



What Happens When Jesus Returns?

When General MacArthur left the Philippines at the beginning of World War II, he said, “I will return.” Some people believed him, and some did not. Regardless of whether they believed him or not, he did return. When Jesus left this earth to go back to heaven He said He would return. Some people believe Him and some people do not. In spite of what some may think, HE WILL RETURN!



The doctrine of the Second Coming of Christ is so important that it is mentioned more than 300 times in the New Testament. There are eight times more verses regarding the Second Coming of Christ than there are regarding His first coming. God is very serious about this message: Jesus Christ is coming back to earth!

The Second Coming of Jesus will be like His first in that He will return in a physical body. When Jesus came the first time, He came to save us from the power of sin. When He comes again He will save us from the presence of sin by removing us from this corrupt world.

Overview

While the Bible is quite clear that Jesus Christ will come again, we are never told exactly when He will return. Christians who live in close relationship with God will recognize the season of His coming even though they will not know the exact date and time.

The return of Jesus will happen in two stages. First, Christ will come in the clouds, just as He left

the earth (Acts 1:9-11). At this point, Jesus will not touch the earth; instead, Christians will rise to meet Him in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17) This will be referred to as *the Rapture* throughout this study.

Second, Jesus will return with the armies of heaven seven years after the Rapture. When He comes the second time, Jesus will prove that He is King of Kings (Revelation 17:14). We refer to this stage of Jesus’ second coming as *the Revelation* because, at

this time, all truth will be fully revealed on the earth. Jesus will bring with Him His angels and His saints who will reign with Him on the earth. During *the Revelation*, Jesus will make everything right on the earth. He will fight and destroy anyone remaining on the earth who sides with satan.

One thousand years of perfect peace and righteousness will follow *the Revelation*. This time period will be discussed later in this Bible study.

DECLARATION OF FAITH

We believe that the second coming of Christ is personal and imminent; that He will descend from heaven in the clouds of glory with the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God; and that at this hour, which no man knoweth beforehand, the dead in Christ shall rise, then the redeemed that are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall they ever be with the Lord;

- Aimee Semple McPherson,
Founder ICFG



Insight

No one knows the exact time when Jesus will return. However, we can know the general season of His coming. We can be aware of the events Jesus said would be common just before His return. The events described by Jesus, recorded in Matthew 24:3-14, indicate that these conditions will get increasingly worse. Christians are warned to be sensitive to the times and seasons and to recognize that Jesus' predictions are gradually coming to pass.

EVENTS PRIOR TO CHRIST'S RETURN

False Messiahs (Matthew 24:3-5) - We have no trouble recognizing false Messiahs when they are wild-eyed, emotionally unbalanced people. However, the warning of Jesus goes further. He wants us to be so aware of the truth of His Word that we will not follow **any** leader into deception.

Tough Times (verses 6-7) – The closer we get to the end, mankind will experience more troubles, sorrows, and calamities building to the point of great distress, grief, pestilence and warfare. This type of destruction will continue to increase and will culminate in the Great Tribulation (explained in Lesson 14).

Persecution (verses 8-10) – The closer the return of the Lord becomes, the more discomfort we will sense within the world. Persecution because of our faith will be more common, not only in remote parts of the world, but in our own homeland. Confusion and disagreements even among Christians, if not properly resolved, will cause some Christians to turn on one another. Loyalties will be abandoned, and many religious people will actually develop a hatred toward other Christians.

Apostasy (verses 11-13) – Many who once had a high regard for faith will turn from their convictions. The Bible indicates that even people in Christian churches may make the choice to abandon their faith. Some will be led away from the truth of God's Word by deceptive teachers, while others will simply grow indifferent or disillusioned in their faith.

Worldwide Evangelism (verse 14) – In spite of all the negative predictions, Jesus also promised that the gospel will reach more people and have greater results than ever before.

WHAT HAPPENS AT THE RAPTURE

Christians Meet Jesus in the Air

People who accepted Jesus as Savior and have died will be resurrected and will rise to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:16; 1 Corinthians 15:52). Christians who are still alive will also rise to meet the Lord and return with Him to heaven (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

Our Physical Bodies Will Be Changed

When we meet Jesus in the air, He will give us glorified bodies with no physical limitation, eternal bodies which will never die (1 Corinthians 15:51).

For Those Left Behind, the Rapture Will Be a Catastrophic Event

We can only speculate about what will take place on earth after the Rapture. It is easy to imagine the resulting destruction of millions of vehicles instantly without drivers. How will the news media report the disappearance of millions of Christians? No doubt, after a period of shock, there will be an attempt by world leaders to minimize the cataclysmic disappearance by concocting some story to allay people's panic. Some, however, will see through the deception and recognize the phenomenon as the Rapture described in Bible prophecy.

The following scriptures refer to signs of Christ's coming or actual events relative to the Rapture. Read each Bible verse below and draw a line to the corresponding phrase that would best describe that verse.



Personal Response

2 Timothy 3:1-7
 Revelation 16:12
 1 Thessalonians 4:16
 1 Thessalonians 4:17
 Matthew 24:4,5
 Matthew 24:14
 Luke 17:34-36
 1 Corinthians 15:51
 Daniel 12:4
 Luke 21:29-31

Euphrates dries up for armies of the East.
The dead in Christ will rise first
Israel again becomes a nation.
There is progress in transportation and science.
Some are left behind when Jesus returns.
The gospel is preached throughout the world.
We will receive glorified bodies.
False messiahs appear.
Christians rise to meet Jesus in the air.
Perilous and profane times occur.



HEART PERSPECTIVE

Read each phrase and the corresponding Bible verse. Prayerfully consider how the concept and Bible verse apply in your life. Throughout the week, make notes about how the knowledge of Jesus' soon return will change you and strengthen you as you continue to serve God.

Knowledge of the Second Coming of Jesus Promotes:

- watchfulness (Matthew 24:42-44) _____
- self-control (1 Peter 4:7;5:8; 1 Thess. 5:6) _____
- faithful labor (Matthew 25:19-21) _____
- spiritual concerns rather than worldly ones (Matthew 16:26-27) _____
- clean living (Colossians 3:4-5; 1 John 3:2-3) _____
- brotherly love (1 Thess. 3:12-13) _____
- Christian fellowship (Hebrews 10:25) _____
- caution in judging others (1 Corinthians 4:4-5) _____
- bold witness for Christ (Mark 8:38) _____

A railroad engineer wanted to teach his fireman how to handle the locomotive in case Jesus returned and he was caught up in the Rapture. The fireman responded, "don't teach me how to run the locomotive; teach me how to be ready for Christ's return." God wants every person to be saved and be ready to meet Him. The opportunity to be saved must be made available to everyone. It is our task to take the good news of Jesus Christ to everyone we know and not merely prepare ourselves for the Rapture.





Lesson 13 Teaching Outline

What Happens When Jesus Returns?

REFERENCE POINT

(10 minutes)

Instruct the students to read the *Reference Point* of the lesson to themselves. Write on the chalkboard the sentence, "JESUS WILL RETURN." Underline the word "WILL" strongly. Emphasize the fact that, even though His return has not yet happened, the promise still exists. He will return. In fact, one of the main reasons Christ has delayed His return is that the Heavenly Father wants more people to be saved. If anything, He has delayed His return out of great mercy and love (2 Peter 3:9).

OVERVIEW

(10 minutes)

Distribute photocopies of the "Second Coming Timeline." This lesson will deal with the first stage of the second coming, called the Rapture of the Church. The terminology may be familiar to some of the students; however the sequence of the events may be the source of some confusion. Keep in mind that opinions vary about the sequence and this timeline represents the viewpoint of the Rapture taking place prior to the Tribulation.

INSIGHT

(25 minutes)

Help students identify the prophetic signs given by Jesus in Matthew's gospel. This outline demonstrates that we are living in the "season" of Christ's return. Avoid a lengthy discussion of how current events fulfill these prophetic signs. Instead, focus on the fact that Christ's return will be very soon.

Discuss how life as we know it will change for both Christians and non-Christians when Jesus raptures His church.

TAKING IT HOME

PERSONAL RESPONSE (Conclusion, 15 minutes)

Review the Bible verses, and complete this activity yourself prior to the class session. Encourage students to work together and be aware that discussion will undoubtedly accompany this activity. Move among the students as they interact; answer questions and clarify any points of confusion as needed.

HEART PERSPECTIVE (Personal Devotions)

As students meditate on these verses and words, encourage them to ask God to show them how their lives of faith should be stronger and their dependency on Jesus Christ deeper.

FAITH SHARING (Follow-Up)

Encourage the students to see themselves as messengers with a life or death message that can bring salvation to people otherwise doomed for destruction. While the students must first be sure they are following Jesus, it is vital that Christians not become complacent in their own salvation. God holds us accountable for the information we have and expects us to help others meet Jesus Christ.

The Rapture

Christians meet Jesus in the air

The Tribulation

- Christians rewarded
- Marriage Supper of the Lamb
- Reign of Antichrist on earth
- Opening of Seals
- Trumpet judgements
- God's wrath revealed

The Reign

- Battle of Armageddon
- Antichrist and false prophet cast into Lake of Fire
- Nations judged
- Satan bound

The Millennium

Thousand year reign of Jesus on earth

Satan Released

People deceived

New Heaven and Earth

- Satan thrown into Lake of Fire
- Final judgement of the wicked

(The highlighted event is covered in this lesson.)