

# Leader's Guide

## Let's Explore Our Faith

### Lesson 12 · The Return of Christ

#### Aims:

- To introduce the major events surrounding the second coming of Christ
- To understand that joy and holy living should be the result of knowing Jesus is coming again
- To respond by expressing their feelings about the return of Christ

#### Preparation:

- Read through the *Articles of Faith* 6. (about the last things). Though all of *Article 6* will not be specifically included in the lesson, its concepts will be and you should be familiar with them. Note any questions that come to mind. Any question(s) you have may be the same one(s) your students ask.
- Read the Scriptural basis for this lesson: *Daniel 7:13-14, 9:27; Matthew 24:15-29; Mark 13:34-37, 16:15-16; Luke 1:32-33, 21:34-36; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:9-11, 2:38; Romans 8:16-19, 23-24; 1 Corinthians 15:51-52; 2 Corinthians 5:10; 1 Thessalonians 3:12-13, 4:13-18, 5:1, 11; 2 Thessalonians 1:3-10; 1 Timothy 6:12-14; Titus 2:12-13; James 5:7-8; 2 Peter 3:10-13; 1 John 2:28, 3:2-3; Jude 14; Revelation 3:10, 5:9-10, 19:7-8, 11-16, 20:1-6, 11-15, 21:1.* You may also wish to look up the Scriptures for *Article 6. b. through d.*: *1 Peter 4:17; John 1:12; Deuteronomy 32:7; 2 Timothy 2:15; Romans 12:1*
- Read *Article 6* again. Highlight the connections between the key points of the lesson and the Scripture passages referenced.
- Prepare the student lesson.

#### Needed:

- Student workbook, Bible and pencil for each student
- Copy(ies) of *MC Constitution with Articles of Faith and Practice*
- Marker board, markers, and eraser
- Overhead transparency on The Rapture Views

#### Getting Started:

Begin your class by briefly reviewing their *My Church Fast Facts* findings from Lesson 11. Conclude your reporting with a short prayer. Thank God for the many ways your church helps them as believers in Jesus, and ask God to now help students understand what He wants to say to them about living their lives in light of Christ's return.

Distribute *Student Workbooks*, Bibles, and pencils. Students answer first question on page 1, exploring what words or pictures come to mind when they think of Jesus' coming back. Say, **It is quite possible that we will still be alive on this earth when Jesus comes back. How would you feel if you witnessed His return?** Volunteers answer. Explain that those believers who are still living when Jesus returns will never die. Plus, if we are alive when Jesus comes back, we will—faster than our eyes can blink—receive our new bodies. (See 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 and 1 Corinthians 15:51-52.) What an exciting possibility! After that we will be with the Lord forever.

Then say, **It's great to think about still living when Jesus returns, but dying doesn't change anything—Jesus is coming back!** Talk about how right now Jesus is getting heaven ready for us, and anticipating taking us to be with Him forever. That's the message He gave to His disciples just before He was crucified. Have a volunteer(s) read John 14:1-3, and all students fill in the blanks. (*Answer: I will come back*)

Emphasize that God's great plan for us includes the return of Christ, but that doesn't mean we know all the details. For instance, the Bible does not tell us exactly *when* Jesus will come back. Have a volunteer read 1 Thessalonians 5:1, and all students fill in the blanks. (*Answers: times, dates*) Point out that the Bible goes on to describe Christ's return like a thief coming to rob a house (1 Thessalonians 5:2). Ask, **How does a thief come?** Allow volunteers to respond. Possible responses include: suddenly, with no warning, secretly. God did not tell us the exact time or day of Christ's return because He wants us to be ready and watching. In fact, the Bible says that any effort to figure out the day or time of Christ's return is simply silly. Not even God the Son, Jesus Christ, knows when He will return. Matthew 24:36 says, "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."

The Bible also doesn't give us every detail about all the events related to Jesus' return, which can make studying *last things* challenging. Also, some prophetic sections of Scripture can be hard to comprehend or even understood in different ways by Christians, which can make studying *last things* perplexing. Explain to the students that God has clearly or literally told us what He wants us to know, and other *not-quite-so-pressing* details about prophetic events He tells us symbolically. We can trust the Holy Spirit to help us to learn what's important as we study God's Word.

## Study:

Direct students' attention to the *Article of Faith* paragraph in the workbook. Read Article 6.a. from the Constitution one phrase at a time as students follow along. Have students circle any words that are new to them. Write the words on the board. (Words printed in **bold** are listed in the *Glossary*.) Take time for students to discuss possible meanings for new terms they identify and look those up in the *Glossary*. Then discuss the paragraph, noting any concepts that may require more explanation during the study time.

Work through the remaining study material as a group. As needed, ask students to read the Scripture passages aloud. Note: many of the terms in this lesson may be new to your students, so be especially sensitive to their ability to assimilate new concepts and pace your speed through the lesson accordingly.

Instruct students to read Acts 1:9-11 and fill in the blanks. (*Answers: come, back, saw, go*) In these verses, Jesus' return to heaven is described. Jesus had just commanded the disciples to be His witnesses when He was taken up into the air as they watched. Encourage students to imagine the disciples' surprise. Their eyes were glued to the sky for any glimpse of Him. Then the Bible says two men wearing white appeared—a common biblical description of angels—and said that Jesus would come back from heaven in a cloud. Point out that from this account, we believe that Jesus will come again as a person, in a physical body and people will witness His return.

Direct the students' attention to the paragraph that begins, "Our goal in this lesson...." Re-emphasize that God wants us to be aware of end-times events

and study His Word to better understand them, so that we can live in light of and long for His appearing.

### Event 1. The Rapture.

Have students focus their attention on the first part of the paragraph that defines The Rapture. Have a volunteer read 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17. Explain that The Rapture is the first part of Christ's return. We can believe the events of The Rapture will happen because we have Jesus' word on it. Divide students into pairs or groups of 3. Assign each pair or group of students one of the run-on sentences to solve. Have pairs share their answers. (*Answers: Jesus will come down from heaven in the clouds, Believers who have died will be resurrected first, Believers who are alive when Jesus returns will be caught up to meet Him in the air*)

Ask, **Why did Paul write these words?** Allow responses. The answer to this question can be found in verse 18—*encourage each other with these words*. Not only did he want them to be informed about *last things*, point out that he wanted to comfort believers when their believing loved ones died. Now ask, **How does knowing about The Rapture affect you?** Again, allow students to respond.

### Event 2. The Tribulation.

Have a volunteer read the paragraph on The Tribulation. Direct the students to pair up. Each pair should read the Matthew 24:15-29 passage, listing at least four things told about The Great Tribulation. Allow pairs to share their discoveries. Stress how horrible The Tribulation will be for those people who are still living on earth. Matthew 24:22 says that no one would survive, except that God is in control of how long the persecution lasts.

Direct the students' attention to the overhead transparency and *Workbook* paragraph that outlines the three views on The Rapture and The Tribulation. After presenting the views, make the point that while believers may not agree on when The Rapture will happen, most all agree on what will happen once Jesus comes back. Again, stress the importance of remembering the big picture—Jesus is coming back, and He tells us these things so that we will live rightly now and be ready.

### Event 3. The Revelation.

Have a volunteer read the paragraph on The Revelation. Not to be confused with the book of Revelation, this event related to Christ's return is when everyone will know that Jesus is Lord—end of discussion. At the Revelation, everyone will know who God is and what He is like because of Jesus Christ's return in power and glory.

Direct the students' attention to Revelation 19:11-16. Read the passage out loud as students follow along in their Bibles. Then have students individually complete the true or false exercise. (Answers: F, T, F, T, T, T, F, F, T)

### Event 4. The Millennium.

Students are probably familiar with the word *millennium* from the world's celebration of the year 2000. Ask if anyone knows what the word *millennium* actually means. Allow responses. Explain that Christians use The Millennium term to describe Christ's 1,000 year reign on the earth as righteous King, but they have different views on just how and when the 1,000 years will take place. Have students complete the matching exercise. (Answers: *premillennial—Christ will return immediately before; postmillennial—Christ will return after; amillennial—There will not be an actual 1,000 year reign*)

After presenting the views, point out that most people in the Missionary Church believe Jesus will return to earth *before* The Millennium, and that His rule happens before Satan is thrown into the lake of fire. Again, stress that while believers may not agree on the how and when The Millennium will happen, they do agree on the important, big picture—Jesus is coming back, He will crush Satan, and He will reign forever! Have students pair up and work with their partner to read Revelation 20:1-6 and complete the sentences that describe millennial events. (Answers: *...bound and thrown in the abyss—or bottomless pit—for 1,000 years; ...resurrected and rule with Christ*)

### Event 5. The Judgments.

The Bible teaches several truths about judgment. First, when we believe in Jesus Christ, we cross from death to life and will not be condemned—

judged guilty and punished forever (John 5:24). Then, since believers are God's children, He disciplines or judges us in this life (1 Corinthians 11:32). But final judgment is after we die (Hebrews 9:27). Have students read the 2 Corinthians 5 and Revelation 20 passages describing The Judgments related to Christ's return. Instruct them to complete the matching exercise. (Answers: B, A, A, B, B, B)

Emphasize that we are not saved by our actions—only by trusting in Jesus to forgive our sins. All the names of persons who have believed in Jesus are written in the Book of Life. But at the Great White Throne Judgment, actions are seen as proof of having a personal relationship with God. The other books opened tell the deeds of everyone, good or bad.

### Event 6. The Eternal State.

After The Judgments comes eternal life either with Jesus in heaven because you're God's child, or without Jesus in hell because you rejected His gift of salvation. Then Revelation 21:1 says that God will prepare a new heaven and a new earth. What a future! He didn't tell us everything we'd like to know about eternity, but we know it will be wonderful to be with Jesus forever. Have students read 2 Peter 3:10-13 and complete the multiple-choice exercise. (Answers: b, a, d)

Ask, **So how should we live because Jesus is coming back?** Read the following short story to the students.

Tom and Bill were brothers. One Saturday morning, their father woke them early. He said, "I have to do some unexpected work at the office today. I'll be home at three o'clock. If you boys have your Saturday chores finished when I come home, I'll take you golfing. If either of you hasn't finished, he won't get to go."

Tom rolled out of bed and got to work. Even before his mother called him for breakfast, he was finished with his chores. After breakfast, he had time to read and work on a model car he was building. After lunch, he got his golf clubs ready, then watched a baseball game on television.

Bill rolled over in bed when his father left. "I've got plenty of time before Dad comes home," he thought to himself as he drifted back to sleep. He was still asleep when his mother called him for breakfast. After breakfast, he watched cartoons on television. After lunch, he fixed the gears on his bike. He never even thought about the chores his father had assigned.

At 2:50pm, both Tom and Bill heard the crunch of gravel in the driveway as Dad drove in.

Have students circle their answers to the story questions. (*Answers: Tom, Bill, Yes, Those who are ready*) Briefly discuss the story. Stress that Dad's coming home was the same for both boys, but their reactions were very different. It wasn't because Dad came home two different ways, but because the boys had prepared differently. Make the connection to our preparations for Christ's second coming.

The Bible teaches there are three parts to being ready for Christ's return. First, accept God's gift of salvation through Jesus. Have a volunteer read Acts 2:38. Instruct students to fill in the blanks. (*Answers: Repent, Jesus, Christ, forgiveness, sins*)

Secondly, live a holy and godly life. Direct the students' attention to 2 Peter 3:11 reprinted in the *Workbooks*. Instruct students to circle the words that describe the kind of lives we should live. (*Answers: holy, godly*) Emphasize that Jesus wants us to spend our time becoming more like Him.

Finally, do the important work Jesus gave us to do in this world. Instruct students to read Mark 16:15-16 and fill in the blanks. (*Answers: Go, good, all, believes, saved, condemned*) Make the point that as we grow in Christ-like character—loving Him and serving Him wholeheartedly—Jesus will give us the chances and boldness to tell others about Him.

## Let's Review.

Have students do the review match individually or with a partner. (*Answers: Rapture—Believers taken up to be with Christ, Tribulation—A seven-year period of great trouble, Millennium—Thousand-year reign of Christ on earth, Revelation—Completion of the second coming, Pre-tribulation—before The Tribulation, Mid-tribulation—during The Tribulation, Post-*

*tribulation—after The Tribulation, Premillennial—before the thousand years, Postmillennial—after the thousand years, Amillennial—not be an actual thousand years*)

Emphasize the *Scripture to Learn*. To teach 1 John 3:2b-3 to students, sing the words to the tune of "Michael, Row Your Boat Shore."

*But we know that when he appears  
We shall be like Him,  
For we shall see Him as He is,  
Alleluia!*

*Everyone who has this hope in Him  
Purifies himself,  
Just as He is pure,  
Alleluia!*

Explain that our becoming more like Jesus will be complete when we see Jesus. Until then, we should look forward to His coming and stay ready by following Jesus' example of purity. He lived rightly and free from sin. We should want to live in a way that pleases God, so we can be excited when Jesus comes, not ashamed.

## My Response:

Direct the students' attention to the *My Response* section of the *Student Workbook*. Have students work alone to finish the sentences. This exercise explores their feelings about end times' events. Some students may find these topics particularly frightening. We should never use students' fear to manipulate them into a spiritual decision. However, it is appropriate to help them understand that the only way to be prepared for these events is by believing in Jesus as Lord and Savior. Be prepared to counsel any student who expresses concern or a desire to accept God's gift of salvation.

## Let's Explore Our Faith

### Lesson 12 · The Return of Christ

**What words or pictures do you think of when you think of Jesus coming back?**

Write or draw your answer.

How would you feel if you were living when Jesus returns?

Jesus is coming back! The Bible is clear. He is returning to take those who believe in Him to live with Him in heaven forever. Jesus gave His disciples this important and exciting message shortly before He died on the cross. **Read John 14:1-3 and fill in the blanks.** He told them, “Don’t be afraid—just trust Me! Soon I’ll be leaving here and going to heaven to get your permanent home ready. And because I’m going...

... \_\_\_\_\_ for you!”

The Bible does not tell us exactly when Jesus will come back. **Read 1 Thessalonians 5:1 and fill in the blanks.**

“Now, brothers, about \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_  
we do not need to write to you...”

But it does say we should look forward to—and even pray for—the day when Jesus Christ will return to take His people home to be with Him forever.

The Bible also does not tell us everything about what will happen leading up to when Jesus comes back, which can sometimes make reading about His return confusing. But God has clearly told us what He wants us to know. So we are wise to study His Word to learn all we can about Christ’s return and how we may be ready for it.



## Article of Faith.

In the Missionary Church Constitution, the *Article of Faith* about “The Last Things” sums up what we believe the Bible teaches about Jesus Christ’s return, also called His “second coming” or “second advent.”

*We believe that the **second advent** of Christ is the hope of the church and will be personal, bodily, visible, premillennial, and redemptive. It is the source of encouragement and consolation, the motive for purification and holiness, and the inspiration for activity and service. Christ will first descend into the clouds, where His church, the waiting bride, will be caught up to meet Him. After the tribulation judgments, which will be poured out upon the earth, He will return with His church to judge the nations and to establish His **kingdom** wherein He will rule upon the earth for a thousand years.*

**Read Acts 1:9-11.** From this account of when He left, we understand that:

Jesus will c \_\_\_\_\_ b \_\_\_\_\_ in the same way they s \_\_\_\_\_ Him g \_\_\_\_\_.

So we believe that Jesus will return as a person (not a mindless force), in a physical body, and that people will see Him and witness His return.

Our goal in this lesson is to help you become familiar with six major events related to Christ’s return, and to know how you should live your life because of them. Because some of the events are not described completely, when you study these *last things*, always remember the main point—Jesus is coming back! So be ready!

## Six Major Events Related to Christ's Return

Put the event words from the word bank in the correct places.

|                      |            |            |         |               |
|----------------------|------------|------------|---------|---------------|
| WORD BANK: Judgments | Revelation | Millennium | Rapture | Eternal State |
| Tribulation          |            |            |         |               |

Event 1. The R \_\_\_\_\_.

The exact word “rapture” is not used in Scripture, but we use it to mean the time when Jesus “catches away” or “takes up” all believers from the earth to be with Him for a time. People who have not believed in Christ—or are still spiritually lost—will be left behind to continue life on the earth. **Read 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17.** Each word in the sentences below is either combined with part of another word or is divided in the wrong place. Separate the letters, and write each word in order on the line below the sentence. Each sentence teaches about the rapture.

Jes usw ill com edow nfrom he ave nin thec louds.

Bell ever swho ha vedi edwil lberre sur rect edf irst.

Belle versw hoare ali vew hen Je susre turns willbe caught up tome et Himin  
theair.

Event 2. The T \_\_\_\_\_.

Around the time of Christ's return and the sudden disappearance of believers, the Bible says there will be a seven-year period of great suffering and trouble here on earth. We usually describe this time as “The **Tribulation**” or “The **Great Tribulation**.” At first, it may not be easy to tell the difference between the suffering God's people sometimes experience now and the start of The Tribulation. But the Bible teaches that during this time God's strong judgment will be poured out on the earth worse than ever before or since. **Read Matthew 24:15-29.** List four things Matthew tells us about The Great Tribulation.

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

c. \_\_\_\_\_

d. \_\_\_\_\_

Our church believes that the rapture will happen and right away The Tribulation begins. This is called the **pre-tribulation view**. Other Christians believe the rapture will occur in the middle of The Great Tribulation (**mid-tribulation**.) And still others think that the rapture will happen at the end of the tribulation (**post-tribulation**.) Because the different views can be puzzling, it's important to remember the big picture. The Tribulation will happen because Jesus is coming back! So be ready!

**Event 3. The R \_\_\_\_\_.**

This is the part of Christ's return when He will return to the earth to rule. Believers will come with Him. The Revelation actually completes Jesus' **second coming** because Jesus is revealed or acknowledged as King. **Read Revelation 19:11-16. Then read each statement below.**

**If it is true about The Revelation of Jesus, circle the "T." If it is false, circle the "F."**

- |   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| T | F | Jesus will be the rider of a black stallion.                       |
| T | F | He is called Faithful and True.                                    |
| T | F | With revenge, He judges and makes war.                             |
| T | F | His eyes are like blazing fire.                                    |
| T | F | On His head are many crowns.                                       |
| T | F | He will rule the nations with an iron scepter.                     |
| T | F | He is dressed in a clean, white robe.                              |
| T | F | Out of His mouth comes words of praise.                            |
| T | F | The name <i>King of kings and Lord of lords</i> is written on Him. |

**Event 4. The M \_\_\_\_\_.**

The word "**millennium**" means a thousand years. Believers use this term to describe Christ's thousand-year reign on earth as righteous King. And just like The Tribulation, there are different views about The Millennium. **Draw lines to match the key word with the correct meaning.**

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| <b>Premillennial</b>  | There will <i>not</i> be an actual thousand-year rule at all              |
| <b>Postmillennial</b> | Christ will return immediately <i>before</i> The Millennium               |
| <b>Amillennial</b>    | Christ will return <i>after</i> a millennium period has happened on earth |

Our church believes that Jesus will return to earth before The Millennium. **Read Revelation 20:1-6. Complete both sentences below based on the events of The Millennium described there.**

The devil or Satan will be...

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Those who died during The Tribulation because of their faith in Christ will be...

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**Event 5. The J \_\_\_\_\_.**

The Bible teaches that everyone will answer to God—or be judged—for how they lived their life. God will judge everyone fairly, but we who believe in Jesus as Savior and Lord will be judged differently than those who do not.

**Read the Scripture passages below. Each describes judgments related to Jesus' coming back. Write the letter of the correct reference beside each truth linked with that judgment.**

A. 2 Corinthians 5:10      B. Revelation 20:11-15

- \_\_\_\_\_ The judgment at the end of The Millennium happens before the “great white throne.”
- \_\_\_\_\_ Believers will appear before “the judgment seat of Christ.”
- \_\_\_\_\_ When Jesus returns, He will reward believers for actions here on earth, either good or bad.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The Book of Life is opened, listing all the names of persons who can enter heaven.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Anyone whose name is not found in the book of life will be thrown into the lake of fire.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Each person will be judged according to what they have done, by the way they have lived.



“ \_\_\_\_\_ and be baptized, every one of you, in the name  
of \_\_\_\_\_ for the \_\_\_\_\_ of  
your \_\_\_\_\_.” And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

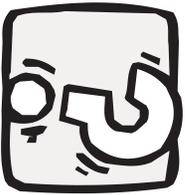
Only those who are members of God's family, because they have asked Jesus to forgive them of their sin, will be ready when Jesus comes back.

Then, as we look forward to Jesus' return, we must devote ourselves to God's use and honor Him by what we think, say, and do. **2 Peter 3:11 is reprinted below. Circle the words that describe the kind of lives we should live.**

“Since everything will be destroyed in this way,  
what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives.”

Jesus wants us to spend our time becoming more like Him. He wants us to grow in Christ-like character—loving Him and serving Him wholeheartedly.

Finally, we who are believers in Jesus Christ, part of His body—the Church—have important work to do in this world. **Read Mark 16:15-16 and fill in the blanks.**



“ \_\_\_\_\_ into all the world and preach the \_\_\_\_\_ news to \_\_\_\_\_ creation.

Whoever \_\_\_\_\_ and is baptized will be \_\_\_\_\_,

but whoever does not believe will be \_\_\_\_\_.”

Because Jesus is coming back, we should tell as many people as possible how they can be ready. Their lives now and in the future depend on it.

## LEF'S REVIEW.

Complete the three matching sections below, drawing lines from the words on the left to the correct meanings on the right.

Section A: Words about the *last things*:

|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| <b>Rapture</b>     | Thousand-year reign of Christ on earth |
| <b>Tribulation</b> | Completion of the <b>second coming</b> |
| <b>Millennium</b>  | A seven-year period of great trouble   |
| <b>Revelation</b>  | Believers taken up to be with Christ   |

Section B: Views of the **rapture** and **tribulation**:



|                    |                        |                               |
|--------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <b>Tribulation</b> | <b>Pre-tribulation</b> | Believers taken up during The |
| <b>Tribulation</b> | <b>Mid-tribulation</b> | Believers taken up after The  |



**Post-tribulation**                      Believers taken up before The  
Tribulation

Section C: Views of Christ's return and the **millennium**:

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| <b>Premillennial</b>  | There will not be an actual thousand years.  |
| <b>Postmillennial</b> | Jesus will return before the thousand years. |
| <b>Amillennial</b>    | Jesus will return after the thousand years   |

## Scripture to Learn.

"But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure."      1 John 3:2b-3 (NIV)

## My Response.

**Finish each of the sentences below.**

When I think about Jesus' return, I am happy because...

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When I think about Jesus' return, I am sad because...

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Knowing that God is in control of all these things makes me...

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Because Jesus is coming back, I want to become more like Him by...

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Because Jesus is coming back, I want to help others be ready by...

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