and then be ready to share what you have written with the group.

Since Last Week

5 minutes

Grace-Filled Accountability

5 minutes

Planning for Evangelism, Missions, and Service

5 minutes

Prayer

7 minutes

At Home: Nail It Down

All human history and all reality are moving toward the second coming of Christ. Read the following passage carefully. "For God had allowed us to know the secret of his plan, and it is this: he purposes in his sovereign will that all human history will be consummated in Christ, that everything that exists in Heaven or earth shall find its perfection and fulfillment in him" (Ephesians 1:10, Phillips).

Do you think Christ will be glorious and mighty on the day of His second coming? When all humanity kneels as He descends and the sky is full of angels, do you think your King will be radiant and dazzling in splendor? Just before His return to earth, do you think Christ will quickly turn into something new? (The biblical answer is no. From His ascension to heaven forward to all of eternity, Christ is the same.)

That means the Christ you spoke to in prayer this morning is exactly the same Christ who will split open the heavens and return for all the world to see. Did that dawn on you this morning? Can you believe that the central Person of the second coming gives you permission to stand before Him and speak to Him?

Sometimes believers think of "sweet little Jesus who lives in my heart," (and it is true that Christ lives in us) but how does an accurate view of Christ in His second coming change how we approach Christ and how we speak to Him?

What if you ran to your backyard because of thunderous trumpet music outside and then looked up? What if you saw the dazzling Christ slowly descending to earth? What if you saw the dead in Christ already rising to meet Him in the air? What prayers would come from your mouth? What would you shout to Him? Now, do any of those expressions remind you of things you said in your early prayers this morning? Never forget this truth:

Who Christ will be on the day of His second coming is precisely who He is today.

And *that* Christ invites you to be His disciple.

Follow up Question

In what way do you have a greater heart desire to be a disciple of Christ because of new insight into His power and glory as revealed in His second coming to earth?

The Making Disciples curriculum is a gift from Southwestern Seminary to those who, for the glory of the Father and in the power of the Spirit, will spend a lifetime embracing the full supremacy of the Son, responding to His kingly reign in all of life, inviting Christ to live His life through them, and joining Him in making disciples among all peoples.