

Last Things

By David L. Allen

Pre-Session Assignments

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

Assignment One

Read the comments related to Acts 1:11 in the section **It's in the Book**. Prepare to summarize briefly the big picture of what will take place when Jesus returns to the earth.

Assignment Two

Read the comments related to 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 in the section **It's in the Book**. Prepare to share your answers to the following question: What are the three major views concerning the rapture of the church that Paul speaks about?

Assignment Three

Read the comments related to Revelation 20:1–6 in the section **It's in the Book**. Prepare to share your answer to the following question: What happens to the following people during the millennial reign of Christ: Satan and those martyred during the tribulation period.

Scripture to Memorize

(They) said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw Him go into heaven." Acts 1:11

Session Goal

Consistent with God's Word and in the power of the Holy Spirit—by the end of this session, disciples will understand and be able to identify the basic views concerning what the Bible teaches about the second coming of Christ and the end times.

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He is the author of *Hebrews* in the New American Commentary series; *Lukan Authorship of Hebrews*; *1–3 John: Fellowship in God's Family* in the Preaching the Word series; and *Preaching Tools: An Annotated Survey of Commentaries and Preaching Resources for Every Book of the Bible*. David also is the coeditor and contributor of *Whosoever Will: A Biblical-Theological Critique of Five-Point Calvinism*, *Text-Driven Preaching*, and *The Return of Christ: a Premillennial Perspective*. You can follow David on Twitter @drdavidlallen and on Facebook at David Lewis Allen. His website is www.drdavidlallen.com.

It's in the Book

30 minutes

Real-Life Scenario

Imagine you and a friend who is not a Christian just watched a movie about the second coming of Christ and the rapture of Christians out of this world. Your friend thinks all this came from science fiction writers. What would you share with your friend about what the Bible actually says about the return of Christ? Could you turn to the Bible verses you need?

Read Acts 1:11 out loud.

Studying the Passage, v. 11

Eschatology is the doctrine of end times. The term comes from two Greek words meaning “study of” and “last.” Much in the Old and New Testaments speaks to this subject. The last book in the Bible, Revelation, is all about events that will unfold when Jesus returns again to the earth.

Verse 11. Jesus . . . will come. The Old Testament speaks of Christ reigning on the earth in the end times. The New Testament speaks of this future reign of Christ on the earth as the millennium (Revelation 20:1–6). Some Bible scholars think this reference to a future, thousand-year reign of Christ on the earth is to be understood in a spiritual sense rather than a literal reign, but the combination of Old Testament prophecies that speak of a literal reign of the Messiah on earth, coupled with Revelation 20:1–6, indicates that Christ will reign on the earth for a thousand-year period.

Assignment One Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment One** during the week can now briefly summarize the big picture of what will take place when Jesus returns to the earth.

Discussion Question

Why is it important that disciples understand what the Bible teaches about the end times?

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Verse 14. God will bring with Him. Believers who die will be raised from the dead at the second coming of Jesus.

Verses 15–17. Those **who are alive at the coming of the Lord . . . will be caught up together with them** [those who are resurrected] . . . **to meet the Lord in the air.** This event is called the *rapture*, from the Latin translation of the Greek word which means “to take up; to snatch away.” The bodies of the dead in Christ will be united with their souls, and all believers at that particular moment will receive their glorified bodies (see 1 Corinthians 15:50–58).

Christians differ over the timing of the rapture in relationship to the future seven-year period of tribulation (God’s judgment) on the earth as described in Revelation. There are three major views:

1. Pretribulation—The rapture occurs before the beginning of the seven-year tribulation.
2. Posttribulation—The rapture occurs after the tribulation and is synonymous with the

- second coming of Jesus to the earth.
3. Midtribulation—The rapture occurs during the tribulation at the halfway point of the seven-year period.

Assignment Two Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Two** during the week can now share answers to the following question: What are the three major views concerning the rapture of the church that Paul speaks about?

Read Revelation 19:11–20 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Verse 11. heaven opened. Verses 11–20 describe the return of Christ to the earth at the end of the seven-year period of tribulation.

Verse 15. the nations. Jesus will judge the nations at His return, and He will rule on the earth.

Verse 20. beast . . . false prophet. The beast and the false prophet refer to two world leaders who will be on the scene during the great tribulation. Also present will be the Antichrist, the world ruler, who will control the world during this time. All will be judged and cast into hell when Jesus returns.

Read Revelation 20:1–6 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Verses 1–3. chain . . . Satan . . . shut it and sealed it. Satan is bound for a thousand years. There is every reason to interpret this literally.

There are three basic positions on the interpretation of the thousand-year (millennial) reign of Christ:

1. Premillennialism—Christ will return to earth *before* He reigns over an earthy kingdom for a thousand years.
2. Postmillennialism—The church will increase its influence on earth such that God’s kingdom is going to become realized on this earth, followed by Christ’s return ushering in eternity.
3. Amillennialism—The millennium is not a literal thousand-year reign. Rather, Jesus’ return will usher in eternity.

Verse 4. they came to life and reigned with Christ. During the seven-year tribulation period, those who believe in Christ will be severely persecuted by the Antichrist, and many will be martyred. **reigned with Christ for a thousand years.** This verse describes their resurrection when Jesus returns to the earth to establish His millennial reign.

Verse 5. the first resurrection. This is the resurrection of believers. It is called the first resurrection because there will be a final resurrection of all the unsaved dead at the end of the millennial reign.

Assignment Three Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Three** during the week can now share an answer to

the following question: What happens to the following people during the millennial reign of Christ: Satan and those martyred during the tribulation period?

Here is a listing of end-time events in approximate chronological order.

- Return of Christ
 - Rapture at the beginning of the seven-year tribulation (1 Thessalonians 4:13–18)
 - Second coming to earth at the end of the tribulation period (Revelation 19:11–16)
- Seven-year tribulation period and growing turmoil on the earth (Daniel 7:25; Revelation
- Battle of Armageddon at the end of the tribulation and immediately after the return of Christ to earth
- Thousand-year reign of Christ on the earth (Revelation 16:14–16; 19:11–21)
- Judgment of the nations (Matthew 25:31–46)
- Judgment seat of Christ for believers in heaven (Romans 14:10; 1 Corinthians 3:10–15; 2 Corinthians 5:9–10)
- Marriage supper of the Lamb in heaven (Revelation 19:1–10)
- Resurrection of unbelievers at the end of the millennial reign (Revelation 20:6, 13–15)
- Great white throne Judgment of all unbelievers (Revelation 20:11–13)
- Eternal state (Revelation 21–22)

On Your Own

In the space below, describe some specific ways you should live in light of the return of Christ.

Heart and Hands

8 minutes

Read again the **Real-Life Scenario** at 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

The Bible teaches clearly that Jesus is coming again. The timing of His return is, however, debated among Christians. There are three basic views on the end times concerning the reign of Christ:

1. Premillennialism
2. Postmillennialism
3. Amillennialism

There are three major views concerning the timing of the rapture of the church:

1. Pretribulation
2. Posttribulation
3. Midtribulation

The Bible speaks of two major resurrections in the end times:

1. The resurrection of the righteous.
2. The resurrection of the wicked for judgment.

At the end of Jesus' thousand-year reign on the earth, the eternal state begins, as described in Revelation 21–22.

Disciples of Jesus should not be clock-watchers and date setters regarding the second coming of Jesus. We should live every day as if that would be the day Jesus comes again!

Follow up Question

How should we live in light of the imminent return of Christ?

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.