














# End Times

## Prepping for Eternity

### ESCHATOLOGY



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# STRONG

## curriculum

A world weak on truth needs a strong, trustworthy message. STRONG Curriculum builds stronger churches by teaching all Scripture to produce spiritually mature believers who measure up to the stature of Christ.

### A Plan You Can Trust

The Bible has the answers to what students need most. No other book or philosophy contains God's power to save and transform lives. Because of this, we've made it our unwavering commitment to build Strong Students upon the sure foundation of God's Word. With this curriculum, your church can develop teens who will be strong defenders of the faith.

The Strong Students scope and sequence is designed around the seven teaching aims Jesus modeled in His ministry. Since these are Jesus' aims, teachers can be confident in the aims' effectiveness and purpose. Every lesson in the Strong Students scope and sequence addresses at least one of Jesus' teaching aims.

Every lesson also focuses on students' needs. We understand the challenge of teaching the Bible to today's teens because of four barriers culture has pushed on them:

- Struggles with identity
- Subjective view of truth
- Hope in a social utopia
- Belief that a career and wealth guarantee happiness

Strong Students takes care of the tough part for you by striking at the foundation of these barriers and providing a Biblical response to each one. With Strong Students, you can concentrate on communicating to your teens and helping them grow into strong believers in Christ without worrying whether you are effectively addressing the philosophies competing for their minds.

Look for the **BuildUP** icons in the table of contents and on the first page of each lesson.

### JESUS' TEACHING AIMS



**BELIEVE THE GOSPEL.** Jesus taught His students to trust in Him alone for salvation and to share the gospel with others. This aim is obviously fundamental to all the rest



**UNDERSTAND BIBLICAL ETHICS.** Jesus instructed His students to live according to moral values. These values provided them with the tools to make wise decisions.



**INTERNALIZE GODLINESS.** Jesus taught His followers to be godly on the inside. He warned them not to become like the Pharisees, with a mere outward appearance of godliness.



**LEARN DOCTRINE.** Jesus knew the importance of teaching His students the truth and identified doctrine as one of the means for spiritual growth. Wishy-washy doctrine leads to faulty practice.



**DEVELOP LIFE SKILLS.** Jesus taught His followers to meet life's challenges in a way that honored and glorified God. He gave them the skills to navigate those challenges successfully.



**UPLIFT OTHERS.** Jesus' life was all about others. Leading by example, He taught His followers to be all about others too.



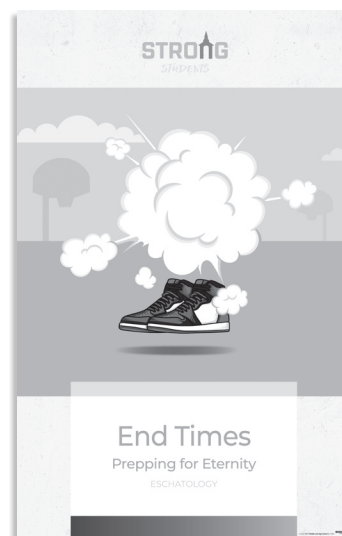
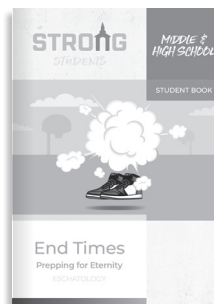
**PREPARE TO SERVE.** Jesus prepared His followers to serve in the context of local churches that were established soon after His ascension. He emphasized sacrifice and dedication.

# STRONG<sup>®</sup> curriculum

## Kit Contents

- ☐ Teacher Guide
- ☐ Student Book  
*Order one book for each student*
- ☐ Card with online download code  
*Includes PowerPoint, resources, Home Connection Tool, and additional teacher resources*
- ☐ DVD
- ☐ Verse Poster
- ☐ Posters

This Strong Students course presents the Bible's doctrine on end-time events. The course will help your students know what God has planned for the future and how His plans will affect them. The study will challenge them to consider what they need to do now to prepare for eternity and especially for their stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ.



## Ordering Information

All materials are available from Regular Baptist Press.

- Web: [www.StrongCurriculum.com](http://www.StrongCurriculum.com)
- E-mail: [orders@rbpstore.org](mailto:orders@rbpstore.org)
- Toll-free orders in the United States:  
1-800-727-4440
- Fax: 1-847-843-3757
- Canada: Contact your distributor.



## The Doctrinal Basis of Our Curriculum

*A more detailed statement with references is available upon request.*

- The verbal, plenary inspiration of the Scriptures
- Only one true God
- The Trinity of the Godhead
- The Holy Spirit and His ministry
- The personality of Satan
- The Genesis account of creation
- Original sin and the fall of man
- The virgin birth of Christ
- Salvation through faith in the shed blood of Christ
- The bodily resurrection and priesthood of Christ
- Grace and the new birth
- Justification by faith
- Sanctification of the believer
- The security of the believer
- The church
- The ordinances of the local church: baptism by immersion and the Lord's Supper
- Biblical separation—ecclesiastical and personal
- Obedience to civil government
- The place of Israel
- The pretribulation rapture of the church
- The premillennial return of Christ
- The millennial reign of Christ
- Eternal glory in Heaven for the righteous
- Eternal torment in Hell for the wicked



# How to Teach **STRONG STUDENTS** Lessons

# Leading a Student to Christ

STRONG STUDENTS has been designed to help you clearly present God's Word to your students. Each lesson will guide students through the Bible, encouraging them to interact with the material and apply it to their lives.

Familiarize yourself with the resources included in the kit and on the download pages so you can maximize your effectiveness in the classroom. The key resources you need are Student Books, the PowerPoint (download), and the Home Connection Tool (download).

Encourage students to use their Student Books during each lesson so they can follow the PowerPoint presentation by taking notes. The words to fill in the blanks are either part of the outline or highlighted in orange in the sentences in the PowerPoint.

Some of the PowerPoint presentations contain additional slides that obviously tie into the teacher guide lessons. Make sure you review the PowerPoint presentations before teaching.

The student books include a daily devotional. Encourage your students to complete them after coming to class.

The Home Connection Tool gives the parents of your students an idea of what you are teaching in class. Consider emailing those to each family represented in your class. You can find them on the downloads page using the code on the download card.

## Before Each Lesson

- Read the Scripture Focus passage several times.
- Do the Time with God section of the Student Book to know what your students are studying.
- Memorize the key verses.
- Prepare the materials you will need for each activity.
- Work through the Bible Study section and carefully plan the lesson.
- Plan how you will apply the Bible lesson to your students' lives. Make sure what you say is clear and shows students how they can use the lesson.
- Pray for yourself, your students, and your lesson.

AS A TEACHER, your most important concern is the personal salvation of your students. Find out whether your students know Jesus Christ as their Savior in a way that doesn't introduce doubt in their minds. An easy and gentle way to find this out is to give your students several minutes to write out an answer to a question like, How can a person get to Heaven? Collect their answers and read them during the following week. If any of your students seem confused about salvation, you can present the gospel to them and provide the opportunity for them to receive Christ. If possible, deal with students individually.

## The Plan of Salvation

- Everyone is a sinner. No one can live up to God's perfect standard (Romans 3:23).
- Sin's penalty is death (Romans 6:23).
- God loves us and sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to pay for our sin. Christ died in our place (John 3:16; Romans 5:8).
- When a person places his trust in Jesus' payment for sins, Christ becomes his Savior. His sins are forgiven, and he receives God's gift of eternal life (John 1:12; 5:24).
- Everlasting life begins the moment we trust in Jesus (John 3:36).
- After that, nothing we ever do will take us out of God's hand; we are secure (John 10:27–29).
- The experience of the new birth (being born into God's family) is not based on a feeling, but on confidence in God's Word (1 John 5:11, 12).

Encourage students to pray, but explain that prayer does not save a person. Prayer is how we communicate our inward thoughts to God. Ask new believers to explain what they have done and what has happened to them.

## Discipleship

Encourage new believers to read the Bible, and explain the importance of prayer. Also explain 1 John 1:9 to them so they can deal with sin in their new Christian life. Make it a priority to follow up with new believers.



# Knowing Your Students

## Description of Physical, Social, and Emotional Development

- I MAY feel developmentally out of step with my peers—behind or ahead in physical changes—as I experience puberty.
- I MAY be sensitive about my weight and body shape and worry about whether I am normal.
- I AM developing my own sense of identity.
- I AM more interested in and influenced by my peer group than by the adults in my life.
- I MAY be moody, depressed, or anxious about academic or social issues in my life.
- I AM very focused on myself and may feel both high expectations and lack of confidence.
- I AM better able to express feelings through talking, but I tend to respond dramatically, feeling that no one else has ever experienced the same feelings and emotions.
- I DO NOT always exhibit the emotional maturity that matches my more adult-like appearance. I have trouble thinking before acting; sometimes I seem silly and unfocused on the task at hand.

## Effective Responses

- Provide emotional and spiritual support and encourage students to develop a strong sense of self as a valuable person created by God.
- Accept students as they are and avoid comparing them to others. Resist stereotyping. Not every tall boy is a basketball player.
- Generate an atmosphere of acceptance and love for all, demonstrating interest and care for each student.
- Create an atmosphere of mutual respect so youth feel they are part of a community.
- Help build genuine relationships by honestly sharing mistakes and life experiences.
- Help students talk through the ramifications of their choices without asking, How could you? What were you thinking?

- Avoid arguments by remaining calm and not engaging in banter over an issue.
- Be patient with the tendency of some youth toward constant personal grooming.

## Cognitive (Learning) Development

- I MAY be hesitant to try new things for fear of embarrassing myself in front of my peer group.
- I AM developing new thinking skills and am able to think about multiple options and possibilities.
- I CAN think more deeply and significantly about abstract ideas such as faith.
- I AM developing a stronger sense of right and wrong.
- I MAY be ready to take significant steps in areas of faith and Christian growth.

## Effective Instructional Methods

- Create an open and stress-free environment where youth can learn and share concerns in a confidence-building atmosphere.
- Provide background information, a purpose to the lesson, and understanding of the text.
- Combine love, high energy, enthusiasm, and seriousness with engaging ways to present the lesson.
- Use personal stories that illustrate Biblical principles to keep students engaged in learning.
- Provide honest answers to questions.
- Stimulate thinking in areas of salvation and Christian growth.
- Help Christians work through issues of assurance of salvation and to begin studying the Bible for daily decision making.
- Encourage students to articulate Biblical principles of right and wrong that they are learning from God's Word.
- Invite volunteers to look up and read aloud Bible passages. But don't put students on the spot or ask them to do things that make them feel foolish.

## SESSION 1

# THE BIBLE'S PROPHECY

### Scripture Focus

Deut. 13:1–4; 18:20–22; Ezek.  
26:4–21; Mic. 5:2; Acts 1:6–9;  
1 Cor. 2:9–12; 2 Tim. 2:15;  
4:1–4; 2 Peter 1:19, 21; Rev. 22:7

### BuildUP Theme



#### LEARN DOCTRINE

God revealed truths about the end times so we might understand and be assured of His plans.

### Measurable Response

Students will purpose to study Bible prophecy with confidence that God will help them understand it.

### Memory Verse

“For prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:21). NKJV

“For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:21). NEV

## Teacher Preparation

- ☐ Prophecy can be daunting, but it is crucial to our understanding of God’s plan for the ages—past, present, and future. We need to study it. Yet, Bible scholars don’t agree on all aspects of end-time events. We do, however, have many advantages that allow us to come to some solid, life-changing conclusions.
- ☐ Read 1 Corinthians 2:9–14 and 2 Peter 1:21. We have the inspired words of prophecy preserved and recorded in a language we can read and study. And as believers we have the Holy Spirit, the ultimate Teacher living in us. We also have Biblical guidelines for interpretation to direct our efforts to make sense of prophecy passages.
- ☐ As you begin this study of the end times, your students may be eager to dive into the details of the Tribulation or to have speculative discussions about the identity of the Antichrist. Use this session, along with next week’s session, to lay a foundation for reading and understanding Biblical prophecy and for recognizing the God’s greatness in being able to plan the future and to see it as perfectly as He sees the past.

## Cultural Barrier

This session addresses the false idea that truth is subjective. Some people view the Bible’s teaching on the end times as a matter of opinion. But the Bible gives us objective truth concerning the end times. The Bible also helps us know how to study and interpret passages about the end times. And the Holy Spirit guides us into God’s truth in His Word. We can speak clearly and confidently about the end times.

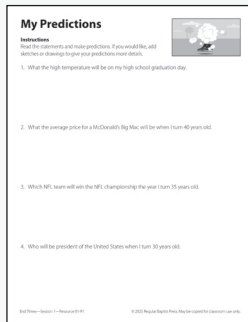
# Session Starters

## Option 1—My Predictions

### Gather

- Resource 81-R1.
- Colored Pencils.

### Steps



81-R1

1. Give each student a copy of resource 81-R1. Students make their predictions on the resource and add drawings of their predictions. The prediction categories are listed below.
  - What the high temperature will be on my high school graduation day.
  - What the average price for a McDonald's Big Mac will be when I turn 40 years old.
  - Which NFL team will win the NFL championship the year I turn 35 years old.
  - Who will be president of the United States when I turn 30 years old.

2. Discuss making predictions.

**ASK:** How confident are you that even one of your predictions will come true?

**ASK:** What would you conclude if one of them did come true? Would you say you are a prophet?

If one of your predictions comes true, you couldn't say you knew it all along. Predictions are educated guesses.

3. Transition to the Bible study.

Some Bible passages contain prophecies that might seem like predictions. But a Bible prophecy differs from a prediction in that it is a sure, God-inspired statement about what *will* happen in the future. Predictions are guesses based on a limited amount of information. God has planned the future. He can see what will happen as clearly as He sees what is happening now. This session lays the groundwork for studying Bible prophecy as God intended.

## Option 2—Coin-flip Flops

### Gather

- Coin.



## Steps

1. Announce that you are going to determine who is the best at predicting coin flips. Have all the students stand. Students who think the coin flip will be heads raise both their hands. Students who think the flip will be tails leave their hands at their sides.
2. Flip the coin and announce the result. Students who were wrong must sit down and stay seated through additional rounds.
3. Repeat the process until all the students have incorrectly guessed a coin flip.
4. Discuss making predictions.

**ASK:** Why can't we definitively say we have proved who is best at predicting coin flips? *Because no human has the ability to correctly predict something that is random.*

**ASK:** What would you predict would happen if we did this exercise again?

5. Transition to the Bible study.

Some Bible passages contain prophecies that might seem like predictions. But a Bible prophecy differs from a prediction in that it is a sure, God-inspired statement about what *will* happen in the future. Predictions are guesses based on a limited amount of information. God has planned the future. He can see what will happen as clearly as He sees what is happening now. This session lays the groundwork for studying Bible prophecy as God intended.

## Bible Study

### Gather

- Resources 81-R2 and 81-R3.

### I. Identifying Bible Prophecy

#### A. It is common (Rev. 22:7)

God used prophets to speak His word and represent Him. Many of the Old Testament prophets wrote about the end times, but only Daniel, Ezekiel, Isaiah, Joel, Zechariah, and Micah focused a good portion of their books on the last days. Their writings pointed to God's judgment on Israel's sin followed by a final triumph for the nation through their trust in the Messiah.

In the New Testament, the Gospels and Acts include prophecies, and Revelation is a prophetic book. Also, many of the Epistles reference

future events. In all, about a quarter of the Bible is prophetic and about half of the prophecies are about the end times.

John wrote that Jesus said that He will bless the person who knows about the end times and prepares for His coming.

**READ:** Revelation 22:7. **ASK:** Why does being ready for the end times bring God's blessing to a believer's life? *Prepping for the end times involves obeying God, serving Him, and sharing the gospel. God gives peace and joy to believers who do those activities.*

## **B. It is certain (Deut. 13:1–4; 18:20–22; 2 Peter 1:21)**

**READ:** Isaiah 8:1; Jeremiah 1:4; Ezekiel 2:1–4. **ASK:** What did these prophets claim about the origin of their messages? *That their messages came directly from God.*

God's prophets made sure their audiences understood that their messages came from God. Of course, false prophets also claimed to speak for God. So, Moses gave Israel a way to evaluate prophets.

**ASK:** How might you determine whether a prophet was a true prophet?

**READ:** Deuteronomy 18:20–22.

A true prophet's prophecies always came true. By contrast, a false prophet's prophecies didn't happen because the prophecies were merely guesses.

Moses also warned that some questionable prophets might appear to perform signs and wonders. In those cases, the prophets' calls for Israel to follow false gods would prove that the prophets were untrustworthy. No true prophet would call for God's people to follow false gods.

**READ:** Deuteronomy 13:1–4.

The Holy Spirit moved authors to record without error (inerrantly) the details that He wanted us to know and study about the end times.

**READ:** 2 Peter 1:21.

God intends for His prophecies about the end times to influence our lives. He wrote them so we might be prepared when they happen.

## **II. Observing Bible Prophecy (Ezek. 26:4–21; 2 Peter 1:19)**

Many Bible prophecies have already happened. Ezekiel, for example, prophesied around 586 BC about the destruction of the great city of Tyre. Tyre was both a Mediterranean port city and an island fortress in Phoenicia north of Israel.

**READ:** Ezekiel 26:4, 5, 12–21.

Ezekiel prophesied that King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon would destroy the mainland city of Tyre, that other nations would rise up against the city, and that the city would become a bare rock. The prophecy also stated that fishermen would use the site of Tyre as a place to spread their nets, that someone would fill its harbor, and that no one would rebuild the ancient city.

Historical records show that Nebuchadnezzar led a campaign against Tyre around 585 BC. He destroyed the mainland city, but the island fortress remained powerful. In 323 BC, Alexander the Great laid siege to the island fortress. He pushed the debris of the mainland city into the water to build a passageway out to the island. In a matter of months, he conquered Tyre. When Alexander left, the city was in ruins and its people were dead or enslaved. But Tyre did recover some of its strength. Antigonos conquered the city in 314 BC. And the Sultan Halil brought the city to complete ruin in AD 1291, more than eighteen hundred years after Ezekiel's prophecy. Numerous historians and archaeologists have confirmed that nothing of the original ancient city exists today. The original mainland city lies under the sand and water of the Mediterranean Sea (26:19). The ancient structures visible in modern Tyre are mostly Roman ruins.



81-R2

**DISPLAY:** Resource 81-R2.

The notion that Ezekiel made lucky guesses about Tyre's future is so improbable that we could say it is impossible. His writings had to be prophecies from God. So, we can see the fulfillment of Ezekiel's prophecy with our own eyes.

We could include numerous other examples of the Bible's fulfilled prophecies. Daniel, like Ezekiel, wrote about Alexander the Great and other historical figures. Alexander is the horn on the goat that represents the Greek Empire (Dan. 8:5–8). All that he prophesied about kings and the rise and fall of their nations came true.

Furthermore, all the Old Testament prophecies about Jesus' first coming came true. For example, Isaiah 7:14 said Jesus would be born of a virgin. Luke 1:26–35 confirms Jesus' virgin birth. Psalm 41:9 says a friend would betray the Messiah. Matthew 10:4 confirms the betrayal. Isaiah 53:9 says Jesus' grave would be a rich man's tomb. Matthew 27:57–60 confirms Isaiah's prophecy.

**READ:** 2 Peter 1:19.

Peter compared the Scriptures, which he called God's prophetic and sure word, to a light shining in a dark place. He tells us to heed God's prophetic Word until the day dawns and the morning star rises in our hearts—both references to Christ's return.



**ASK:** How should we respond to the Bible's history of fulfilled prophecies? *We should take God's Word seriously; we should study end-time prophecy and live in light of it.*

Scripture and history clearly testify that God always fulfills His prophecies.

### III. Interpreting Bible Prophecy

We must be careful to consistently follow interpretation guidelines to understand end-time prophecies.

#### A. Rely on the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 2:9–12)

As believers, we have the Holy Spirit in us to help us understand God's Word, including its prophecies (1 Cor. 2:14). We couldn't understand God's Word without the Holy Spirit.

**READ:** 1 Corinthians 2:9–12.

Paul wrote 1 Corinthians 2:9 as a loose reference to Isaiah 64:4 and 65:17. Isaiah's verses pointed the Israelites to God's creation of a new heaven and new earth at the culmination of the end times. The new heaven and new earth are part of what God has prepared for believers, the ones who love Him and are waiting for Him.

**ASK:** Does having the Holy Spirit in us mean that we can easily understand God's Word every time we read it? Explain. *Not necessarily. Studying and interpreting Scripture is challenging work (2 Tim. 2:15) that continues over a lifetime.*

#### B. Practice normal interpretation (2 Tim. 4:1–4)

When the plain sense of Scripture makes sense, seek no other sense. Unless a passage alerts the reader that it is using symbolical language (e.g., using "like" or "as"), the reader should interpret the passage's language literally. To allegorize a passage means to give it a spiritual meaning instead of its normal meaning. For example, some Bible interpreters believe passages about Jesus' earthly reign refer to Christ's present spiritual reign in and through believers. They don't believe Jesus will sit on an actual throne in Jerusalem, ruling the world for one thousand years. But both the Old and New Testaments present plain language regarding Christ's earthly reign.

**READ:** Micah 4:1, 2; Revelation 20:1–4. **ASK:** What, if anything, in these passages suggests we should interpret them allegorically? *Nothing. The passages present plain truth concerning Christ's millennial reign on earth.*

Jesus interpreted the Old Testament literally. He acknowledged, for

example, that a fish swallowed Jonah (Matt. 12:40). He also spoke about Adam and Eve as historical people and the Genesis account of their creation as true (19:4, 5). While on earth, Jesus sought no other sense when the Old Testament passages made plain sense.

We should note that literal interpretation leaves room for the use of figurative language. God created figurative language and often used it in His descriptions of end-time events. But the language is obviously figurative and clearly intended to enhance our understanding of God's truth.

**READ:** Revelation 14:17–19. **ASK:** What do the bunches of grapes and the winepress reveal about God's judgment? *The grapes reveal that God has been storing up His wrath against sinful man and that His wrath will be ready to burst forth. The winepress reveals that God has prepared to pour out His wrath on the earth.*

To understand the grapes and winepress in Revelation 14 as symbolic of truths about God's judgment is a normal use of figurative language. Practicing normal interpretation is what Paul had in mind when he told pastor Timothy to preach the Word.

**READ:** 2 Timothy 4:1–4. **ASK:** Listeners with itching ears are those who only want to hear certain messages. What truths about the end times might people today refuse to hear? *That God will save only the people who trust in Jesus as Savior; that the torments of the Lake of Fire will last forever; that God's wrath during the Tribulation will be deadly and destructive.*

### C. Study the context (2 Tim. 2:15)

When studying Bible prophecy, we must study the text's Scriptural, cultural, and historical contexts. This principle is particularly important when interpreting passages with figurative language. For example, Daniel recorded Nebuchadnezzar's prophetic vision of a large, five-part statue (Dan. 2:31–45). The Scriptural context for the passage tells us exactly what the statue means. Producing alternate meanings would be an abuse of the text.

Sometimes the symbols that writers used in their prophecies have meanings in other passages or in the writer's historical or cultural context. The passage at hand should inform our interpretation first. We must seek to know how the writer used the symbol in the immediate context before we begin to look elsewhere for interpretation clues.

**READ:** 2 Timothy 2:15. **ASK:** How should interpreters who twist God's Word feel about their practices? *They should be ashamed of their handling of God's Word.*

Once we have studied a passage's context, we can compare Scripture

with Scripture to evaluate our interpretation of a passage. God's Word never contradicts itself. It acts as one unit with one story.

## D. Recognize time intervals (Mic. 5:2; Acts 1:6–9)

We must recognize that prophecies often have both immediate and future fulfillments in view. And we must note that prophets didn't always alert us to time gaps between their prophecies. For example, some prophets combined prophecies about Christ's first and second coming. The prophecies for Christ's first coming, including His birth and life on earth, have already happened while the prophecies of Jesus' Second Coming have yet to happen.

**READ:** Micah 5:2. **ASK:** What did Micah say about Jesus' first coming? *That Jesus would be born in Bethlehem.*

**ASK:** What did Micah write about Jesus' second coming? *Jesus will rule over Israel.*

Jesus came to earth as a baby in Bethlehem in fulfillment of the first part of Micah's prophecy. But Jesus has not yet ruled over Israel.

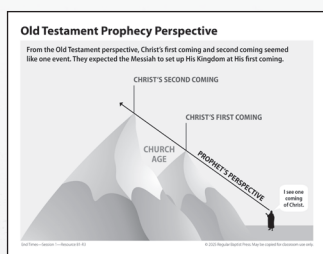
**DISPLAY:** Resource 81-R3.

When prophets looked ahead to the coming of the Messiah, they perceived both of His comings as one singular coming. It was as if they were looking at two mountaintops and seeing only one because of their perspective. So, they expected Christ to establish His Kingdom when He came to earth the first time. Even Jesus' disciples questioned their post-resurrection Lord about the timing of His Kingdom in the moments before He prepared to leave earth.

**READ:** Acts 1:6–9.

The disciples' understanding of God's plan for the Church Age, the unseen gap, came mostly after the Holy Spirit came (Acts 2:1–4).

We live in the time period between the two comings of Christ. Christ will come again for us at the Rapture (John 14:1–3) before His second coming to earth with us (Rev. 19:11–16). We must live in light of the truth that Christ is coming again. This course will help us do that.



81-R3

## Memory Builder

### Gather

- Whiteboard and markers.

### Steps

1. Write 2 Peter 1:21 on the board and review its meaning.



Every Bible prophecy about the end times came from God. None of the prophets who recorded them embellished the prophecies or changed them in any way. In fact, the prophets couldn't change the prophecies because the Holy Spirit directed what they wrote. They had to write exactly what God wants us to know about the future. We must trust the Bible's prophecies and live in anticipation of them coming true.

2. Talk about the impact of end-time events on your students' lives.

**ASK:** What events come to mind when you think about the end times?

**ASK:** Which truths about the end times impact your daily life? Which ones should impact your life?

3. Students respond to the truth of 2 Peter 1:21 by writing a personal statement on the board. The following are examples of personal responses.

- Because God wrote to me about the end times, I will be diligent to study what He had to say.
- God's revelation about the end times is crucial to my daily life, so I will put effort into learning what He had to say.

4. Give students a few minutes to memorize the verse.

## Session Application

### Steps

1. Review the lesson.

About a quarter of the Bible is prophetic and about half of the prophecies are about the end times. The prophets who wrote about the end times did so under God's authority and with certainty. We can trust what they wrote. When interpreting Bible prophecy, we must rely on the Holy Spirit to guide our understanding. We must also practice normal interpretation of Scripture, study the context of the passages that reveal truths about the end times, and recognize time issues with end-time revelation.

2. Discuss studying Bible prophecy.

**ASK:** Some believers have concluded that Bible prophecies are too confusing and abstract to understand. What do their conclusions reveal about their view of God? *That God communicated to us poorly and inadequately, that the Holy Spirit can't or won't help us understand Bible prophecies.*

**ASK:** What did you learn from this session about interpreting Bible prophecy?

In the next twelve weeks, we'll study prophecy that God has yet to fulfill. Armed with good study techniques, an assurance of the inspiration of prophecy, and the promise of the Spirit's help in understanding, we'll seek to grow in our Christian walk and in our trust in God.

3. Pray your students will benefit from this study of the end times and that they will be prepared when the end times begin.

## Session Takeaways

Before dismissing the students, draw their attention to the Time with God page in their student books. Instruct them to complete the study on their own. The activity reviews key principles from this study.

## SESSION 2

# GOD'S PROPHETIC PURPOSES

### Scripture Focus

Gen. 3:14, 15; 12:1–3; 15:5–7;  
2 Sam. 7:12–14; Isa. 53:10, 11;  
Jer. 31:31–34; Ezek. 37; 2 Cor.  
5:10; 1 Thess. 4:13–17; Rev.  
5:6–10; 6:12–17; 19:7–16; 20:4

### BuildUP Theme



#### LEARN DOCTRINE

God gave prophecies to different groups of people so they might have hope and glorify His name.

### Measurable Response

Students will glorify God based on His revelation of His end-time plans.

### Memory Verse

"And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, In you all the nations shall be blessed" (Gal. 3:8). NKJV

"And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, In you shall all the nations be blessed" (Gal. 3:8). NEV

## Teacher Preparation

- ☐ Read through the passages listed in the Scripture focus. As you read, consider why God made the prophecies included in the passages and to whom He made them.
- ☐ Understanding why God made prophecies reminds us that Christ is the world's only hope for the future and that God wants the world to be saved. Knowing why God made prophecies also causes us to appreciate God because prophecies reveal His perfections and greatness to us.
- ☐ Understanding to whom God made prophecies helps us understand His overall plan for the end times. Once we understand His plan, we will find motivation for serving God well while we can.
- ☐ Encourage your students to pay attention to what God tells us about the future. Knowing about the future will motivate them to glorify God and to serve Him well while they have the opportunity.

## Cultural Barrier

This lesson addresses the false hope some people have in a social utopia. God is our only hope for a perfect environment. He sent Christ to pay the penalty for our sins so we might trust in Christ and have the hope of an eternity in God's presence. Man could never be the solution to the sin that has ruined our present world.



# Session Starters

## Option 1—The Endgame

### Gather

- Chessboard and chess pieces.

### Steps

1. Explain the term “endgame” in relation to chess.

The term “endgame” comes from the game of chess. Players plan out their final moves so they might be victorious in the end.

2. Allow students who are good at chess to set up scenarios on the chessboard that put an opponent’s king in checkmate.
3. Talk about preparing for an endgame in life.

**ASK:** What, if anything, are you doing now that will help you be “victorious” at the end of your life?

**ASK:** What does the “victory” look like? Are you considering eternal matters?

4. Transition to the Bible study.

Our endgame for life will fail if we don’t consider our endgame for eternity. We must set life goals with God’s plans for eternity in mind. This session will help you understand God’s plans for you in eternity. The introduction will lay the foundation for taking serious steps to being ready for eternity.

## Option 2—Prepping for “Adulthood”

### Gather

- Whiteboard and markers.

### Steps

1. Students draw pictures on the whiteboard that represent what they are doing to prep for adulthood.
2. Students explain their drawings to the class.
3. Discuss prepping for “adulthood.”

**ASK:** Which of the drawings reflect actions you need to begin taking to get ready for adulthood?

**ASK:** What do your parents say you need to be doing to get ready for adulthood?

4. Transition to the Bible study.

Preparing to become an adult is wise. Preparing for eternity is too. This session will help you understand God's plans for you in eternity. The introduction will lay the foundation for taking serious steps to being ready for eternity.

## Bible Study

### Gather

- God's Plan for the End Times poster.

### I. Why God Gave Prophecy

#### A. To give people hope (Gen. 3:14, 15; Isa. 53:10, 11)

God created Adam and Eve to exercise dominion over the earth and to subdue it (Gen. 1:26–28). But sin ruined Adam and Eve, making them unqualified to rule and unable to fulfill God's plan. Sin completely affected their hearts and bodies. They became thoroughly sinful and began to die physically (Rom. 5:12). They also died spiritually and came under God's wrath (Gen. 2:16, 17). Furthermore, the curse God put on creation made the earth impossible for Adam and Eve to subdue (Gen. 3:17–19). Yet, God gave Adam and Eve hope when He voiced His first prophecy about their redemption.

**READ:** Genesis 3:14, 15.

Jesus is the "Seed" of the woman. God said Satan (the serpent) would wound Jesus but that Jesus would crush Satan in the process. God, of course, is referring to Jesus' victorious death on the cross—our only hope for salvation from our sins.

**ASK:** To whom or to what else might Adam and Eve have turned for hope if God hadn't provided it immediately? *They could have turned to each other, to themselves, or to Satan. God was their only hope for deliverance from sin.*

Prophecies after Genesis 3 give us more details about God's redemption plan. Isaiah, for example, prophesied about the coming death of Christ for the world's transgressions (Isa. 53).

**READ:** Isaiah 53:10, 11.

Detailed prophecies about God's redemption plan give us a sure hope that God has made us righteous and saved us from His wrath (Rom.

5:8–11). We also have a sure hope that God will one day permanently deliver us from the presence of sin. The more we learn about God's redemption plan in relation to the end times, the deeper our hope in God grows.

## **B. To glorify Himself (Rev. 5:6–9; 6:12–17; 19:11–16)**

To some degree, every prophecy reveals God's glory, meaning His perfection and greatness. For example, as we study end-time prophecy, we will learn about God's love and mercy. John recorded a scene in Heaven that will take place after Christ comes to take Church-age believers to Heaven at the Rapture. The twenty-four elders in John's revelation represent the church.

**READ:** Revelation 5:6–9. **ASK:** How does this prophecy reveal God's love? *It pictures Jesus as a lamb that has been slain for our sins. Jesus died for us because God loves us (John 3:16). When we see Christ, we will better understand the high price He paid for our sins.*

End-time prophecies also reveal God's justice and holiness. A large chunk of the book of Revelation records how God plans to pour out His wrath on sinful humanity during the seven-year tribulation. God pours out His wrath on sin because He is holy and just.

**READ:** Revelation 6:12–17. **ASK:** What is the answer to the question in verse 17? *No sinner who has not been cleansed by Christ's blood can stand before God's wrath.*

Our study of end-time prophecy also helps us understand God's greatness. We will learn that God is sovereign (all-controlling), omnipotent (all-powerful), and omniscient (all-knowing). The prophecy of Christ's return to earth at the end of the Tribulation reveals His greatness to us.

**READ:** Revelation 19:11–16. **ASK:** What can you learn about Christ's greatness from this prophecy? *His eyes are like fire, meaning He sees everything about a person; a sword goes from His mouth, meaning He will slay sinners with the word of His mouth; and "King of Kings and Lord of Lords" will be written on His robe.*

Perhaps most importantly, end-time prophecies reveal that God is faithful. Note that John's prophecy about Christ's return to earth says He was called "Faithful" and "True" (Rev. 19:11). The idea is that to know Christ is to know faithfulness and truth. All that God tells us about the end times will most certainly come true.

When we are in Heaven awaiting our return to earth with Christ, we will feel compelled to worship Christ for His greatness. We will glorify Him with shouts of joy. But we don't have to wait to see Christ in



Heaven to talk about His greatness. His praise should always be on our lips (Ps. 34:1–4). And God’s revelation of end-time events gives us plenty of reasons to praise and glorify the Lord.

## II. To Whom God Prophesied

**DISPLAY:** Refer to the God’s Plan for the End Times poster as needed throughout the remainder of this session.

As we study specific end-time prophecies, we must keep clear to whom God is giving a specific prophecy. Not all of God’s prophecies are for us as Church-age believers.

### A. To the world (Gen. 3:14, 15; 12:3)

God’s promise to Adam and Eve about the Seed of the woman defeating Satan (Gen. 3:14, 15) is a prophecy for the world. God will save whoever trusts in Christ’s work on the cross (John 3:16; Rom. 10:9). Accordingly, Jesus sent His followers to all nations to share the gospel and make disciples of them (Matt. 28:19, 20). Prophecies about salvation are for all people.

Even when God came to Abraham and made him promises exclusive to his descendants, God included a promise for the world.

**READ:** Genesis 12:3. **ASK:** How did Abraham provide a blessing for the world? *Jesus is a descendant of Abraham. He blessed the world by dying on the cross for their sins.*

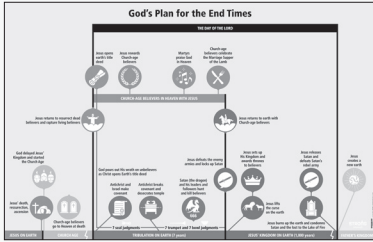
Paul made clear that Jesus is the descendant of Abraham through Whom all the world would be blessed (Gal. 3:8). He is the One Who will crush the serpent’s head (Gen. 3:14, 15) and provide salvation to the world. All the world has the opportunity to trust in Christ as Savior. Salvation has never been exclusive to a nation or people group. The other parts of God’s promise to Abraham, however, are exclusive to Abraham’s descendants.

### B. To Israel (Gen. 12:1–3; 15:5–7; 2 Sam. 7:12–14; Jer. 31:31–34; Ezek. 37)

Abraham’s descendants are called the Children of Israel or Israelites. Israel (Jacob) is Abraham’s grandson. The promises God made to Abraham passed on to Abraham’s descendants. We call God’s promises to Abraham the Abrahamic Covenant.

**READ:** Genesis 12:1–3; 15:5–7. **ASK:** What did God promise to Abraham? *A large nation and an exclusive land, called the Promised Land. The land is the main focus of the promise.*

God also made the Davidic Covenant, promising King David a descendant would sit on his throne forever (2 Sam. 7:12–14; 1 Chron.



17:9–11). In God's Land Covenant with Israel, He promised to regather the scattered nation into the Promised Land (Deut. 30; Ezek. 37; Matt. 24:31). And finally, God made the New Covenant with Israel, promising to regenerate their hearts when He regathers them to the Promised Land (Jer. 31:31–34).

God has set Israel aside during the present Church Age. But when the end times come, He will again deal with them as a nation according to His covenants with them. We will see in the coming weeks how God will work in the future to fulfill all His promises to Israel. We will also learn how God deals with us, the church, at the same time. Knowing the difference between God's dealing with Israel and His dealing with us will help us prepare for the end times.

## C. To the church

The Church Age began with the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1–4). Christ will stop adding believers to His church at the Rapture, the time of His return for His church. Everyone who trusts in Christ as Savior at some point between the coming of the Holy Spirit and the Rapture automatically becomes part of Christ's church. Even Jews who trust in Christ become part of Christ's church.

God didn't make formal covenants with Church-age believers like He did with Israel. But there are parts of His plan for the future that relate only to Church-age believers. God gave us those prophetic plans in the form of promises. There is nothing uncertain about God's plans for the church.

### 1. Rapture (1 Thess. 4:13–17)

When the Rapture takes place, Christ will resurrect departed Church-age believers immediately before snatching up living believers to meet Him in the clouds in the sky.

**READ:** 1 Thessalonians 4:13–17. **ASK:** Why did Paul write to the Thessalonians about the resurrection of believers and the Rapture of living believers (v. 13)? *He wanted them to be informed so they might have hope concerning the future.*

We don't know what the Rapture will feel like or look like. But we do know Christ is coming to the sky for us and that He will glorify our bodies at that time, making us free from sin and perfect. We will live in our perfect state and in Christ's presence forever.

### 2. Reward (2 Cor. 5:10)

Once we as believers have met Christ in the air, we will go on with Him to Heaven where He will judge us at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

**READ:** 2 Corinthians 5:10. **ASK:** What about our lives will Christ judge? *He will judge what we did while living on earth.*

Reward will be Jesus' focus when He judges Church-age believers. He will consider what we did for Him and why we did it. He will then give us crowns to reward our good service for Him. Jesus is with us and is keeping a perfect record of the work we do for Him and our motives and attitudes while we serve Him. For all eternity, no believers will ever think that what they did for Christ was a waste of time.

### **3. Reception (Rev. 19:7–10)**

After receiving our rewards from Christ, we will celebrate our "marriage" to Christ with a grand feast, called the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. Our "marriage" to Christ shows the permanent nature of our relationship with Him. The feast will likely take place in Heaven before we return to earth with Christ.

**READ:** Revelation 19:7–10. **ASK:** What are your thoughts about going to a wedding reception in Heaven?

John wrote that when he heard about the marriage feast, he was so glad and excited that he fell down to worship the angelic messenger making the announcement. The angel reminded John to worship God instead. John's point is that Heaven is going to be fantastic for believers. No wedding reception on earth will compare to the heavenly reception we share as the bride of Christ.

### **4. Rule (Rev. 5:8–10; 20:4)**

We will only be in Heaven for about seven years before returning to earth with Christ. The Tribulation on earth will end with Christ's return. He will then take steps to set up His Kingdom, called the Millennium. We will rule and reign with Christ on our present earth for one thousand years.

**READ:** Revelation 5:8–10; 20:4.

Before our rule with Christ begins, He will lift the curse on the earth and restore its beauty and bountifulness (Isa. 11:6, 7; Amos 9:13). Our rule with Christ on earth will reflect what God intended for Adam before Adam sinned in the perfect Garden of Eden.

**ASK:** How often do you think about ruling and reigning with Christ?

**ASK:** How might making our future rule with Christ our focus change our perspective on life? *We would focus more on eternal matters, like serving Christ, spreading the gospel, and loving others.*

In the coming weeks, we will learn a lot more about each of the events



God has planned for the world in general and for Israel and the church specifically. Our increased knowledge and understanding should make us excited for the future as well as motivated to serve God well in the present.

## Memory Builder

### Gather

- Whiteboard and markers.

### Steps

1. Write Galatians 3:8 on the board and review its meaning.

God planned for salvation to be for all people, including both Jews and Gentiles (heathen). So, when He promised Abraham a land, He included the promise that through Abraham all the nations of the world would be blessed. He meant that through Jesus, the promised Messiah born in Abraham's line, the world would have the opportunity to be saved.

2. Discuss God's message of salvation to the "nations."

**ASK:** Who in your life is part of the "nations" mentioned in our memory verse?

Everyone you know is part of the "nations" in our memory verse. So, God wants all your unsaved friends and family members to hear about redemption through Christ.

**ASK:** What are you doing to tell the "nations" about salvation through Christ?

3. Have volunteers replace some of the key words on the board with icons or simple drawings. Review the verse as a class by alternating between erasing some of the words and saying the verse together.

## Session Application

### Steps

1. Review the lesson.

God gave detailed end-time prophecies to give the world hope for redemption. End-time prophecies also motivate us to glorify God. Every prophecy reveals God's glory, meaning His perfection and greatness. As we study prophecy, we must determine to whom God wrote the prophecy. His prophecies about redemption are for

the world. God's prophecies about the Abrahamic, Davidic, Land, and New Covenants are for Israel. God will work throughout the end times to fulfill all His promises to Israel. God's prophecies about the Rapture, reward at the Judgment Seat of Christ, the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, and ruling positions in Christ's Kingdom are for the church.

2. Discuss learning about God from end-time prophecies.

**ASK:** Why should we focus on what end-time prophecies teach us about God? *Because knowing God better will motivate us to glorify Him with our lips and with our lives. We will want to praise and serve Him more.*

**ASK:** What do you anticipate as you look to your future? Are your sights set on earthly things that won't last or on things that are eternal?

**ASK:** How might purposing to live for eternity change your daily life?

3. Thank God for revealing His greatness through His prophecies. Pray your students would live their daily lives with eternity in view.

## Session Takeaways

Before dismissing the students, draw their attention to the Time with God page in their student books. Instruct them to complete the study on their own. The activity reviews God's purposes for Bible prophecy and the prophecies God made to different groups of people.

## SESSION 3

# THE CHURCH'S COMING MOVE

### Scripture Focus

Matt. 24:9–11; Rom. 8:23; 1 Cor. 15:50–58; Phil. 3:20; 1 Thess. 1:8–10; 4:13–18; 5:9; 2 Tim. 3:1–13; Titus 2:11, 12; 1 John 3:2; Rev. 3:10; 19:11–16

### BuildUP Theme



LEARN DOCTRINE

Christ promised to come again for Church-age believers, resurrecting the dead and rapturing the living.

### Measurable Response

Students will determine to live every day in light of the imminent return of Christ.

### Memory Verse

"And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:3). NKJV

"And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also" (John 14:3). ESV

## Teacher Preparation

- ☐ Read John 14:1–3. Jesus didn't want His disciples to feel troubled when He departed. He told them He would come again to take them back with Him to Heaven. Of course, Jesus' disciples have all since died and are now living with Jesus in Heaven. But Jesus is still coming back to resurrect them and to rapture and glorify living believers.
- ☐ Jesus told His followers that He would be with them always. After the Rapture, all Church-age believers will be permanently in Jesus' physical presence. What comes to mind when you think of entering Jesus' presence? Do you consider the blessings of being free of sin and having a glorified body? Do you consider that the Rapture ends your opportunity to serve Christ on earth?
- ☐ We should anticipate the Rapture and all the blessings that come with being in Jesus' presence. But we should also view the Rapture as our motivator to use our time wisely while we have it. The moments we have to serve Christ before His return are finite. Impress that fact upon your students. Encourage them to be busy for the Lord as they anticipate seeing Him at any moment.

## Cultural Barrier

This session addresses teens' struggles with their identities, especially as they look to the future. Some teens find their identity in what they hope to become. They work hard so they can open the doors that will allow them to reach their goals. For some those doors don't open. And for others, they find that their ideal life wasn't all they thought it would be. All teens need to find their identity in Christ instead. He has goals for their lives, and He could arrive at any moment to see how they did in reaching those goals. Teens who focus on buying up daily opportunities to serve Christ, knowing He will return at any moment, won't struggle to find their identity as they move toward adulthood.



# Session Starters

## Option 1—My Next Big Day

### Steps

1. Students share what they consider to be their next “big day” in their lives. They might be leaving on a trip, participating in a sporting event, or celebrating a holiday or birthday.
2. Discuss preparing for a big day.

**ASK:** What are you doing now to prepare for your next big day?

**ASK:** How might a lack of preparation affect your big day?

3. Transition to the Bible study.

Jesus talked about the believer’s ultimate next big day. As He talked with His disciples, He promised to come again for living believers to take them to Heaven to be with Him forever. This session focuses on that big day. Even though we don’t know when that day will be, we know what we should be doing to be ready when it comes. God tells us in His Word how to be ready.

## Option 2—Caught Unprepared

### Gather

- Whiteboard and markers.

### Steps

1. Write the following two sentence starters on the board.
  - I had a dream that I was totally unprepared for . . .
  - I completely forgot about preparing for . . .
2. Students pick one of the sentence starters to complete. Have the students write their completed sentences on the board and draw a picture to show the trouble their unpreparedness caused them.
3. Students read their sentences and share their drawings.
4. Transition to the Bible study.

As Jesus talked with His disciples, He promised to come again for living believers to take them to Heaven to be with Him forever. Even though we don’t know when that day will be, we know what we should be doing to be ready when it comes. God tells us in His Word how to be ready so the Rapture doesn’t catch us unprepared.

# Bible Study

## Gather

- Resources 81-R4 and 81-R5.
- God's Plan for the End Times poster.

## I. The Rapture's Timing

### A. It is imminent (1 Cor. 15:51, 52; 1 Thess. 4:13–17)

When the Rapture takes place, Christ will resurrect departed Church-age believers immediately before snatching up living believers to meet Him in the clouds in the sky.

**ASK:** What in your life could happen at any moment?

Lots of things, both good and bad, could happen to us without warning. But not all of those events are imminent. Something is imminent when we know it will happen for sure but don't know *when* it will happen. Christ's return for His church is imminent. There are no end-time prophecies that God needs to fulfill before Christ comes back for us. The Rapture is the first event on a lengthy list of future end-time events.

**READ:** 1 Corinthians 15:51, 52; 1 Thessalonians 4:13–17. **ASK:** What do these passages reveal about the Rapture's timing? *They don't give any events that must happen before the Rapture happens. Paul believed it could happen in his lifetime.*

There won't be a warning that Jesus is returning. NASA won't be tracking His arrival to give us time to witness to one more person or encourage one more friend. The trumpet, shout, and voice that announce Christ's return will all sound as we immediately appear with Christ in the air.

The cover image for this course captures the imminent nature of the Rapture. The teen is shooting a jump shot on a basketball court when the Rapture suddenly happens.

**ASK:** What do you hope to be doing if Christ returns in your lifetime?

The timing of the Rapture will be a surprise to all believers who are living. But the Rapture should not catch us off guard. We should all be living as if Christ will return at any moment.

This session ends with a section on preparing for the Rapture. But first, we want to examine the Rapture's timing in relation to the Millennium and the Tribulation.



## B. It is premillennial (Matt. 24:9–11; 2 Tim. 3:1–13; Rev. 19:11–16)

Because the Bible reveals that the Rapture is imminent, then it must happen before the Millennium. The Millennium is Christ's one-thousand-year reign on this earth.

**DISPLAY:** Refer to the God's Plan for the End Times poster.

**HANDOUT:** Give each student a copy of resource 81-R4 to help you explain Christ's return in relation to the Millennium.

Christ will return to the earth to establish the messianic Kingdom that God promised to Israel (2 Sam. 7:12–14; 1 Chron. 17:9–11; Jer. 23:5; Rev. 20:4–6). Upon His return, Christ will rule over the entire world for one thousand years in peace and righteousness (Isa. 2:2–4). Church-age believers, including us, will join Christ in His rule (Rev. 20:6).

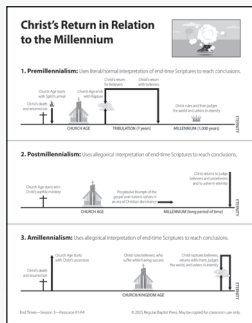
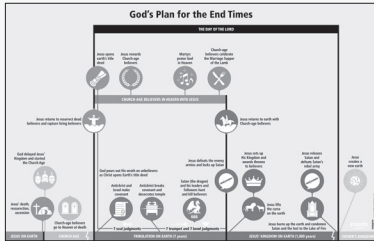
**READ:** Revelation 19:11–16. **ASK:** Does this future event sound like Paul's explanation of the Rapture (1 Thess. 4:13–17)? What is different? *In the Revelation passage, Christ is coming all the way to earth to battle and destroy the world armies that want to kill Him. In the Rapture passage, Christ is resurrecting departed believers and taking believers from the earth to be with Him.*

That the Rapture and the Second Coming of Christ are two different events is obvious. As is the fact that the Rapture must take place before Christ returns to earth to establish His Kingdom. Since both the Rapture and the Second Coming will be prior to the millennial Kingdom, we refer to the return of Christ as a premillennial return. At the end of the Millennium, a series of events will unfold before Christ will conclude human history and usher in the eternal state.

Premillennialists interpret Scripture literally. They let the Bible speak for itself. The other two major views about the timing of Christ's return use allegorical interpretation. The proponents of those views spiritualize symbols and events to come to their conclusions.

Postmillennialists believe a progressive triumph of the gospel over the nations is now taking place. They think the progress is ushering in the Millennium, a "golden age" of Christian dominance in the world that will span an unknown number of years. Postmillennialists believe Christ will return after the Millennium to usher in the eternal state.

The postmillennial view spiritualizes passages about Christ's physical return to reign on earth. They suggest Christ's reign is happening from Heaven. In addition, the view fails to consider the growing expressions of man's rebellion against God. The world will degrade before Christ's return rather than improve. Even those who call themselves religious will be known for their ungodliness.



81-R4



**READ:** 2 Timothy 3:1–5, 12, 13. **ASK:** What did Paul write about the last days? *He wrote that godly believers would suffer persecution as evil people and religious fakes grew worse and increased their influence.*

**READ:** Matthew 24:9–11. **ASK:** What did Jesus say would happen in the last days? *He said believers would experience persecution and hatred among the nations and that false prophets would arise.*

Amillennialists believe there will be no physical reign of Christ on earth. “A” is a prefix that means “no.” So, there won’t be a millennium for Christ to return before or after. Amillennialists believe Israel forfeited the kingdom God promised to them and that God is ruling in believers’ hearts in the Church Age. They think that believers will both make progress and suffer until Christ raptures them, returns to earth, judges all humanity, and ushers in the eternal state.

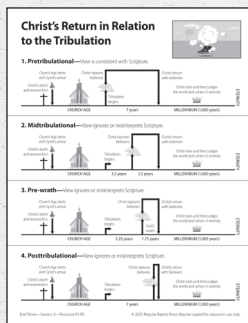
Amillennialists reject the literal fulfillment of God’s promises to Israel and the Bible’s description of Jesus’ second coming and Kingdom (Rev. 19; 20). They also fail to recognize that the Judgment Seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10) for believers and the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev. 20:11–15) for unbelievers are separate events.

**ASK:** Why is spiritualizing or allegorizing clear Scripture passages a problem? *The interpreters claim authority over God’s Word instead of submitting to the authority of God’s Word.*

### C. It is pretribulational (1 Thess. 1:8–10; 4:17; 5:9; Rev. 3:10)

There are also different views of Christ’s return for His church in relation to the Tribulation. During the Tribulation, God will discipline disobedient Israel and pour out His wrath on unbelievers. Some will reject Him while others will turn to Him, placing their faith in Christ.

**HANDOUT:** Give each student a copy of resource 81-R5 to help you explain Christ’s return in relation to the Tribulation.



81-R5

The pretribulational view states that Christ will rapture Church-age believers before the Tribulation begins. Posttribulationists believe that believers will go through the Tribulation before Christ returns. Midtribulationists put Christ’s return for His church at the midpoint of the seven-year Tribulation. And others hold a pre-wrath view, placing Christ’s return before God’s final outpouring of His wrath on the world after the three-quarter mark of the Tribulation (Rev. 6—19).

**READ:** 1 Thessalonians 1:8–10; 5:9; Revelation 3:10. **ASK:** What do these passages plainly say about God’s plans for believers? *That He will not pour out His wrath on believers.*

Passages detailing the events of the Tribulation don't mention the church being on earth as the events unfold (Rev. 6—18), meaning the church must be in Heaven. Daniel 9:24–27 is the foundational passage for the seven-year Tribulation. The passage reveals that God will use the Tribulation to deal with unbelieving Israel.

In writing to the Thessalonians, Paul stated that Christ might return for His church in their lifetimes (1 Thess. 1:9, 10; 4:17). So, even in the year AD 52 or 53, God had no other prophecies He had to fulfill before Christ could come for His church. We know that Christ did not come in the days of the early church, but He could have.

## **II. The Believer's Preparation**

God tells us how to live while waiting for Christ's return for us.

### **A. Anticipate the Rapture (Rom. 8:23; Phil. 3:20; 1 John 3:2)**

Some believers might hope Christ delays His return because they feel they haven't lived for Him as they should have. Others might be apathetic about His return, preferring to live a "full life" on earth before spending eternity with Him. By contrast, the New Testament writers anticipated Christ's immediate return because they had a close relationship with Him and because they understood the extreme benefits of His return (John 14:1–3; 1 Thess. 4:17). If we don't anticipate Christ's return, then we must get to know Him better and consider the benefits of His return.

When Christ returns, we will be like Him in that He will glorify us (1 John 3:2); He will make our bodies sinless and perfect. We should all learn to anticipate the benefit of having a glorified body.

**READ:** Romans 8:23. **ASK:** What won't you miss about your present sin-cursed body?

The more we learn to anticipate Christ, the more out of place we will begin to feel here on earth. We will begin to long to be in Christ's presence in Heaven.

**READ:** Philippians 3:20. **ASK:** What about this world makes you feel like it is not your home?

### **B. Grow in righteousness (1 Cor. 15:58; Titus 2:11, 12)**

Waiting for Christ to return isn't a passive activity. We shouldn't wait for Christ as if we are sitting on the front step watching for an Amazon driver to deliver a package. As believers we are to be busy growing in righteousness before Christ returns to earth, setting perfect Christlikeness as our goal.

**READ:** 1 Corinthians 15:58. **ASK:** How are you participating in the work of the Lord?

**READ:** Titus 2:11–12. **ASK:** What makes living righteously possible? *God's enabling grace in our lives.*

### C. Encourage others (1 Thess. 4:13, 14, 18)

**READ:** 1 Thessalonians 4:13, 14, 18.

In times of discouragement or trouble, the hope of Christ's return lifts believers' eyes from their circumstances to their certain future. In times of apathy, believers need to remember that Christ is indeed returning at any moment. In times of rejoicing and gladness, believers still need to look toward the day of greatest rejoicing when they will be forever in Christ's presence.

### D. Share Christ (1 Cor. 15:50–58)

The only prerequisite for a person to be a part of the Rapture is salvation. Those who have not trusted in Christ as Savior will remain on earth to experience the Tribulation instead. The difference between spending seven years in Heaven with Christ and spending seven years on earth going through the Tribulation is too great for us to even comprehend. And, of course, the difference between eternity with Christ and eternity in the Lake of Fire is even greater. As believers, we must be diligent to share Christ while Christ tarries.

**READ:** 1 Corinthians 15:50–58. **ASK:** In what part of the Lord's evangelistic work are you steadfastly involved?

## Memory Builder

### Gather

- Whiteboard and markers.
- Copy of the lyrics from the song called Somewhere in Outer Space or a lyrics video of the song.

### Steps

1. Write John 14:3 on the board and review its meaning.

Jesus promised His disciples that He will come again if He goes away. He went back to Heaven, so we can count on Him coming again for all Church-age believers. Christ will take His church back to Heaven to live in a place He has prepared for them. Being in Heaven will feel like being home because we will enjoy a perfect and eternal fellowship with Christ.



2. Discuss the verse.

**ASK:** What do you wish was better about the house you live in?

**ASK:** What can we expect from a dwelling made by Christ? *It will be amazingly perfect and beautiful. It will cause us to rejoice and bring us eternal contentment.*

No Church-age believer will ever sigh discontentedly in Christ's presence. All Christ is preparing for us and all He is as our Savior will fill us with joy forevermore.

3. If you were able to locate the lyrics to the song "Somewhere in Outer Space," read them to your class. Or have the students sing the song along with a lyric video. The original flashcard booklet for the song had John 14:3 printed on the back for people to read. So, have the students read the memory verse after saying or singing the song lyrics.

The author wrote this song in 1966. You or your parents may have sung it as a child. The countdown to Christ's return is still getting lower every day, as is the countdown of days we have to serve Christ on this earth. We should live every day as if it is the final day of the countdown to Christ's return.

4. Students say the verse together again as a class.

## Session Application

### Steps

1. Review the lesson.

The Rapture is Christ's return to the air for Church-age believers. Christ's return for His church is imminent, premillennial, and pretribulational. Believers should grow in their anticipation of Christ's return by getting to know Him better and by thinking on the benefits of His return. Believers should also grow in righteousness, setting Christ's perfection as their daily goal. Furthermore, believers should encourage each other to keep their eyes on eternity in Christ's presence. And they should be diligent to share Christ with the lost while they still have the opportunities to do so.

2. Have the students think about their responses to Christ's imminent return.

**ASK:** What responses to the imminent return of Christ for you do you need to work on? Do you need to increase your anticipation of Christ's return, grow in righteousness, encourage fellow believers, or share Christ with the lost?

3. Have your students focus on one or two specific responses to the truth of Christ's imminent return. Give them a few minutes to share their responses with a friend before they pray for one another.

## Session Takeaways

Before dismissing the students, draw their attention to the Time with God page in their student books. Instruct them to complete the study on their own. The activity encourages your students to respond to Christ's imminent return.

SESSION 4

# THE CHURCH'S CROWNING MOMENT

## Scripture Focus

1 Cor. 3:10–15; 9:24, 25; 10:31;  
2 Cor. 5:9, 10; Eph. 3:20, 21; 1  
Thess. 2:19; 2 Tim. 4:6–8; James  
1:12; 1 Peter 5:2–4; Rev. 2:10;  
4:1–11

## BuildUP Theme



PREPARE TO SERVE

God will reward Church-age believers for serving Him well.

## Measurable Response

Students will examine the motives and attitudes that characterize their Christian service.

## Memory Verse

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad” (2 Cor. 5:10). NKJV

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil” (2 Cor. 5:10). ESV

## Teacher Preparation

- ☐ Read 2 Corinthians 5:8–10. Every believer will give an account of his or her life to the Lord. Paul’s accountability motivated him to please the Lord with his whole life. He wanted to be able to stand before the Lord and receive rewards for his faithful service.
- ☐ Do you think about why you serve God? Are you serving Him out of a sense of duty or pride? Do you depend on your strength or on God’s strength when you serve Him? Have you considered why you are teaching this course and whether Christ will find your efforts worthy of reward?
- ☐ Encourage your students not only to be active in serving Christ but also to be serving Him well. Christ is the perfect judge. He will see every believer’s motives and attitudes perfectly. He will reward only those acts of service that believers do for God’s glory and by God’s enabling.

## Cultural Barrier

This session deals with teens’ struggles with identity. If they aren’t careful, they will become so focused on themselves that they do everything, including serving God, with a sense of pride. Instead, they need to focus on glorifying Christ with their service. Christ won’t reward teens for serving Him as a way to draw attention and praise to themselves.



# Session Starters

## Option 1—Preps for Checkups

### Steps

1. Talk about dental checkups.

**ASK:** Think about your last dental checkup. What questions were you hoping the hygienist didn't ask about your dental hygiene habits?

**ASK:** What promises did you make about your habits going forward?

**ASK:** How does knowing you will have your teeth checked motivate you to practice good dental hygiene?

**ASK:** What other "checkups" in your life motivate you to adjust your daily behavior?

2. Transition to the Bible study.

Jesus is returning for us. And when we arrive in Heaven, we will all stand before Him to give an account of our lives. But He won't ask us about our hygiene habits. Instead, He will judge our service for Him with fire. This session will encourage us to serve Christ well so that He will find our service worthy of reward.

## Option 2—Lessons from the Three Pigs

### Gather

- Online video of "The Three Little Pigs" story.

### Steps

1. Before class, locate and preview a video of "The Three Little Pigs" to play in class.
2. Show the video and lead a discussion.

**ASK:** What would you say is the moral of the story?

**ASK:** How might the story help us think about how and why we serve the Lord?

**ASK:** What might the straw and stick houses represent about our service to the Lord?

3. Transition to the Bible study.

The Bible relates building materials to our service for the Lord. We won't face a big bad wolf. Rather, our life's work for Christ must stand up to His fire test. We will learn in this session the kind of service for Christ that wood and hay represent. This session will challenge us to serve the Lord for the right reasons and with the right attitudes so our life's work will survive Christ's judgment.

## Bible Study

### Gather

- Eternal Crowns poster.

### I. Christ's Perfect Judgment

#### A. Of every believer (2 Cor. 5:9, 10)

Christ will resurrect dead believers, return to the sky, rapture living believers, and return to Heaven with His completed church. Not long after arriving in Heaven, Christ will judge Church-age believers. Paul related that message to the Corinthians. He shared that he made major adjustments to his life in light of his coming judgment day.

**READ:** 2 Corinthians 5:9.

We should aim to please God because one day we will stand before Christ to give Him an account of our lives. Paul made pleasing God his life's goal.

**ASK:** Describe the life of someone who aims to please God. *The person looks for ways to glorify God, serves God sacrificially, tells people about God, and prays a lot.*

Some believers aim to please themselves. They aim their thoughts, actions, and words at bringing themselves happiness or pleasure. They tend to complain about anything they find displeasing, and they tend to talk a lot about themselves.

Other believers aim to please their friends or even the world. They want their friends to accept and include them, so they say and do things that will make their friends happy even if their words and actions don't please God.

**READ:** 2 Corinthians 5:10.

"All" believers will have a time of reckoning before the Judgment Seat of Christ. No one will be able to hide from Him. Of course, believers wouldn't even entertain the thought of escaping judgment because they will have their glorified bodies and minds, meaning they will be completely honest and submissive to Christ.

## B. Of good works (1 Cor. 3:10–15; 10:31; 2 Cor. 5:10; Eph. 3:20, 21)

Christ won't read a list of our sins or play videos of them as we stand before Him. He won't even mention our sins. Christ has already paid the punishment for all our sins.

Christ will judge our works to see whether they are "good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10). Good works are acts of service we do in God's power and for His glory (1 Cor. 10:31; Eph. 3:20, 21). Bad works are acts of service we do in our own strength and for our own glory.

**READ:** 1 Corinthians 10:31; Ephesians 3:20, 21. **ASK:** How might we know if we are serving God for our own glory? *We only serve Him in ways that other people will notice; we tell people how we have served; we see other believers as competitors for the praise of others; we get angry when no one praises us for serving sacrificially.*

When we serve God in His power and for His glory, we aim to praise and lift up His name. We shouldn't even care about the recognition we receive on earth. And when people do thank us, we should respond by saying, "Praise the Lord!"

**READ:** 1 Corinthians 3:10–15.

Paul described Christ's judgment as a discerning fire. Only the good works we do for God's glory and in His strength will prove worthy of reward. Those good works are like building with gold, silver, and precious stones on the foundation of Christ, the author of our salvation. If all our works don't survive Christ's fire, we will still have our salvation. But we will lose opportunities to praise God with our rewards for the rest of eternity.

## II. The Believer's Precious Rewards

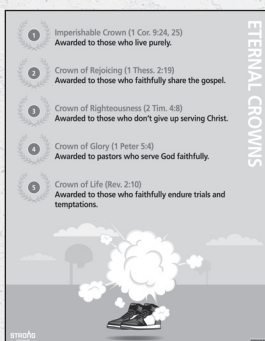
The Bible calls our rewards gold crowns. In Jesus' day, victorious athletes would get crowns made from laurel or olive branches. It's possible that our crowns from Jesus will be similar to laurel or olive branches made of pure gold. Whatever they are, we will be glad to receive them.

The Bible mentions five specific crowns. Christ could reward us with other crowns too. The Bible doesn't give us a definitive list.

**DISPLAY:** Eternal Crowns poster.

### A. Imperishable crown (1 Cor. 9:24, 25)

All crowns that believers earn at the Judgment Seat of Christ will last forever. They will never tarnish or lose their shine because they reflect God's work through believers. Yet, Paul described a specific crown as incorruptible and imperishable.





**READ:** 1 Corinthians 9:24, 25.

The imperishable crown is for exercising self-control by the Spirit's power. Believers earn it by saying no to their sinful desires and by deciding to serve and please God instead.

**ASK:** What does Satan want us to believe about the struggle against sinful desires? *That saying no to our sinful desires is too hard and not worth the effort.*

The Holy Spirit in us makes victory possible. Christ will give the imperishable crown to those who live victoriously.

## **B. Crown of rejoicing (1 Thess. 2:19)**

**READ:** 1 Thessalonians 2:19.

The crown of rejoicing is for those who have witnessed to the lost, even if the lost didn't trust in Jesus as their Savior. Some people call the crown of rejoicing the "soul-winner's crown."

**ASK:** What, besides sharing the gospel, does witnessing involve? *Being a good testimony, showing Christ's love, praying for missionaries.*

Never think that witnessing is pointless because few people respond to the gospel. Jesus rewards the faithfulness of those who share the gospel. That means missionaries who faithfully witness for years with only a few converts will still earn this crown.

For those who do witness and see positive results, they will get the extra benefit of spending eternity with those who trusted Christ through their witness. They, like Paul, will rejoice in the people's presence in Heaven just as much as in the crown itself.

## **C. Crown of righteousness (2 Tim. 4:6–8)**

Despite all the trials and hardships that Paul faced, he never quit following Christ. Like a runner sprinting to the finish line of a marathon, Paul stayed true to Christ to the end of his life. Christ will reward Paul with the crown of righteousness. All other believers who finish life strong and don't give up serving Christ will enjoy the same crown.

**READ:** 2 Timothy 4:6–8.

Living for Christ is a lifetime commitment, so there is no retirement age for serving the Lord. Christ expects believers of all ages to be busy serving Him as long as they are mentally and physically able.

**ASK:** How might a believer in a nursing home serve the Lord? *By being a witness to staff and other residents, by praying for fellow believers, by rejoicing to know the Lord, by refusing to complain.*

## D. Crown of glory (1 Peter 5:2–4)

**READ:** 1 Peter 5:2–4.

Christ will reward the fourth crown to faithful pastors. Christ is the Good Shepherd. So, when pastors serve faithfully, they glorify Christ by showing the love and care Christ has for His sheep. The pastor's reflection of Christ's glory might be why God calls the pastor's crown the "crown of glory."

All young men should be sensitive to God's calling to enter a full-time pastoral ministry. Never tell God you don't want to be a pastor. Instead, tell God you will do whatever He wants you to do and then simply follow His leading for your life. God may call a young lady to be a pastor's wife or a missionary. If He calls you to one of those roles, serve God willingly and diligently. God will recognize and reward faithful women too.

**ASK:** How can we support our pastor in his efforts to be faithful in his ministry?

## E. Crown of life (James 1:12; Rev. 2:10)

**READ:** James 1:12; Revelation 2:10.

Jesus will give the crown of life to those who have patiently endured persecution in their service to Him. Paul, for example, will receive the crown of life. His enemies imprisoned and stoned him before they finally put him to death for preaching Christ.

**ASK:** Why does suffering for Christ make believers' testimonies so powerful? *It shows believers' appreciation for God's work in their lives, their confidence that God will sustain them through the suffering, and the deepness of their belief in God.*

No amount of suffering for Jesus' sake on earth will compare to the rewards and opportunities to glorify God in Heaven. Remembering that Jesus gladly suffered for us helps us endure suffering for Him (1 Peter 2:21–25).

## III. Believers' Responses

The possibility of rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ is a powerful motivator for serving God. But we won't strut around Heaven showing off our crowns to bring attention to ourselves. Rather, we will use our crowns to glorify the Lord. God gave John a glimpse of Church-age believers responding to receiving crowns (Rev. 4).

## A. Wonder at God's greatness (Rev. 4:1–9)

John's vision focused on God sitting enthroned in Heaven. He described God and the amazing scene around God's throne.

**READ:** Revelation 4:1–3.

John described God's appearance as jasper and sardius stones. Jasper is a clear, diamond-like stone while sardius is a reddish-brown stone. The vertical rainbow around God's throne reminds us that God is light and in Him is no darkness (1 John 1:5). A rainbow is simply white light split into its constituent colors by a prism.

**READ:** Revelation 4:4.

There are five reasons we should conclude the twenty-four elders represent all Church-age believers. First, the twenty-four elders are on thrones and ruling with God. Church-age believers will rule with Christ (Rev. 2:26, 27; 5:10; 20:4). Second, in the Bible the word "elders" always refers to men who have the ability to exercise authority. The word never refers to angels. Third, the elders are wearing white robes, the clothing of Church-age believers in Heaven (Rev. 3:5, 18; 19:8). Fourth, the elders have gold crowns, which are their rewards from the Judgment Seat of Christ. And fifth, the twenty-four elders hold bowls (vials) full of incense that represent the prayers of all believers, called "saints" (Rev. 5:8–10).

**READ:** Revelation 4:5. **ASK:** What usually goes along with lightning and thunder? *A powerful, destructive storm.*

The frightening thunder warned of God's coming judgment on the world during the Tribulation, which was the next major event in John's vision of the end times (Rev. 6:1, 2).

**READ:** Revelation 4:6, 7.

The creatures John saw in Heaven were different than anything he had seen on earth, so he used their similarities to earthly creatures to describe them to us. The flying creatures might have illustrated some of God's attributes, though we don't know that for sure.

**READ:** Revelation 4:8.

We might think that the creatures flying around God's throne would tire of glorifying God and declaring His holiness and eternality. But God's glory is so great and magnificent that anyone in His presence can't help but talk about it.

**ASK:** How might we increase our wonder of God's greatness in our present lives? *By meditating on Scriptures that talk about God's greatness; by observing God's greatness in His creation; by including praise in our prayer times.*

When we get to Heaven, we will have the opportunity to praise God forever, and we will never grow tired of it. The twenty-four elders' response to the praise that the angelic creatures gave to God shows that we will feel compelled to worship God in Heaven.



## B. Worship of God's greatness (Rev. 4:10, 11)

**READ:** Revelation 4:9, 10.

The crowns the elders cast before the Lord are the crowns they received at the Judgment Seat of Christ. As Church-age believers (elders), we will recognize that Christ deserves all the glory for our service for Him on earth. He saved us, empowered our service, and then made it fruitful. Christ graciously works through us to produce good works (Phil. 2:12, 13), so He will deserve all the praise for our crowns.

**READ:** Revelation 4:11.

The fact that God is the creator of all things is one of the greatest reasons to give Him glory. Since God created all, He answers to no one. There is none like Him.

## Memory Builder

### Gather

- Whiteboard and markers.

### Steps

1. Write 2 Corinthians 5:10 on the board and review its meaning.

Every Church-age believer must appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ. Christ will judge each believer's works done in his or her body, meaning while on earth. Christ will reward good works that believers did for God's glory and in God's strength. Bad or evil works are those works that believers do for selfish reasons or in their own strength. Christ will not punish believers for their sins. He already took the punishment on the cross.

2. Students take turns saying the memory verse. Have them make it personal by changing the pronouns to first person "I" and "my" and dropping the word "all."
3. Say the verse as a class without making any personalized changes.

## Session Application

### Gather

- Video 1 from the DVD—"The Church's Crowning Moment."

### Steps

1. Review the lesson or play video 1 from the DVD—"The Church's Crowning Moment."

After the Rapture, all Church-age believers will have a time of reckoning before the Judgment Seat of Christ. Christ will reward only the good works we did for God's glory and in His strength. Our rewards will be in the form of crowns. The imperishable crown is for believers who exercised self-control by the Spirit's power. Christ will award the crown of rejoicing to believers who faithfully witnessed to the lost. The crown of righteousness is for serving Christ without giving up. Christ will recognize faithful pastors with the crown of glory. And believers who endure persecution will receive the crown of life. Believers will worship God's greatness in response to receiving crowns.

2. Discuss the reality of standing before the Judgment Seat of Christ.

**ASK:** Suppose Christ returns today and you are standing before His judgment seat before the day is over. Are you thrilled by that thought or nervous? Why?

**ASK:** What might you need to change to make your stand before Christ an experience you are anticipating?

3. Thank God for revealing to us our time of accountability before the Judgment Seat of Christ. Pray that Christ will find your students faithful when He returns for His church.

## Session Takeaways

Before dismissing the students, draw their attention to the Time with God page in their student books. Instruct them to complete the study on their own. The activity challenges them to make it their aim to please God with their lives.

SESSION 5

# THE CHURCH'S CELEBRATORY MARRIAGE

## Scripture Focus

Rev. 19:7–10 and other passages

## BuildUP Theme



INTERNALIZE GODLINESS

God wants believers to build their relationships with Christ in anticipation of their union with Christ.

## Measurable Response

Students will determine ways to cooperate with Christ's sanctifying work in their church.

## Memory Verse

"Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints" (Rev. 19:7, 8). NKJV

"Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure" (Rev. 19:7, 8). ESV

## Teacher Preparation

- ☐ Think about the last wedding you attended. As the bride made her way down the aisle, what was she focused on? The groom, of course. This week's lesson about the Marriage of the Lamb is greatly enhanced by an understanding of weddings—not modern weddings, but the weddings of first-century Israel.
- ☐ The brides in first-century weddings had a very different role than today's brides. Their job was to prepare themselves, remain faithful, and watch for the arrival of their betrothed. The grooms were the ones who were busy preparing and planning the celebration.
- ☐ Read Revelation 19:7–10. The descriptions in the Bible about the Marriage of the Lamb are beautiful. We—the church—are already involved in the marriage process, and our Bridegroom is preparing to lead us through the final stages. As you and your class study this precious time for the church, remember to keep your eyes on the Groom.

## Cultural Barrier

This lesson deals with the false belief that a career and wealth guarantee happiness. Christ is coming for the church, His bride. He expects Church-age believers to be anticipating His return by busily serving Him. Believers who are too busy chasing career goals and wealth to serve Christ will realize that they should have been anticipating their wedding day instead of their next raise or promotion.



# Session Starters

## Option 1—"I Do" Remember

### Gather

- Wedding refreshments (e.g., mints, cake, fruit cups, punch).
- Wedding album (optional).

### Steps

1. As students arrive, invite them to help themselves to the wedding refreshments. If you brought your wedding album, let them look through it.
2. When several students have arrived, ask them to share stories about weddings they've attended or been a part of. Prompt them to think of funny incidents and memorable moments and ask them to share what they thought were the best parts of the wedding.
3. Transition to the Bible study.

This session is about a marriage ceremony that is much different than the ones we have attended or planned. Yet, we will all play a part in the ceremony. In fact, we will learn that we are now in a preparation phase for our coming wedding.

## Option 2—Traditional Wedding Roles

### Gather

- Two large sheets of paper.
- Markers.

### Steps

1. Have the girls gather together in one part of the room and the guys in another. Give each group a large sheet of paper and markers.
2. One of the girls writes "Bride's Preparation" at the top of the girls' sheet of paper. One of the guys writes "Groom's Preparation" at the top of the guys' sheet of paper.
3. The girls make a list of all the things the bride must do to get ready for a wedding. The guys make a list of all the things the groom must do. Give them five minutes.
4. Compare the lists. The list for the bride's preparations will likely be longer, and the items on the list will be detailed tasks that take careful planning.

## 5. Transition to the Bible study.

This session covers the Marriage of the Lamb. We will learn that all of us need to prepare for that marriage and that our list of to-dos reflects the bride's list more than the groom's list.

# Bible Study

After God raptures the church, the Lord will judge believers' good works at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Christ will then receive His church into a marriage union. Several passages in the New Testament use a marriage between a groom and a bride to describe Christ's union with the church (2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:25–29, 32; Rev. 19:7–9; 21:9). Christ is the groom, and the church is the bride.

## I. The Marriage Process

To better understand prophecies concerning Christ's marriage to the church, we must understand New Testament marriage customs. First-century marriages had three distinct steps.

### A. Betrothal (Matt. 1:18–25; Eph. 1:13, 14; 4:30; 5:25)

The first step of the union happened before the couple were officially married. The future bride and groom entered a betrothal covenant. First-century betrothal covenants included the bride and groom's names, their pledge to marry, and the groom's payment of a dowry either to the bride or the bride's father. Though the couple did not begin living together after their betrothal period began, they were legally bound to each other. To break their betrothal covenant, they had to get a divorce.

Mary and Joseph were betrothed to be married when the Holy Spirit came upon Mary, meaning Mary became pregnant. When Joseph heard that Mary was expecting a child, he planned to end his betrothal covenant with Mary. He believed Mary had been unfaithful to him. Joseph would have had to take legal action to dissolve his betrothal covenant with Mary.

**READ:** Matthew 1:18–25.

Joseph later learned that Mary had remained faithful to him, that her pregnancy was of the Holy Spirit, and that she was carrying the long-awaited Messiah. Joseph dropped his divorce plans and kept his betrothal agreement with Mary before eventually marrying her.

By His death on the cross, Christ paid the dowry price for everyone who trusts in Him for salvation (Eph. 5:25). As part of Christ's church, we belong to Him through His shed blood (1 Cor. 6:20). We are all

members of the Bride of Christ. But Christ has not yet come to claim us as His bride.

While we wait for Christ's return, there is nothing we can do to break our betrothal covenant with Him. God will present all believers as part of Christ's blameless bride in Heaven (Jude 24, 25). And Christ will never break His betrothal with us (John 10:28, 29). We will be His bride when He comes for us.

**READ:** Ephesians 1:13, 14; 4:30. **ASK:** Why else can we be confident that Christ will take us to be His bride when He returns? *Because we have the Holy Spirit in us as our guarantee of our salvation and our union with Christ in Heaven.*

Don't think of a modern engagement when you consider your relationship with Christ. If an engaged couple decides to break off their engagement, they simply call off their plans to marry. Their engagement isn't a legal agreement. Breakups happen all the time. Our betrothal relationship isn't subject to a change of heart that leads to a breakup. Christ won't break His promise to save us, and we can't break our relationship with Christ.

## **B. Preparation period**

The second step in the first-century wedding process was a preparation period. Both the groom and the bride prepared for their coming wedding day.

### **1. The groom's preparation (John 14:1–3)**

A first-century groom diligently prepared a home for his future bride. At some point, he planned to leave his home to go get his bride. He wanted his house to be ready when she came back with him.

**READ:** John 14:1–3. **ASK:** What has Christ been doing during our betrothal period with Him? *He has been preparing a place for His bride, the church.*

Christ is preparing a place for believers in Heaven. It has many rooms (mansions) to accommodate all Church-age believers. The place Christ promised to make might be the same as the New Jerusalem that descends onto the new earth at the start of the eternal state (Rev. 21:2). Regardless, anything Christ builds will bring Him glory and will give believers unspeakable joy.

### **2. The bride's preparation (Eph. 5:25–27; James 4:1–11; Rev. 19:7, 8)**

**ASK:** What might a first-century groom think if he went to get his bride and found her out with someone else? *He would be*



*disappointed and even crushed that He paid a dowry and then prepared a place for his bride who is uninterested in his arrival.*

Christ is preparing to come for you. He wants us to be ready and watching for His arrival.

**READ:** Revelation 19:7, 8. **ASK:** What are you doing to prepare for Christ's arrival?

As Christ's bride, we will put on fine linen. The linen will be clean and bright. Our fine clothing will reflect our pure hearts, a result of Christ's work on our behalf on the cross. We will be forever clean and unable to sin. We won't even feel the urge to sin because our sin nature will be gone.

While our bright clothing will reflect our pure hearts, it will primarily represent the righteous deeds that we did while on earth by God's grace, under the Spirit's power, and according to Christ's work (John 15:5; 1 Cor. 3:10). Christ is presently working in us to cleanse us and present us to Himself without spot or wrinkle. His work in us is called sanctification. Paul wrote about Christ's sanctification of His bride.

**READ:** Ephesians 5:25–27. **ASK:** Do you recognize Christ's desire to sanctify you? How have you responded to His desire to sanctify you?

Believers will respond to Christ's sanctifying work in different ways. Some will put in a great deal of effort, using their lives to serve the Lord and loving Him with all their hearts (Phil. 2:12, 13). Others will resist Christ's sanctifying work and will seek to please and serve themselves instead. They will befriend the world instead of learning to love the Lord. James said that believers who love the world are being adulterous in their relationship with Christ (James 4:1–5).

Adulterous believers are those who won't be ready when Christ returns for His bride. He will still take them, but they will be like the bride who is out with another person when her groom shows up at her door.

**READ:** James 4:6–11. **ASK:** What must "adulterous" believers do to restore their relationship with Christ? *Humble themselves by admitting their need for God's enabling grace; draw near to God through His Word and prayer; confess their sin.*

Perhaps the degree to which we progress in our sanctification while on earth will be apparent in the brightness of our clothing in Heaven. The brighter our clothing, the better we would be able to glorify Christ. The connection between the clothing and its brightness would make sense since the clothing is connected to believers' righteous acts (Rev. 19:8). Furthermore, Christ will award the crown of righteousness to those who serve Him faithfully and love His appearing (2 Tim. 4:8). So, there

is a strong connection between serving God faithfully and our rewards in Heaven. Believers who love Christ's appearing will be like the bride who leaps for joy to see her groom coming to get her.

### **C. Wedding day (1 Thess. 4:17)**

When the groom finished preparing his home, he went to the bride's house to claim her as his lawful wife and take her to the home he prepared for her. Jesus used the groom's departure for his bride as the background for His parable of the ten virgins (Matt. 25:1–10). The parable likely refers to Christ's coming back to earth at the end of the Tribulation. The virgins represent Israel. Some of the Israelites (Jews) will trust Christ during the Tribulation and be ready for His return while others will not. They won't have the oil they need, and their lamps won't be lit to go out into the night to meet Christ. Christ's parable encourages us to live everyday with Christ's return on our hearts and minds.

When Christ is ready, He will come for His church at the Rapture to take us back with Him to the place He prepared for us. Paul wrote about Christ's coming and rejoiced to know he would one day be with Jesus permanently (1 Thess. 4:17). Similarly, a faithful bride rejoiced in finally being with her groom and starting her marriage with him in the home he prepared for her.

**READ:** 1 Thessalonians 4:17. **ASK:** What relationships are more important than your relationship with Christ, the church's groom? *No other relationship compares to the importance of our relationship with Christ. We will focus on Him for eternity.*

We should not allow friends to pull us away from deepening our relationship with Christ. What they think of us now may seem highly important. But when Christ returns for us, we will immediately know that He is the most important person in our lives.

## **II. The Marriage Feast (Rev. 19:9, 10)**

First-century wedding celebrations concluded with a feast that lasted several days. The bride and groom invited friends and family to celebrate their union and to honor their marriage. Jesus' first recorded miracle happened at a wedding feast in Cana. When the wine ran out, He turned water into fine wine to keep the feast going (John 2:1–10). Our wedding feast with Christ will occur after the Rapture and after Christ has rewarded us, His bride.

**READ:** Revelation 19:9, 10.

**ASK:** Why will we as believers, the Bride of Christ, be so glad to take part in our wedding feast? *Because of our union with Christ. Christ will be our primary reason for joy and gladness at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.*

Some scholars believe the feast will take place in Heaven before we return to earth with Christ to set up His Kingdom. Other scholars think the feast will take place on earth after Christ's return. Either way, the feast will be a time of great joy with Christ.

There are significant differences between the union of Christ with the church and the union of human marriage in the first century. Yet, God used the similarities to help us understand our relationship with Christ. The comparison helps us focus on Christ's self-sacrificing love for us, His preparation to receive us, our need to be prepared for His coming, and the eternal fellowship we will have with Christ.

## Memory Builder

### Gather

- Whiteboard and markers.
- Paper and markers.

### Steps

1. Write Revelation 19:7 and 8 on the board and review its meaning.

Verse seven is a quote of a great multitude of people in Heaven. The multitude seems to include believers who suffered martyrdom in the Tribulation and believers who make up the church, the Bride of Christ. Everyone will universally recognize the honor due to the Lamb for His sacrifice that made salvation possible. Everyone will also recognize that the Lamb deserves the praise for the fine linen robes worn by Church-age believers. Christ now works in us to do His will. So, He deserves the praise for all we do for Him.

2. Give each student a piece of paper and markers. Have the students personalize the memory verses as they write out the verses on their paper. For example, they can put their name in place of the word "us" in verse seven's opening phrase.
3. Students read their personalized versions of the memory verses.
4. Have all the students read the memory verses from the board.

## Session Application

### Gather

- Whiteboard and marker.

### Steps

1. Review the lesson.



First-century marriage customs help us understand prophecies about Christ's marriage to the church. The relationship began with a betrothal agreement. Christ died to pay the dowry price for those who trust in Him for salvation. Next, there was a time of preparation. Jesus is in Heaven preparing a place for His Bride. We are to be preparing for Christ's appearing by drawing near to Christ. When Christ returns for us, He will take us to be with Him and to share in the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

2. Discuss how students could cooperate with Christ's ongoing sanctifying work in their church.

**ASK:** What can our church do to participate in Christ's sanctifying work in believers' lives?

**ASK:** What can you do individually to help Christ's sanctifying work?

**ASK:** How might keeping your mind focused on the coming Bridegroom help you prepare?

3. Pray that your students will grasp the importance of their time on earth and that they will invest their days and hours in preparing for Christ's return for them, the Bride of Christ.

## Session Takeaways

Before dismissing the students, draw their attention to the Time with God page in their student books. Instruct them to complete the study on their own. The activity reviews key truths related to the believers' coming union with Christ.

SESSION 6

# THE WORLD'S TROUBLE BEGINS

## Scripture Focus

Dan. 9:24–26; Rom. 8:19–22;  
Rev. 5:1—8:5

## BuildUP Theme



LEARN DOCTRINE

Christ qualifies to open the title deed to earth to accomplish God's purposes for the Tribulation.

## Measurable Response

Students will praise God for His sovereign control of the future and will pray for an unbelieving friend.

## Memory Verse

"And they sang a new song, saying: You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation" (Rev. 5:9). NKJV

"And they sang a new song, saying, Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation" (Rev. 5:9). ESV

## Teacher Preparation

- ☐ This session is the first of three sessions on the Tribulation. This first session will set the background and will cover the first set of judgments that God pours out on the earth. The study will challenge the students to focus on God and His sovereign control over what will seem chaotic to people living through the Tribulation.
- ☐ Read Revelation 5. We could summarize this chapter by saying that Jesus' death and resurrection made possible His reclamation of the earth. God wins in the end because Jesus died and rose again.
- ☐ The twenty-four elders in Revelation 5 represent Church-age believers, including you and your students. How will believers respond to Christ's claim to be worthy to open the scroll? How should you respond to that reality today?
- ☐ Use this session to help your students understand that God is sovereign over the earth. He will carry out His plan to judge the world and save those who trust in Christ. No one will be able to stop God. The future is in His hands. He will win in the end because of Christ's death and resurrection.

## Cultural Barrier

The passages covered in this session shatter the idea that man can create a social utopia. Sin always brings destruction and death. The Tribulation will make that truth abundantly clear. God, by contrast, offers life and triumphs over sin to bring order and peace. God is the only answer to the world's present problems. He will bring trouble on the earth during the Tribulation to help the world see that they are helpless against Him and that they need to humbly trust Him for salvation.

# Session Starters

## Option 1—Tribulation Association

### Gather

- Whiteboard and markers.

### Steps

1. Write the word “tribulation” on the board. Students add words to the board that they associate with the Tribulation. Note that some of their words may not be accurate.
2. Read the words on the board and let the students respond. Note any words that describe the Tribulation as adventurous or cool.
3. Transition to the Bible study.

In the next three sessions, we will be studying the Tribulation. As we learn what the Bible has to say, we should have a growing awareness of the devastating nature of the Tribulation. We should also see it as a warning to believers to be active in witnessing to unsaved friends who would experience the Tribulation if Christ returned today.

## Option 2—Action-adventure Scenes

### Steps

1. Discuss being part of a scene from an action-adventure movie.

**ASK:** Suppose all action-adventure movies were true. Which action-adventure scenes would you like to observe?

**ASK:** In which scenes would you like to be an active participant?

2. Transition to the Bible study.

The Tribulation will unfold in scenes that could be part of an action-adventure movie. But the scenes will be real. We will examine some of those scenes today. The scenes should motivate us to warn people that great devastation is coming and that they don’t want to be on earth when the devastation begins.

## Bible Study

### Gather

- God’s Plan for the End Times poster.



## I. God Reveals His Tribulation Purposes

### A. Discipline and restore Israel (Dan. 9:24–26; Rev. 7:1–4)

While the prophet Daniel was in captivity in Babylon, God gave him a vision about His present and future dealings with Israel. At the time, Jerusalem was still in ruins and most of the Jews lived in Babylon. God revealed that He would address Israel over seventy weeks with each week being seven years for a total of four hundred and ninety years. The first week began when King Artaxerxes made a decree in the twentieth year of his reign to rebuild Jerusalem (Neh. 2:1–8). The sixty-ninth week ended when Israel “cut off” the Messiah by rejecting Him instead of accepting Him as their king.

**READ:** Daniel 9:24a, 25, 26a.

God’s clock in His plan for Israel stopped with the nation’s rejection and crucifixion of His Son, the promised Messiah. God has temporarily turned His focus away from Israel. He has been using the years since Christ’s death and resurrection to call a new people, the church, to believe on Christ for salvation. When Christ removes His church from the world at the Rapture, God will deal once again with Israel, using the seventieth week (7 years) to accomplish His will. We call Daniel’s seventieth week the Tribulation.

**READ:** Daniel 9:24.

Six phrases in Daniel 9:24 help us understand God’s purposes for Israel through the Tribulation. God will first “finish the transgression,” meaning Israel’s apostasy and wandering will end. Second, God will put an “end” to “sin.” The idea is that God will bring an end to Israel’s sins through judgment and forgiveness. Third, God will atone for Israel’s “iniquity” based on Christ’s death on the cross (2 Cor. 5:19). The atonement allows God to restore Israel to holiness. Fourth, God will “bring in everlasting righteousness” in that the Tribulation will pave the way for Christ’s righteous rule in Israel in the Millennium (Isa. 11:2–5). Fifth, God will “seal” both the vision and the prophecy, meaning He will fulfill prophecies about Daniel’s seventy weeks and the Tribulation in particular. Sixth, the purpose to “anoint” the most Holy or most holy place probably refers either to Christ or to the holy of holies in the new temple in Jerusalem. Both possibilities look forward to Christ’s millennial Kingdom in Israel.

**ASK:** What words might you use to describe God’s plan for Israel in the Tribulation? *Judgment, revival, completion, fulfillment.*

During the Jews’ hardship and suffering in the Tribulation, some of them will realize that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and their Messiah. God will restore to fellowship the Tribulation Jews who trust in Christ as their Savior. John wrote about a group of 144,000 believing Jews.

From the commandment to rebuild Jerusalem to the Messiah the Prince was seven weeks (49 years) plus threescore and two weeks (62 weeks or 434 years) for a total of 483 years (Dan. 9:25).

**READ:** Revelation 7:1–4.

## **B. Reclaim the earth (Rom. 8:19–22; Rev. 5)**

God gave Adam and humanity the right of earthly dominion, but man lost that right through his sin (Gen. 1:26; Heb. 2:5–8). No human is able to lift the curse on the earth to restore its glory so humanity might have dominion over it. John came to this realization while seeing a vision of God's throne room in the moments before the start of the Tribulation on earth.

**READ:** Revelation 5:1–3.

The sealed scroll in God's hand is the title deed to planet Earth. Whoever opens the scroll can claim the earth.

**READ:** Revelation 5:4. **ASK:** Why did John weep when he realized no one was worthy to open the scroll in God's hand? *Because it appeared that the earth would be forever under the curse and that sin had triumphed.*

John's despair didn't last long. What he saw next gave him great confidence and joy.

**READ:** Revelation 5:5–7. **ASK:** Who did John see and why was He qualified to take and open the scroll? *He saw Jesus as a slain lamb. Jesus died as the sacrifice for sin so the world might be saved and the curse lifted on the earth.*

The second Adam, Jesus Christ, became Man and died on the cross to regain for humanity their lost dominion over the earth (Heb. 2:9). Christ will claim what is rightfully His through the series of judgments revealed in the opening of the title deed's seven seals. Christ is the One through Whom God will fulfill all of His royal promises to Israel (2 Sam. 7:12–16; Luke 1:30–33).

When Christ took the scroll, three anthems of praise sounded forth. The first was by Church-age believers as represented by the twenty-four elders.

**READ:** Revelation 5:8–10. **ASK:** What does Jesus' death mean for our future on earth? *We will reign on earth with Christ as God intended before sin entered the world.*

In their song, the elders (Church-age believers) ascribed worth to Christ for His crucifixion, His redemption of them, and His appointment of them to be kings and priests on a renewed earth (cf. Matt. 19:28; 2 Tim. 2:12).

**READ:** Revelation 5:11–14.

In the second song, angels sang that Christ is worthy of praise because

Christ is the Lion of the tribe of Judah and the Root of David. David's royal line remained dormant for hundreds of years before Christ came to earth as the Son of Man in the line of David. It was as if a dead tree stump representative of David's royal line grew a new shoot. Christ is the new shoot from the stump.

of His death for humanity. And in the third song, the creation, which includes birds, fish, and animals, sang of Christ's honor, glory, and power. The value of Christ's death extends to the removal of the curse upon all animals and plants too.

**READ:** Romans 8:19–22. **ASK:** Why is the process of childbirth a good illustration of creation's present pain? *The pain is temporary and ends with a tremendous blessing. Christ will one day restore the earth and reclaim it for humanity.*

### C. Judge the world (Rev. 6:1)

**READ:** Revelation 6:1.

The Lamb opened the seals because only He has the right and power to do so as the possessor of the earth's title deed. An angelic creature told John to come and see what the first seal revealed. His voice sounded like thunder. The rumble of thunder usually announces a coming storm. In Scripture, thunder was often part of God's judgment (cf. Exod. 9:23; 1 Sam. 7:10). The thunder at the start of the Tribulation warns of the terrible judgments that God will bring on the world.

## II. Christ Begins the Tribulation Events

**DISPLAY:** Refer to the God's Plan for the End Times poster as needed throughout the remainder of this lesson.

### A. First seal: Antichrist (Rev. 6:2)

**READ:** Revelation 6:2.

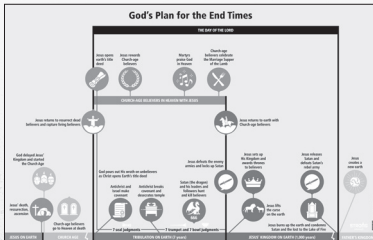
The white horse and its rider symbolize the Antichrist, Satan's central figure in the Tribulation. The Antichrist will pledge to protect Israel if the nation agrees to surrender their land and arms. The Jews will agree to the covenant because they will see the Antichrist as their political savior and messiah (Dan. 9:27a). The covenant between Israel and the Antichrist will officially start the Tribulation.

**READ:** Daniel 9:27a.

The Antichrist's white horse shows his intention to deceive Israel. Christ, the true Savior and Messiah, will return to earth on a white horse after the Tribulation period (Rev. 19:11).

**ASK:** The Antichrist rises to power only after Christ opens the first seal. What does that say about his power and authority? *He is ultimately subject to Christ's sovereignty even though he does Satan's bidding.*

The Antichrist has a bow but no arrows. Daniel predicted that the false messiah would destroy many by means of peaceful negotiations (Dan.





8:25). Paul declared that destruction would swiftly follow the cries of peace in the Day of the Lord (1 Thess. 5:3).

Satan offered the worldly kingdoms to Christ in the temptation experience, but Jesus refused them (Luke 4:5–8). The Antichrist, however, will gladly accept Satan's gift (Rev. 6:2; 13:2). His ultimate goal is to defeat Christ and rule the world.

**READ:** Revelation 13:2, 4. **ASK:** The Antichrist is the beast and Satan is the dragon. What are the answers to the questions the world asks about the beast? *God is more powerful than the beast and Christ will defeat him.*

As the Tribulation unfolds, Satan and the Antichrist prove to be no match for Christ.

## **B. Second seal: Warfare (Rev. 6:3, 4)**

**READ:** Revelation 6:3, 4.

The second horse is red, the color of blood and the mark of warfare. The rider on the red horse will have the power to take peace from the earth. Wars will break out throughout the Tribulation, including in Israel. Ezekiel, for example, prophesied about an invasion of Israel from the north by Gog, perhaps a reference to Russia (Ezek. 38:8–16). God will intervene for Israel with a supernatural destruction of Gog.

**READ:** Ezekiel 38:18, 22, 23. **ASK:** What will the world learn through the destruction of Gog? *That God is the Lord and the One to Whom they must answer.*

## **C. Third seal: Famine (Rev. 6:5, 6)**

**READ:** Revelation 6:5, 6.

The black horse represents suffering from hunger. Famine normally follows catastrophic wars. The balance held by the rider will show that food will be scarce. People will pay a day's wage to purchase wheat to provide one meal or barley to provide three meals. Oil and wine will be even more expensive.

## **D. Fourth seal: Death (Rev. 6:7, 8)**

**READ:** Revelation 6:7, 8.

The fourth horse is pale, a yellowish green color. The rider is Death, and its companion is Hell (Hades). When unbelievers die, their souls go to Hell to suffer and to await resurrection and God's final judgment on their sins.

Wild animals will combine with the ongoing war and famine to kill a quarter of the earth's population. A quarter of the present population

is more than two billion people. That is an unprecedented number of casualties for such a short period of time. By comparison, about eighty-five million soldiers and civilians died in World War II.

**ASK:** What message will the staggering number of deaths send to the world in the Tribulation? *That man will not bring peace to the world; that sin brings death and destruction; that the world is hopeless apart from God.*

## **E. Fifth seal: Martyrdom (Rev. 6:9–11; 7:9–14)**

**READ:** Revelation 6:9–11.

With the opening of the fifth seal, the scene changes from earth to Heaven. John saw believers whom the Antichrist and his followers killed. Beheading will apparently be the Antichrist's preferred method of execution (Rev. 20:9). The martyrs cried out for divine vengeance. God's answer to their prayer is that judgment will come, but only after more believers die for their faith. A great multitude of people from all nations will trust in Christ and suffer martyrdom in the Tribulation.

**READ:** Revelation 7:9–14.

## **F. Sixth seal: Disturbances (Rev. 6:12–17)**

**READ:** Revelation 6:12–14.

The sixth seal brings disturbances in creation, including an earthquake below the earth, catastrophic waves and flooding on the earth's surface, and devastating meteorite showers from the sky.

**READ:** Revelation 6:15–17. **ASK:** What will the world conclude from the string of "natural" disasters? *That no one will be able to survive or hide from the outpouring of God's wrath on their sin.*

The first six seal judgments reveal a simple, two-pronged message: Man is bad and God is mad. Sinful man deserves God's wrath, and God will not hold back in pouring it out on them, giving them the clear message that they must repent of their sin and turn to Him in faith to escape His anger.

## **G. Seventh seal: Prayers (Rev. 8:1–5)**

The seventh seal will reveal multitudes of persecuted believers who are praying to God during the Tribulation.

**READ:** Revelation 8:1–5.

The "angel" with the censer offering the prayers of Tribulation saints on the altar in Heaven is likely Christ. He intercedes for believers who pray to God (Rom. 8:34). Christ casts a censer filled with fire to earth in

response to the Tribulation believers' prayers for help. He answers their prayers by bringing more devastation on those who seek to harm and kill them. Seven trumpet blasts, which we will study in the next session, reveal the additional devastation Christ will bring on the world.

## Memory Builder

### Gather

- Whiteboard and markers.

### Steps

1. Write Revelation 5:9 on the board and review its meaning.

Church-age believers, along with some angelic beings, will sing the song recorded in our memory verse. We will recognize that only Christ is worthy to open the title deed to earth. He died on the cross for the sins of the world to gain that right. His death provided for us the way of salvation. And His death will provide for the salvation of a multitude of people during the Tribulation.

2. Discuss using songs to communicate to God.

**ASK:** Why do you think we will sing to Christ in Heaven? Why not just tell Christ what we think? *Songs are an excellent way for people to join together in communicating their shared message; songs come from the heart and are usually far more expressive and meaningful than just the spoken word.*

**ASK:** What songs do you like to sing to God?

3. Break up the memory verse, assigning different parts to students or groups of students. Have the groups say their parts with emotion and meaning. Mix up the assignments to give the choral reading variety and to make it pleasing to hear.

## Session Application

### Gather

- Whiteboard and marker.

### Steps

1. Review the lesson.

God's purposes for the Tribulation include disciplining and restoring Israel, reclaiming the earth, and judging the world. Christ will take the title deed for the earth from God the Father and break



its seals to accomplish God's purposes for the Tribulation. The first seal reveals the rise of the Antichrist to power. The next three seals bring war, famine, and death. The fifth seal reveals the martyrdom of Tribulation believers. Christ will break the sixth seal to reveal devastating "natural" disasters. And the final seal reveals Christ's reception of the prayers of persecuted believers.

2. Discuss witnessing to unsaved friends.

**ASK:** Why will you want to avoid the Tribulation?

**ASK:** Which of your unsaved friends do you think would want to avoid the Tribulation?

God told us details about the Tribulation to, in part, motivate us to tell others about His coming wrath on the world. There won't be anything fun or cool about God's wrath during the Tribulation. Everyone who experiences it will wish they weren't.

3. Have students pray in small groups for unsaved friends. Have them ask God for opportunities to share Christ and for the courage to take advantage of those opportunities.

## Session Takeaways

Before dismissing the students, draw their attention to the Time with God page in their student books. Instruct them to complete the study on their own. The study reviews the seal judgments and encourages the students to respond to them by being an active witness.

## SESSION 7

# THE WORLD'S TROUBLE BOILS

### Scripture Focus

Rev. 8; 9; 11

### BuildUP Theme



LEARN DOCTRINE

God will pour out His wrath in the Tribulation to both punish sinners and motivate them to trust in Christ.

### Measurable Response

Students will determine to live holy lives and to warn unbelievers about God's coming wrath on sin.

### Memory Verse

"And the twenty-four elders . . . worshiped God, saying: We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was and who is to come, because You have taken Your great power and reigned" (Rev. 11:16, 17). NKJV

"And the twenty-four elders . . . worshiped God, saying, We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, who is and who was, for you have taken your great power and begun to reign" (Rev. 11:16, 17). ESV

## Teacher Preparation

- ☐ Read Revelation 11:15–18. After the final trumpet sounds, the church in Heaven will begin to praise the Lord for transferring the kingdom of the earth to Christ even though the actual transfer will have not yet taken place. God will still have more wrath to pour out on the world. But the fact of Christ's return and establishment of His Kingdom is so sure that we will praise the Lord as if it has already happened.
- ☐ Do you praise God for His future transfer of the kingdom of the earth to Christ? How might praising God for what He will do in the future affect your outlook on your present life?
- ☐ Help your students see the importance of knowing what God is going to do in the future and living with those realities in mind. They will see their values change as they recognize the world's coming defeat and God's eternal victory. They will want to be involved in serving Christ rather than chasing what the world has to offer.

## Cultural Barrier

This session again shatters the idea that man can learn to get along and build a utopian society filled with peace and love. The Tribulation shows that unbelievers are like their father the devil in that they are destructive and rebellious. They deserve God's wrath and can only escape it through faith in Christ.

# Session Starters

## Option 1—Weird Army Illustrations

### Gather

- Paper.
- Markers or colored pencils.

### Steps

1. Direct half the class to Revelation 9:7–10 and the other half to Revelation 9:17–19. Students read their passages and then illustrate what John saw, capturing the details as they envision them.
2. Students share their illustrations.
3. Discuss making sense of John's odd descriptions.

**ASK:** What is your response when you read passages like those in Revelation 9?

**ASK:** Do we need to understand what John is talking about before we accept it as truth? Explain.

4. Transition to the Bible study.

John's descriptions of the two menacing groups in Revelation 9 could derail us from our study of the end times. We could throw up our hands and say that we can't know what John is saying or what the future will bring. But knowing what every detail in every end-time passage means isn't the point of our study. John's overall message about the future is clear. As we work through some strange passages today, we need to keep the big picture in mind and respond to what we know for sure.

## Option 2—That Stings!

### Gather

- Paper.
- Markers or colored pencils.

### Steps

1. Students think of a time in their lives when they felt a painful sting. They may have experienced an insect sting or got soap in their eyes.
2. Each student draws a picture of his or her stinging moment and writes a warning to others about the sting.



3. Students share their drawings and their warnings.

4. Transition to the Bible study.

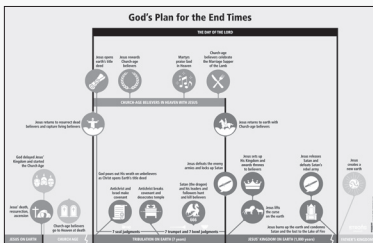
In this session, we will study a passage about stinging, locust-like creatures. They will help us understand the seriousness of sin and the horrors of Hell. When studying the terrifying scene, we should want to live holy lives and to warn unbelievers about God's coming wrath on sin.

## Bible Study

### Gather

- God's Plan for the End Times poster.

**DISPLAY:** Refer to the God's Plan for the End Times poster as needed throughout this lesson.



### I. Six Trumpets: God Controls Life

The six trumpet judgments are all included in the seventh seal that Christ opened (Rev. 8:1–5). So, they are part of the opening of the title deed to earth.

#### A. God's judgments

Seven angels with trumpets prepared to sound them and unleash God's judgments (Rev. 8:6).

##### 1. On people's resources (Rev. 8:7–12)

**READ:** Revelation 8:7–12.

The first four trumpet judgments affect vegetation, sea life (seafood), water, and solar energy, making life on earth extremely difficult.

**ASK:** What is the world's belief concerning the maintenance of the earth's resources? *That if people are responsible, then they can sustain the earth's resources indefinitely.*

While God wants us to take care of the earth, its life-sustaining resources are ultimately in His hands. He will greatly diminish them as He pours out His wrath on the world.

##### 2. On people's bodies (Rev. 8:13—9:11)

**READ:** Revelation 8:13—9:11.

The "star" that falls from heaven to open the bottomless pit after the fifth trumpet sounds is probably an angel. The "star" releases

“locusts” that give painful stings to unbelievers over the course of five months. We don’t know if the locusts are actual creatures or a demonic army. They might be demon-possessed creatures. The king over the creatures is the angel of the bottomless pit. The titles “Abaddon” and “Apollyon” mean “destruction” and “destroyer,” both descriptions of Satan.

Unbelievers will experience pain from the creatures’ stings but not death. They will want to die but will be unable to. They will apparently lose their ability to exercise their wills.

**ASK:** What do the stinging locusts reveal about Satan’s character? *That he hates God’s creation and especially humanity; that he is sinister and mean; that he has nothing good to offer humanity.*

The stinging locusts are a serious reminder of the horrors of the Lake of Fire. Everyone there, including Satan and his demons, will experience everlasting pain. Perhaps believers in the Tribulation will use unbelievers’ inescapable pain from the stinging locusts to warn unbelievers of the horrors of an eternity without Christ.

### 3. On people’s lives (Rev. 9:12–19)

**READ:** Revelation 9:12–19.

When the sixth trumpet sounds, a voice will command the release of four fallen angels bound at the great river Euphrates. The fallen angels will kill a third of humanity alive at the time. When combined with the quarter of the population who die after the fourth seal breaks (6:8), more than half of the earth’s population will be dead when the angels finish their plague. The massive loss of life will communicate the urgency of preparing for eternity.

An army of 200 million will do the killing. The army is likely wicked people rather than evil angels. Their weapons are fire, smoke, and brimstone, descriptions that might reflect modern weapons.

**ASK:** What does the massive army’s destruction of humanity do to the hope of creating a utopian society where love and peace rule the day? *It shows that such a dream is hopeless without Christ on the throne in His Kingdom. Sinful men will always seek to dominate and kill each other.*

### B. The world’s response (Rev. 9:20, 21)

**READ:** Revelation 9:20, 21.

Despite experiencing terrifying suffering from demonic powers and even getting a small taste of the horrors of the Lake of Fire, many unbelievers will reject Christ and cling to their lifeless idols instead.

The Euphrates River currently flows from Turkey and through Syria and Iraq before emptying into the Persian Gulf.

Morally, they will persist in practicing murder, witchcraft, immorality, and theft. They will insist that resisting the living God will be better for them in the end.

**ASK:** What causes unbelievers to be so resistant to putting their faith in Christ? *Sin and Satan blind them to the truth (2 Cor. 4:3, 4).*

Praise God not every unbeliever will resist Christ during the Tribulation. Some will see the gospel light and respond (2 Cor. 4:6).

## **II. Two Witnesses: God Offers Life**

The revelation of the trumpet blasts breaks after the sixth trumpet to include two other scenes. First, God has John eat a little book containing revelations from God (Rev. 10). The little book that is sweet to eat but bitter in the stomach might refer to the anticipation of Christ's Kingdom on earth (sweet) and to the sad reality that all unbelievers must first die (bitter). The second scene is a description of the ministry of two witnesses who reveal truths about God.

### **A. God is man's judge (Rev. 11:1, 2)**

John participated in his vision by using a measuring rod to measure the temple, the altar, and those who worship in the temple. The temple John measures will likely be the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem. In the Bible, measuring things demonstrates God's ownership while measuring people shows that the people are responsible to God.

**READ:** Revelation 11:1.

Near the time of the events recorded in Revelation 11, the Antichrist will enter the temple to desecrate it with a sacrifice and an idol, setting himself up as God (2 Thess. 2:1–4). But nothing the Antichrist could do to the temple will change anything about God. God will always retain His position as judge over all the earth.

John measured the temple altar to demonstrate that God provides the way of salvation, namely through Christ's final sacrifice on the cross. John measured the people to show that God is their judge. Those who follow the Antichrist will stand before God and suffer for their sin.

**ASK:** What claims might people make today to try to discredit God or to prove He doesn't exist? *They claim that all the evil and suffering in the world means God doesn't exist; that evolution proves life happened by chance and that there is no creator.*

**READ:** Revelation 11:2.

Forty-two months is equal to three and a half years, or half the Tribulation. Since the Antichrist desecrates the temple and breaks his covenant with Israel in the middle of the Tribulation, the forty-two



months likely refer to the second half of the Tribulation. During that period, the Gentiles (non-Jews) will take over Jerusalem under the Antichrist's authority. They will seek to rule and control the world. But their treading through the land of Israel will be only temporary. God will hold them accountable. And to make their accountability to God especially clear, God will send two witnesses to proclaim God's truth.

## **B. God is man's present hope (Rev. 11:3–6)**

God's two special witnesses will serve as His prophets for 1,262 days, another reference to the last half of the Tribulation.

**READ:** Revelation 11:3, 4.

The two witnesses are like olive trees that provide the oil for lampstands. As such, they will shine the light of the gospel to Israel during the second half of the Tribulation. And they will do so in sackcloth to show they will mourn for the Jews who turn their backs on God and reject Christ, their only hope of salvation. Their mourning shows God's love for all of Israel.

**READ:** Revelation 11:5.

To show the truth and power of the witnesses' message, God will grant them the ability to protect themselves from would be assassins by commanding defensive fire. No one will have the power to stop the witnesses' message of repentance and faith.

**READ:** Revelation 11:6.

The witnesses will have the power to stop rain from falling, to turn water into blood, and to strike the earth with plagues. Their miracles will parallel some of God's trumpet judgments that will be happening at the same time (Rev. 8:8). The miracles will serve to demonstrate God's judgment on those who reject Him to serve other gods.

## **C. God is man's future hope (Rev. 11:7–13)**

The witnesses' message of repentance and faith will go against the Antichrist's message that God is bad and weak. So, the Antichrist, pictured as the beast from the Bottomless Pit, will move to silence and destroy the witnesses.

**READ:** Revelation 11:7–10.

God will allow the Antichrist to slay the witnesses and leave their bodies to rot. Unbelievers around the world will have three days of partying, thinking they have proven that they were right to reject Christ.

**READ:** Revelation 11:11–13.

God will breathe into His two witnesses the breath of life, causing them

to rise from the dead. Christ will then call His witnesses to Heaven as the world quakes with fear and Jerusalem shakes from an earthquake. Seven thousand will perish in the Jerusalem quake as a warning of God's coming judgment on unbelievers.

**ASK:** What will the witnesses' resurrections prove? *That God has the power to give eternal life to sinners who put their faith in Christ for salvation.*

**ASK:** How might the resurrections of the two witnesses affect Tribulation believers who are suffering for their faith? *The resurrections will deepen their faith in God's power to help them in the present and to resurrect them if they lose their lives as martyrs.*

Some people will respond to the resurrections and the earthquake by fearing and glorifying God.

### **III. One Final Trumpet: Christ Rules Earth**

#### **A. The kingdom's transfer (Rev. 11:15)**

**READ:** Revelation 11:15.

The final trumpet sounds as a prelude to the seven bowls judgments that will lead to Christ ruling on earth. The transfer of the rule over the earth to Christ is so certain that the loud voices in Heaven will announce that it has already happened. Christ will indeed rule on earth. No one can stop His takeover. That's bad news for Satan and the Antichrist and for anyone who rejects Christ's offer of salvation.

The loud voices add that Christ will reign forever and ever. Their statement is accurate even though Christ's rule on the present earth will last only one thousand years. At the end of the Millennium, Christ will submit His power and authority to God the Father on the new earth (1 Cor. 15:24–28). God's kingdom will have no end.

#### **B. The church's gratitude (Rev. 11:16–18)**

**ASK:** What is your response to knowing your eternal destiny is absolutely secure?

**READ:** Revelation 11:16–18.

Church-age believers, represented by the twenty-four elders, will thank the Lord God for using His power to establish His rule on earth (Ps. 2:1–9). The world's nations will oppose Christ at His return, but their wrath will be powerless against God's righteous wrath. Christ will defeat the nations at the end of the Tribulation, raise departed Old Testament and Tribulation believers (Dan. 12:1–3; Rev. 20:4), and reward believers with positions in His Kingdom. Christ will also "destroy" (put to death) the

destroyers (unbelievers) of the earth. No unbelievers will enter Christ's millennial Kingdom.

### C. Israel's covenant hope (Rev. 11:19)

**READ:** Revelation 11:19.

John saw the temple of God opened in Heaven to reveal the ark of the covenant. The vision confirms that God will fulfill His covenants with Israel. Many Jews will trust Christ as Savior, regather to possess the Promised Land, and rejoice to have Christ, a descendant of David, on their throne in Jerusalem.

The five phenomena John witnessed in the temple warn of God's judgment on Israel's enemies during the last half of the Tribulation. God's judgment on the nations will pave the way for Christ's Kingdom on earth.

**ASK:** Why is God's fulfillment of His promises to Israel so important? *It shows He is faithful to all His promises. We can trust God completely.*

## Memory Builder

### Gather

- Whiteboard and markers.
- Paper and pens.

### Steps

1. Write Revelation 11:16 and 17 on the board and review its meaning.

Before Christ ever returns to earth to set up His Kingdom, Church-age believers in Heaven will worship God for transferring the kingdom of the earth to Christ. They will be confident that the future event will most certainly happen because the Lord God Almighty is, was, and is to come. In other words, God is eternal. Whatever He plans will always happen. God will triumph over Satan and transfer the earth to Christ's rule.

2. Give students an opportunity to use Revelation 11:16 and 17 as the basis for praising God. Have them write their praises and then read them to the class.
3. You read the first part of the verse up to the word "saying." Then have the class stand and read the rest of the verses in unison, emphasizing "we."



# Session Application

## Steps

1. Review the lesson.

God will use trumpet judgments to affect people's resources, bodies, and lives and to show that He controls all life. Yet, many people will still reject Him and cling to their lifeless idols instead. God will use two witnesses to show the world that He offers them eternal life. The witnesses will reveal that God is man's judge, present hope, and future hope. When the final trumpet sounds, a loud voice will announce the transfer of the earth's kingdom to Christ. In response, Church-age believers will thank God for establishing Christ's rule. And God will open the temple in Heaven as a reminder of His covenant promises to Israel.

2. Discuss the key truths from this session's Bible study.

**ASK:** What do your unbelieving friends believe about the afterlife? Have you ever asked them?

**ASK:** What key truths did God emphasize in the end-time events we covered today? *Sin is serious; God will bring His wrath on humanity; everyone is responsible to God; God offers us eternal life; Christ will rule the earth.*

God wants us to share these same basic truths with our unbelieving friends and family members. We know that is God's desire because He makes the truths very obvious during the Tribulation.

3. Students break into groups of two or three to pray for each other to take advantage of the witnessing opportunities they have.

## Session Takeaways

Before dismissing the students, draw their attention to the Time with God page in their student books. Instruct them to complete the study on their own. The activity reviews key truths from the Bible study.

## SESSION 8

# GOD'S WILL IN THE WORLD

### Scripture Focus

Gen. 3:14, 15; Rev. 12:1—14:16

### BuildUP Theme



LEARN DOCTRINE

God will overcome a trio of enemies to accomplish His will in the Tribulation.

### Measurable Response

Students will consider how they might increase their sense of urgency to share Christ with the lost.

### Memory Verse

"Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach . . . saying with a loud voice, Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water" (Rev. 14:6, 7). NKJV

"Then I saw another angel flying directly overhead, with an eternal gospel to proclaim . . . And he said with a loud voice, Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come, and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water" (Rev. 14:6, 7). ESV

## Teacher Preparation

- ☐ Who is the most optimistic person you know? Would you consider yourself to be optimistic? When have you been overly optimistic?
- ☐ Read Revelation 12. Satan is an optimist in that he believes he will defeat Christ at some point in history. But beginning in the Garden of Eden, God has always said that Satan will lose in the end (Gen. 3:15). Christ nailed Satan's coffin shut by dying on the cross and rising again.
- ☐ As believers, we should have an optimistic outlook on life because we know God has already won over Satan and the world. And though Satan will seem to have some success as he works through his world leaders in the Tribulation, he will crash and burn in the end.
- ☐ This session will help your students to make the connection between the world's present rebellion against God and God's coming wrath on the world. The world is storing up wrath that God will eventually pour out on them. So, we as believers should be busy sharing the gospel rather than becoming fascinated by and involved in the world's sinfulness.

## Cultural Barrier

This lesson deals with teens' struggles with their identity. They are believers, but they live in a world with values that God despises and will one day judge. They must resist the temptation to live like the world and as if the world won't answer to God. All believers need to live godly lives that point their lost friends to Christ.

# Session Starters

## Option 1—Optimistic or Pessimistic?

### Gather

- Paper and markers.

### Steps

1. Make a sign that says “optimistic” and one that says “pessimistic.” Hang one sign on a wall in your classroom and the other sign on the other wall.
2. Have students stand in the middle of the room. Read the following situations. After reading each of the following situations, your students go to the side of the room that would match their outlook if they were in the situation. Feel free to add your own situations.
  - You have a math test in three days and you need to get an “A” on it to save your grade.
  - You are running a mile in gym class and want to finish in under 7 minutes.
  - Your mom said she got you a special present for your birthday and you hope you like it.
  - You have to do a presentation in science class and you want it to be interesting.
  - You are shooting last second free throws to win your team’s basketball game.
3. Discuss being optimistic and pessimistic.

**ASK:** Would you consider yourself to be mostly optimistic or pessimistic?

**ASK:** When have you been overly optimistic only to fail miserably?
4. Transition to the Bible study.

Satan is perhaps history’s greatest example of being overly optimistic. He has no chance of defeating Christ, yet he is convinced he eventually will. In our session we will study him and his Tribulation leaders. All of them will fail in their quest for world dominance.

## Option 2—Angel at Your Service

### Gather

- Paper and markers or colored pencils.



## Steps

1. Students draw a picture of what they might have an angel do for them if they had his services for one day.
2. Students share and explain their drawings.
3. Transition to the Bible study.

Angels serve God every day, doing His will without resistance or complaining. During the last part of the Tribulation, God will have one of His angels declaring the everlasting gospel. But until then, God asks us to be His witnesses. This session will help us understand the urgency to obey God's call to share the gospel without resistance.

## Bible Study

### Gather

- Resource 81-R6.
- God's Plan for the End Times poster.

### I. God's Enemies in the World

God's enemies in the world during the Tribulation form a wicked counterfeit of the holy Trinity. John described their moves and their relationships during the Tribulation.

**DISPLAY:** Refer to the God's Plan for the End Times poster as needed throughout this lesson.

#### A. Satan, the optimistic leader (Gen. 3:14, 15; Rev. 12)

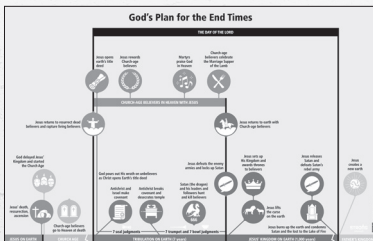
Before we read John's vision about Satan, we need to go back to God's prophecy about Satan's end.

**READ:** Genesis 3:14, 15.

Christ crushed Satan's head by dying on the cross and rising from the grave. Satan has already lost in his battle with Christ, but he foolishly remains optimistic.

**READ:** Revelation 12:1–6.

The woman in John's vision represents the nation of Israel as the means through which the Messiah-Redeemer came. The great red dragon represents Satan's power, ferocity, and murderous character (John 8:44). Satan's ten horns represent the ten nations that forms the nucleus of the Antichrist's kingdom, the revived Roman Empire (Dan. 2:42–44; 7:7, 8, 24). The heavenly stars cast to earth are the angels who followed Lucifer (Satan) in his rebellion against God (Isa. 14:12–17).



**ASK:** What does Satan's plan to devour baby Jesus reveal about his view of himself in relation to God? *He is delusional in that he sees himself as more powerful than God and therefore able to disrupt God's salvation plan.*

The symbolic scene of the dragon and baby Jesus quickly moves (Rev. 19:15; Ps. 2:9; Luke 1:30–33) to Jesus' ascension and then to the middle of the Tribulation. Because of Satan's persecution of Israel, the Jews will flee into the wilderness for the last half of the Tribulation (1,260 days).

**READ:** Revelation 12:7–12.

Satan's loss to Michael and descent to earth will bring joy to the angels and redeemed believers in Heaven but trouble to the earth. Satan, realizing his opportunities to oppose God will soon end, will direct his wrath to Israel (the woman) over the last half of the Tribulation.

**READ:** Revelation 12:13–16. **ASK:** What would you expect Satan to conclude after God blocked his attempts to destroy the Jews?

Frustrated in his attempt to destroy Israel in the Promised Land, Satan pivots to attack the remnant of Israel's seed, a reference to believing Jews who live throughout the Antichrist's kingdom.

**ASK:** Why is quitting not an option for Satan? *He knows that to quit means to accept his fate of suffering forever in the Lake of Fire.*

If Satan stops being optimistic, then he must admit his eternal fate is the Lake of Fire. He will fight Christ to the very end in an attempt to change his destiny.

## **B. Antichrist, the world politician (Rev. 13:1–10)**

Satan's political leader is the Antichrist. The Antichrist will rise up out of the sea (of humanity), meaning he will come from a Gentile nation. John saw him as a beast with specific characteristics that describe the Antichrist's beliefs and position in the world.

**READ:** Revelation 13:1, 2.

The beast's seven heads may symbolize the powers that have occupied the land of Israel: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome, and his kingdom. The blasphemous names on his seven heads will show his contempt for God and his belief that he is deity. His ten horns represent the ten-nation confederation, likely from Western Europe, who will support him. Satan will provide the power for the beast's rise to power.

**ASK:** What would the Antichrist be without Satan's power? *Just an ordinary man.*

The Antichrist will seize the opportunity to use satanic power to deceive the world. By contrast, Christ rejected the chance to bow to Satan and gain control over the world's cities (Luke 4:5–8). Christ chose the cross as His path to the kingdoms of the earth.

**READ:** Revelation 13:3.

The Antichrist will receive a mortal wound that will miraculously heal. Some scholars think the Antichrist will die and rise from the dead. If so, then God will have to permit it to happen. Satan doesn't have the power to resurrect the dead. Either way, the world will be impressed and fooled.

**READ:** Revelation 13:4–8. **ASK:** What might the Antichrist tell the world about God? *That they can't trust Him; that God wants to destroy them all; that God is a liar and deceiver.*

The Antichrist will also make war with the saints and will overcome them (13:7; Dan. 7:21). The title "the saints" refers to believing Israel during the Tribulation. The Antichrist will betray the people of Israel and break his seven-year covenant with them (Dan. 9:24–27). By so doing, he will gain personal control of Jerusalem and the land of Israel, an action that establishes his authority over the entire earth.

Satan's goal is to fool the world into worshiping him based on what the Antichrist does and says. He will be mostly successful during the second half of the Tribulation. A second beast, the false prophet, will help Satan's religious cause.

**READ:** Revelation 13:9, 10.

John's message to believers in the Tribulation is to persevere because God will defeat the Antichrist and his followers.

### **C. False prophet, the religious spokesman (Rev. 13:11–18)**

**READ:** Revelation 13:11–15.

The false prophet appeared to John as a beast with both dragon and lamb features. Satan is the dragon and Christ is the lamb. So, the false prophet will be a counterfeit Christ and Satan's religious spokesman.

The second beast will exercise his satanic power to perform deceiving miracles that direct the world's attention toward the Antichrist. He will also cause an idol of the Antichrist to speak and demand the world to worship it. The punishment for refusing to worship the idol will be the death penalty.

**READ:** Revelation 13:16–18.

In a devastated world where food will be scarce (6:5, 6), the second beast will control people's religious wills by controlling the food. Every



person will need the beast's mark to buy or sell food. The mark is 666, the number of man. The number seven is God's number. It stands for perfection. The number 666 represents humanity's deification of man as the ultimate rebellion against the triune God. The person who recognizes the seriousness of worshiping man shows true wisdom.

**ASK:** How do you see the worship of man in our world today?

## **II. God's Success in the World**

Revelation 14 anticipates God's ultimate triumph with announcements of what will soon take place. The chapter reveals that God alone is sovereign and that His program of righteousness will win out. He will judge the wicked and reward the righteous.

### **A. Firstfruits of God's harvest (Rev. 14:1–5)**

**READ:** Revelation 14:1–5.

The 144,000 people in John's vision are likely the 144,000 Jews that God protects throughout the Tribulation (Rev. 7:4–8). They will remain on earth as believers and enter the Millennium as the firstfruits of God's harvest of Jewish believers from the Tribulation. In John's vision, they are in Jerusalem at what seems to be the start of the Millennium.

While observing the scene in Jerusalem, John hears a new song from Heaven, probably sung by Tribulation martyrs, that only the 144,000 Jews could learn and sing. The song must have something to do with experiencing God's enabling grace during the troubling Tribulation.

John declares the 144,000 are virgins, meaning they rejected the world's corruption during the Tribulation and served Christ with their whole hearts. By contrast, people who surrender to the world's system, called Babylon, will be fornicators (Rev. 14:8; 18:1–3).

The point of John's vision is to show that God will successfully draw people to Himself during the Tribulation. The 144,000 are among the first to respond to Him. God used their testimony, and perhaps even their witness, to draw other people from every nation to trust in Christ for salvation (Rev. 7:9, 10).

**ASK:** What will God reveal about Himself by saving and preserving 144,000 Jews? *That He is faithful to His promises; that He is sovereign over the world; that He loves Israel.*

### **B. Laborers of God's harvest (Rev. 14:6–11)**

In addition to believers, God will use angels as His laborers in His harvest fields during the Tribulation.

**READ:** Revelation 14:6, 7. **ASK:** What advantages will an angelic

evangelist have over human evangelists? *An angel can move swiftly around the world, speak boldly and confidently in any language, and escape capture.*

The preceding judgments on the earth will prepare nations to hear the everlasting gospel from God's angel. The angel's threefold command is simple: Fear, glorify, and worship God, the Creator. The angel will include that God will soon judge the world. The world will have a final chance to turn to God or suffer under His wrath.

**READ:** Revelation 14:8.

A second angel will make a prophetic announcement that Babylon has fallen. Babylon is the world's dominating political and religious system during the Tribulation. Revelation 17 and 18 give the details of the system's fall. The angelic announcement appears to be a warning to the world not to put their hopes in a doomed system. If they reject the gospel, then they will be on the losing team.

A third angel will follow the second angel's warning by adding that those who reject Christ to receive the mark of the beast instead will experience the wrath of God forever in the Lake of Fire.

**READ:** Revelation 14:9–11. **ASK:** Why would God include the Lake of Fire in the angel's message? *Because it is reality and a motivating factor in people choosing to trust in Christ for salvation.*

### C. Reaper of God's harvest (Rev. 14:12–16)

By contrast, those who trust in Christ during the Tribulation will persevere, even if they suffer martyrdom.

**READ:** Revelation 14:12, 13.

The Holy Spirit declares that martyred believers from the Tribulation will rest from their troubles and enjoy rewards for their work for God. Choosing Christ and dying as a martyr is an indescribably better decision than pledging loyalty to the Antichrist.

**ASK:** What does your life tell the world about choosing to follow Christ? Does your life show that trusting in Christ is the wise choice?

**READ:** Revelation 14:14–16.

**DISPLAY:** Resource 81-R6.

Jesus is the person on the cloud, and He is the one doing the reaping. Who He is reaping is not clear. Since the harvest in 14:17–20 refers to God's grapes of wrath, the initial reaping could be a gathering of believers. Either way, all who belong to Christ will be His in the end (John 6:37–40) and no unbeliever will escape God's wrath (John 3:36).



81-R6

# Memory Builder

## Gather

- Whiteboard and markers.

## Steps

1. Write Revelation 14:6 and 7 on the board and review its meaning.

God will use an angel to share the everlasting gospel during the Tribulation. The angel's witness will be loud and clear. He will call on the world to fear (respect) and glorify God, both evidences of salvation, before God starts to pour out His final judgments on the earth and end people's opportunity to trust in Christ. The angel will also call on the world to worship God for being the creator of the universe. Their foolish alternative will be to give their allegiance to Satan, who is himself a created being.

2. Discuss the nearness of God's judgment on unbelievers.

**ASK:** In what ways is God's judgment near for all unbelievers living today? *Christ could return at any moment; an unbeliever could die at any moment.*

**ASK:** Describe your sense of urgency to share the gospel while you have the opportunity to do so.

**ASK:** How might you increase your sense of urgency to preach the everlasting gospel to your unsaved friends?

3. Students personalize the verses, replacing "another angel" with their names and replacing the reference to flying with walking in their city or their school. Give each student an opportunity to say their personalized version of the verses.
4. Students say the verses together.

# Session Application

## Gather

- Whiteboard and marker.

## Steps

1. Review the lesson.

Though Christ has already defeated Satan on the cross, Satan remains foolishly optimistic about his chances to win against Him in



the Tribulation. The Antichrist will be Satan's political leader. He will seize the opportunity to use satanic power to deceive the world. The false prophet will be Satan's religious spokesman. He will convince people to worship the Antichrist. Despite His powerful enemies, God will have success drawing people to Himself. His firstfruits will include 144,000 Jewish believers. Others will respond to the messages of three angels. In the end, all who belong to Christ will be His while all unbelievers will suffer under God's wrath.

2. Discuss living like Christ before the lost.

**ASK:** What "team" do your unsaved friends think you are on—God's team or the world's team?

**ASK:** What "team" do you want them to think you are on?

God will use angels in the Tribulation, but His program for sharing the gospel in this present age is us. We should take our responsibility seriously, knowing that God will work through our witness to see souls saved.

3. Close in prayer for your students. Ask God to help them be consistent testimonies and witnesses of His love for the lost.

## Session Takeaways

Before dismissing the students, draw their attention to the Time with God page in their student books. Instruct them to complete the study on their own. The activity reviews key points from the Bible study.

SESSION 9

# GOD'S WRATH ON THE WORLD

## Scripture Focus

Rev. 14:17—16:21

## BuildUP Theme



LEARN DOCTRINE

God is always just and true when pouring out His judgments on sinful humanity.

## Measurable Response

Students will ask God to help them understand the danger unbelievers face without Christ.

## Memory Verse

"They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying: Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints" (Rev. 15:3). NKJV

"And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations!" (Rev. 15:3). ESV

## Teacher Preparation

- ☐ Read Revelation 15:2–4. Tribulation martyrs will sing this song before God's throne in Heaven prior to God pouring out His bowl judgments on the lost. As martyrs, they will have witnessed many of God's tribulation judgments on the world. Yet, none of them will protest the severity of God's judgments when arrive in Heaven. As eyewitnesses to God's judgments, they will praise Him for being just, true, and holy.
- ☐ As believers, we readily agree that God is always just, true, and holy when He judges the lost. We should also readily agree that we would deserve the same judgment if God hadn't saved us by His grace. Christ took our judgment for us.
- ☐ As you study the judgments that will end the Tribulation, remind your students that they aren't better than those lost who will thumb their nose at God and curse Him. There is nothing good in them that helped them merit salvation. We would all deserve to suffer under God's tribulation judgments if God hadn't saved us by His grace. We should be grateful for God's saving grace and never take it for granted.

## Cultural Barrier

This lesson refutes the idea that people can create a utopia on earth. The last part of the Tribulation will show that sinful man's efforts at controlling the world will only bring God's judgment. God will destroy everything that sinful men will try to build to replace Him. As believers, we must keep our eyes on spiritual and eternal matters as we seek to impact the world for Christ.

# Session Starters

## Option 1—Unusual Punishments

### Gather

- Strips of paper.
- Pens.
- Two containers.

### Steps

1. Before class, cut ten strips of paper and write a different crime on each one. Put the strips in a container or bag.
2. As students come to class, ask them to write a punishment for an unnamed crime on a strip of paper. The punishment can be as unusual as they would like. Collect at least ten and put them in a second container or bag.
3. Students take turns drawing a crime strip and a punishment strip and reading them together. After each pair, discuss whether the punishment is too lenient, appropriate, or cruel and unusual.
4. Transition to the Bible study.

During the Tribulation, God will pour out punishments on the world for the crimes (sins) they have committed against Him. Many of the unbelievers will protest that the punishment is cruel and unusual. Some of the punishments are unusual, but none of them are inappropriate. We will learn why God could never judge people in inappropriate ways.

## Option 2—Cruel and Unusual?

### Gather

- Whiteboard and markers.

### Steps

1. Talk about the Eighth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

The Eighth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution prohibits punishments that are excessive, barbaric, or unnecessarily inflict pain. The amendment states, "Excessive bail shall not be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted." What the Constitution doesn't reveal is a precise explanation of "cruel and unusual."



2. Create a horizontal scale on the board. On the left end of the scale write "too lenient and soft." And on the right end of the scale write "cruel and unusual." Above the center of the line write "appropriate punishment."
3. Name a crime and have students suggest a punishment that would be too lenient, one that would be too cruel, and one that would be appropriate. Your students may disagree with the punishment that would be appropriate. If so, point that out.
4. Name other crimes and continue the process as time allows.
5. Transition to the Bible study.

The founding fathers who wrote the U.S. Constitution expected each generation to determine what they thought were appropriate punishments for particular crimes. That has been the case. During the Tribulation, God will pour out punishments on the world for the crimes (sins) they have committed against Him. Many of the unbelievers will protest that the punishment is cruel and unusual. We will learn why they are all wrong in our study of God's final judgments on the world before Christ's return.

## Bible Study

### Gather

- Resource 81-R7.
- God's Plan for the End Times poster.
- Grapes.
- Paper towels.

### I. Reaping of God's wrath (Rev. 14:17–20)

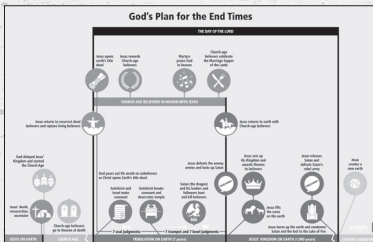
**DISPLAY:** Refer to the God's Plan for the End Times poster as needed throughout this session.

**READ:** Revelation 14:17–19.

The grapes the angel reaps are figuratively storing up God's wrath against the world, including the Antichrist and the false prophet. The grape's skin holds the grape's juice. Smashing the grapes will release the juice so it splatters everywhere like blood.

**ACTIVITY:** Have volunteers smash grapes on paper towels and show the splatters left on the paper towels.

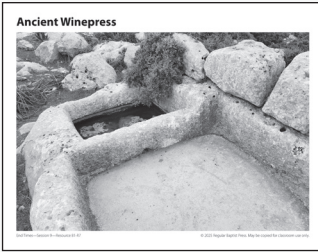
John described the grapes as "ripe." The word he used means "past ripe." The world will be overdue to receive God's wrath. And God will be ready for the trampling of the grapes and the pouring out His wrath.



So, the angel who reaps the grapes will figuratively throw them into a winepress without delay.

**READ:** Revelation 14:20.

**DISPLAY:** Resource 81-R7. The resource is a picture of an ancient winepress. The winemaker put his grapes into the large area for people to crush with their feet. The juice drained through the small opening at the base and into the smaller collection basin.



81-R7

The collection basin in John's image is the land of Israel with the valley of Megiddo as the focal point. A final battle, called the Battle of Armageddon, will take place after a series of other battles between the world's armies in and around Israel. The world's armies will stop their attacks on each other to turn their attack on Christ at His return. Christ will slaughter the world's armies with the word of His mouth. The scene will resemble the crushed grapes left in the winepress with the blood running as high as a horse's bridle.

**ASK:** Should we be horrified by the bloodshed at Armageddon? Explain. *No. God is both righteous and just in all His dealing with humanity. We should be horrified by man's sinfulness.*

## II. Rejoicing over God's wrath

### A. Declaration of God's greatness (Rev. 15:1–4)

John saw seven angels with the seven plagues that God will pour out on the world as the bowl judgments. The angels stood by as John witnessed a declaration of God's greatness.

**READ:** Revelation 15:1, 2.

John saw the tribulation martyrs standing on the sea of glass, which lies before God's heavenly throne (Rev. 4:6). John described the martyrs as victors, people who overcame the beast and his image, mark, and number. In the earthly, physical sense, the Antichrist will overcome the believers by killing them, but they will be victorious over the Antichrist because they belong to God (12:11). In a similar sense, all believers are already victors through Christ.

**ASK:** Do you see yourself as a victor through Christ? How does your standing affect your daily life?

**READ:** Revelation 15:3. **ASK:** What will the tribulation martyrs have witnessed about God's works on earth? *They will have seen His judgments that resulted in a massive number of casualties through famine, disease, and disasters.*

Not one of the tribulation martyrs will ask God to back off the intensity of His judgments on the earth. All of them, like Moses, will sing of

The word "saints" in Revelation 15:3 reads "nations" in better Greek manuscripts.

God's great and amazing acts. Moses sang after watching God destroy the Egyptian army in the Red Sea (Exod. 15:1–18) and again as he approached death (Deut. 32:1–43). The tribulation martyrs will have one or both of these songs in mind as they stand before God's throne and anticipate God's pouring out of His bowl judgments.

**READ:** Exodus 15:6, 7; Deuteronomy 32:40–42. **ASK:** How do Moses' songs present God? *As an avenger Who destroys His enemies with both nature and weapons of war.*

**ASK:** How do you think the world would respond to Moses' lyrics about God's violent vengeance on His enemies?

Many people in the world see God as too loving and kind to ever lift a vengeful sword against His enemies. But that view of God is neither accurate nor acceptable. The martyrs in Heaven will sing that God's ways are "just" and "true." To be "just" means to be right. Every action God takes in judging the world during the Tribulation will be right. God is "true" in that He keeps His promises and acts according to His character. He isn't a fraud or fake like all the false gods down through history, including the Antichrist in the Tribulation. God alone is the true King of the nations. He will hold them accountable for their sinfulness.

**READ:** Revelation 15:4.

The martyrs will wonder who wouldn't fear God and glorify His name after observing His great and marvelous works, including the bowl judgments. God's works show that He is holy, meaning completely right and without any sin. God will take vengeance on the world during the Tribulation because His holiness will demand that He act.

**ASK:** What did God do to show His love toward the world, including unbelievers living during the final stages of the Tribulation? *He sent His Son to die on the cross to pay the penalty for their sins; He gave the world the Bible so they might know about His offer of salvation.*

The martyrs will add that the nations will come to worship before God. Their comments relate to the coming millennial Kingdom when Christ will rule the world from Jerusalem and the nations will gladly worship and obey Him.

## **B. Demonstration of God's greatness (Rev. 15:5—16:1)**

**READ:** Revelation 15:5, 6.

John saw the temple opened, meaning the inner sanctuary of the heavenly tabernacle or the Holy of Holies. The angels' garments of pure white linen fastened by golden girdles seem to symbolize righteousness



and royalty. God is the king of the universe, and He will judge on the basis of moral rightness.

**READ:** Revelation 15:7—16:1.

One of the four living creatures will give to the seven angels the seven golden bowls. At the same time, God's glory, seen as thick smoke, will fill the heavenly temple and keep anyone from entering it. Out of that same smoke-filled temple will come God's voice commanding the seven angels with the seven bowls to pour out His wrath on the earth.

The heavenly temple scene demonstrates that God's judgments on the world have their origin in His holiness. God must judge the world because He is holy.

### **III. Releasing of God's wrath**

God's angels obey His voice and begin to pour out God's wrath on the earth in rapid succession.

#### **A. God's righteous reason (Rev. 16:2–7)**

**READ:** Revelation 16:2–4.

God will cause unbelievers who have the mark of the beast (13:14–17) to develop painful sores on their bodies, making His judgment personal and exclusionary. An angel will have previously warned that those who get the mark of the beast will drink of the wine of the wrath of God (14:9, 10).

The second and third bowls will turn the sea and rivers of springs of water into blood. Every creature in the ocean will die because of the plague. God's ability to change water to blood will show the world that He rules over all creation and that He therefore has power over life and death.

**READ:** Revelation 16:5–7.

The angel that God appointed over the earth's water will speak up after the third bowl judgment, recognizing first that the Lord is righteous and eternal. The angel will add that God will act justly when changing the water into blood because the Antichrist's followers will have murdered believers in unprecedented numbers (Matt. 24:21, 22; Rev. 7:9, 10). Having blood to drink instead of water will be the world's just due. A second angel from the altar will add that God's judgments are true and righteous.

**ASK:** How should the water angel's declaration affect our view of the wicked? Should we ever think that they have gotten away with their sin? *No. We should recognize that those who die without Christ will suffer for their sins forever. God must punish them according to their evil deeds.*

## **B. Man's blasphemous response (Rev. 16:8–11)**

The next two bowl judgments reveal that the world won't agree with the angels that they deserve God's judgment.

**READ:** Revelation 16:8, 9.

God will affect the sun, the world's source of light, by turning up the sun's heat to create unbearable temperatures for those with the mark of the beast. But instead of crying out to God in repentance, they will blaspheme and disrespect God's name and defiantly challenge His authority over their lives.

**READ:** Revelation 16:10, 11.

The fifth bowl will bring darkness and severe pain to unbelievers in the Antichrist's kingdom. Their pain will be so great that they will gnaw at their tongues. Yet, they will still blaspheme God in response, showing that they will remain devoted to Satan and that they will never repent of their wickedness.

**ASK:** What should our response be to those who continue to blaspheme God during the Tribulation? Should we look down on them or be prideful? *We should recognize that without God's grace in our lives, we would blaspheme God too.*

We ought to rejoice every day that we will stand righteous before God in Heaven and enjoy His presence forever.

## **C. Satan's counterfeit signs (Rev. 16:12–14, 16)**

**READ:** Revelation 16:12–14, 16.

The sixth bowl prepares the world for Christ's return and final battle with the Antichrist and the armies of the earth. God will dry up the Euphrates River to allow for troop movements from the East. The movement will be part of a series of battles. In addition, three evil spirits sent by Satan, the Antichrist, and the false prophet will use miraculous signs to motivate the world leaders to move their armies to the Valley of Megiddo in Israel, known as Armageddon. The evil spirits' signs will be counterfeits of God's power. Satan's goal will be to use the world's armies to battle against Christ. God's goal will be to gather the troops for Christ to defeat when He returns to earth.

## **D. Christ's final warning (Rev. 16:15)**

**READ:** Revelation 16:15.

The Lord will return as a thief in that He will arrive suddenly and with a cost to those He overcomes. Unbelievers will lose their lives and any hope of salvation. By contrast, Christ's return will be a blessing

to believers who have survived the Tribulation. Christ will find them clothed in His righteousness so that they are not spiritually without clothes and subject to judgment. The lost will have no covering for their sins and will suffer forever as a result.

**ASK:** Nothing is more important than having Christ's righteousness. But do you act like that is the case? What might you be treating as more important?

## **E. God's final plague (Rev. 16:17–21)**

**READ:** Revelation 16:17.

As the final angel pours out the seventh bowl, a loud voice from the heavenly temple will exclaim, "It is done!" The message will signal that God will not need to pour out any other judgments before He sends Christ back to earth to deal with the unbelievers and set up His Kingdom.

**READ:** Revelation 16:18–21.

The final bowl judgment will bring a catastrophic earthquake that will affect the "great city," likely a reference to Babylon. Other cities will fall and every island and mountain will change. God will shake His creation in anger over man's sinfulness on the earth. God will end the final plague by hurling hundred-pound hailstones onto the earth.

**ASK:** How will unbelievers respond to the massive hailstones? *They will curse God.*

The curses unbelievers hurl at God will be powerless to change anything about God. He will judge them in righteousness and according to their works.

## **Memory Builder**

### **Gather**

- Whiteboard and markers.
- AI song generator (optional).

### **Steps**

1. Write Revelation 15:3 on the board and review its meaning.

Martyred believers from the Tribulation will sing a hymn of praise in Heaven. The song is both Moses' song and the Lamb's song. Moses sang about God's destruction of the Egyptians in the Red Sea and God's faithfulness throughout Israel's history. The Lamb's song speaks of redemption from sin. The tribulation martyrs will conclude



that God's works as King of the nations are great and marvelous and that His ways are always just and true.

2. Discuss the justness of God's judgment of sinners.

**ASK:** Of the judgments God will bring on sinful humanity during the Tribulation, which one do you think is the hardest to accept as morally right? Why?

**ASK:** Why do we know that all God's judgments will be right? *Because God always acts according to His holiness. God can't do wrong.*

The song of the Lamb includes God's placement of our sins on Jesus. Isaiah wrote that it pleased the Lord to crush His Son for our sakes (Isa. 53:10). That wasn't fair, but Christ willingly submitted to God's will. We deserve to suffer for our sins. But through Christ, we have escaped God's wrath. Those who reject Christ's suffering will bear the punishment for their sins forever.

3. If you have a musically inclined student, have him or her create a tune for the verse. Have the class sing it together a few times. Also consider using an AI song generator.

## Session Application

### Steps

1. Review the lesson.

An angel will reap God's grapes of wrath and throw them into a winepress for trampling. The juice that spills out will picture the blood of those who oppose Christ at His return. A group of tribulation martyrs will declare God's greatness and holiness in judging the world. God will fill the heavenly temple to show that His commands to judge the world always spring from His holiness. An angel will declare God's righteousness in response to the bowl judgments, but the world will only blaspheme Him. Three evil spirits will use Satan's power to gather the world's armies to confront Christ. Christ will warn the world that He is returning.

2. Relate God's judgment on sin to today.

**ASK:** Would you say that your unsaved friends deserve the judgments that God will pour out on unbeliever in the Tribulation? Explain.

Satan wants us to think that "good" people are good enough to escape God's judgment. In reality, no one deserves to escape God's judgment. Every person deserves to experience God's wrath. As

believers, God saved us from His wrath through Christ. But your unsaved friends are still under God's wrath. And they will suffer under God's wrath if they don't trust in Christ as their Savior.

3. Have several students praise God for deliverance from God's wrath.
4. Have several other students ask God to help your class understand the danger their unsaved friends face without Christ. Encourage your students use their understanding of God's coming wrath as a motivation to witness to their friends.

## Session Takeaways

Before dismissing the students, draw their attention to the Time with God page in their student books. Instruct them to complete the study on their own. The activity reviews the responses to God's bowl judgments.

SESSION 10

# CHRIST'S RETURN WITH THE CHURCH

## Scripture Focus

Rev. 19:11–21

## BuildUP Theme



LEARN DOCTRINE

Jesus will be faithful to His promises to return to earth, defeat Satan, and establish His Kingdom.

## Measurable Response

Students will consider whether they are taking Christ at His word or if they are living as if what Christ says isn't true.

## Memory Verse

"Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war" (Rev. 19:11). NKJV

"Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war" (Rev. 19:11). ESV

## Teacher Preparation

- ☐ Read Revelation 19:11–21. Christ's important names at His return will be "Faithful" and "True." He will be faithful to His promises to return and set up His Kingdom. And He will expose the Antichrist and false prophet as liars and frauds.
- ☐ Do you believe Christ is faithful to His promises? Do you believe that what Christ says is true? Or are you doubting Him and choosing to live contrary to Him in areas of your life?
- ☐ Christ's return to earth will establish Him as faithful to His Word. Challenge your students to live everyday with Christ's faithfulness in mind. He will always keep His word and His word will always be true.

## Cultural Barrier

This lesson again deals with man's absolute inability to set up a social utopia. Christ will return to earth and find a dumpster fire instead of a peaceful utopia. He will rid the world of its rebels and begin the process of restoring true peace to the earth.



# Session Starters

## Option 1—"I Got This!"

### Gather

- Wads of paper or tennis balls.
- Trashcan.

### Steps

1. Set up a competition. For example, have students toss wads of paper into a trashcan from behind a line. Before each student takes a turn, he or she must describe his or her level of confidence ranging from "I got this" to "I so don't got this!"
2. Discuss declaring victory before securing victory.

**ASK:** When have you said, "I got this!"?

**ASK:** When have you said that and been right?

**ASK:** When have you said that and been wrong?

3. Transition to the Bible study.

In the battle that ends the Tribulation, both sides believe they will win. In fact, one side is so sure of victory that they invite birds to eat what will be the slain bodies of the opposing army. The other side is dead wrong. In this session we will study Christ's thorough victory over the world.

## Option 2—Trash Talking

### Steps

1. Talk about trash talking in sports.

To trash talk is to belittle an opponent and say demeaning things about their abilities. The hope is to get inside the person's head and cause them to doubt they can win.

**ASK:** When have you gone against an opponent that used trash talking to intimidate you?

**ASK:** How, if at all, does trash talking affect your play?

2. Transition to the Bible study.

The Antichrist and the false prophet will trash talk Christ before His return to earth, telling the world that Christ will fail and that they

should put their trust in them as world leaders. But when Christ returns, He will have a special punishment for the Antichrist and false prophet. We will study Christ's return to earth in this session.

## Bible Study

### Gather

- Resource 81-R8.

### I. Christ's Return

#### A. Christ's appearance (Rev. 19:11–13)

During His initial stay on earth, Christ sat on a donkey when He rode into Jerusalem (Zech. 9:9; Matt. 21:5). The donkey illustrated His humble offer of Himself to the Jews. The Jews ultimately rejected Him and hung Him on a cross to die. At His second appearing, Christ will ride on a white horse, signifying His intent to judge unbelievers and to make war with Satan's armies led by the Antichrist.

**READ:** Revelation 19:11. **ASK:** Christ's names are Faithful and True. Why are those names important for believers? *Believers can have confidence that Christ is the true Son of God and that He will be faithful to the future blessings He has promised to them.*

Satan will use the Antichrist and the false prophet to convince the world to worship him and fight on his side against Christ. Christ will expose him as unfaithful to his promises and utterly false in his claims. Christ, by contrast, will be faithful and true to His plans to judge the world.

**READ:** Revelation 19:12.

Christ's fiery eyes speak of His penetrating discernment and judgment. He will know who has truly trusted Him as Savior and who hasn't. There will be a significant number of believers, especially Jewish believers, who survive the Tribulation. Christ will identify them and grant them entrance into His Kingdom. He will judge the rest of the world's population for their sin and pledge of loyalty to the Antichrist. Of course, the mark of the beast on their hand or forehead would be hard for them to hide.

The crowns on Jesus' head will demonstrate that He returns as the absolute sovereign. He will reign over all the kingdoms of the earth, and He will reign over creation, changing it by lifting its curse and returning it to its Garden-of-Eden-like state.

Christ's name that no one else knows but Him likely speaks to His

uniqueness as the Son of God and Son of Man. No one is like Christ in that He is both fully human and yet fully God. His “name” stands for all He is.

**READ:** Revelation 19:13.

Christ’s blood-dipped robe will be a sign of His sure victory against the world’s armies. The blood will be from His enemies, the unbelievers on earth who try to stop His return. The certainty of His victory over them will show by His riding to the battle with the blood already on His robe. Isaiah talked about Christ having stains on His robe from trampling the grapes of wrath prepared for the day of His return (Isa. 63:1–4).

Christ’s revealed name is the “Word of God” (John 1:1–3). As such, He is both equal with God and a revealer of God’s character. Christ’s life reads like a book that tells us what God the Father is like.

**ASK:** What can you learn about God the Father from Christ’s words and actions in relation to the end times?

## **B. Christ’s armies (Rev. 19:14)**

**READ:** Revelation 19:14.

The armies who accompany Christ to earth will be on white horses and dressed in white. Most likely, we will be part of Christ’s army. Angels might be part of Christ’s armies too. Scripture never tells us that these heavenly armies will be engaged in actual conflict. Christ alone will defeat His foes with the power of His spoken word. John makes that clear in the next verse.

**ASK:** In what sense is Christ’s victory ride to earth our victory ride too? *We are in Christ. When we return with Him, He will have given us permanent victory over sin and death (1 Cor. 15:56, 57).*

## **C. Christ’s actions (Rev. 19:15)**

Isaiah wrote that the Messiah will smite the earth with the rod of his mouth and slay the wicked with the breath of his lips (Isa. 11:4). John symbolized the power of Christ’s by saying Christ had a sharp sword proceeding out of His mouth.

**READ:** Revelation 19:15.

No actual, physical, prolonged conflict will occur between Christ and the evil trinity of Satan, the Antichrist, and the false prophet. Christ will simply speak, and His adversaries will collapse before Him.

**ASK:** Why might the armies of the earth think they could defeat Christ? *Satan will deceive them into believing they can defeat Christ. He is persuasive, and they will be blind to the truth about Christ.*



Sin blinds people to truth (2 Cor. 4:4). They will believe foolish lies because they perceive life through sin-cursed minds.

Christ will be a Shepherd-King in the millennial Kingdom. He will rule the nations with a rod of iron (Ps. 2:9). His authority will be firm yet gentle. But before His rule begins, He will “tread” upon the unregenerate in the “winepress” of the wrath of God. We studied God’s winepress filled with His grapes of wrath in our previous session. Christ will be the One figuratively stomping on the grapes to get the juices to flow freely. No wonder He will return to earth with a robe that appears dipped in blood.

Some people might think the picture of Christ stomping on the grapes of wrath shows Him to be too harsh. But Christ submitted to the cruel treatment of the cross for every sinner. He died for the sins of the world. There is nothing more He can do for the lost. If they trample on His grace, then He must tread on the grapes of wrath. He must deal with them according to their sins.

#### **D. Christ’s titles (Rev. 19:16)**

**READ:** Revelation 19:16.

Christ will come to assert Himself as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. In that day, the government will finally be upon His shoulder.

**READ:** Isaiah 9:6.

“Government” means “dominion, power, and legal authority.” Christ will rightfully sit on the throne of David and rule the world from Jerusalem (Ps. 132:10–18; Luke 1:32, 33). Jesus is the Messiah Whom God promised to Israel. And He will be far greater than any human ruler. He will be stronger and more regal than King Saul, more loving and devoted than King David, and wiser than King Solomon. He will be the leader Israel and the world has needed since Adam and Eve bit into the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden.

**ASK:** How do you think Christ will compare to our present political leaders?

**ASK:** Why will He be so much better? *He won’t be ruling the world from a sinful heart. He will rule with absolute knowledge of what is going on in the world and have all the right answers to solve the problems.*

## **II. The Battle of Armageddon**

The unbelievers who survive the Tribulation will not submit to Christ’s rule. Their armies will turn against Christ in the last of the battles that make up the Campaign of Armageddon.

## A. Angelic call to the birds (Rev. 19:17, 18)

**READ:** Revelation 19:17, 18.

Before Christ even faces the enemy armies, an angel will summon the birds to eat the flesh of the dead corpses that will cover the ground. For the birds, it will be a banquet of flesh belonging to the unbelieving soldiers who oppose Christ.

**ASK:** Why will the angel be so sure that all of Christ's enemies will die? *Because Christ is God. No one can stand against Him.*

**ASK:** What else could the angel say to show that Christ's victory is certain?

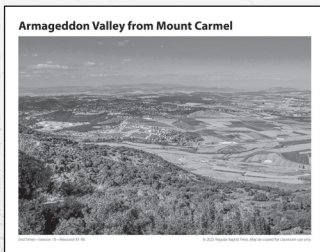
The angel will say that among the slain will be kings, captains, mighty men, free men, slaves, and both small and great. What a person owns and what position he holds at the end of the Tribulation won't matter if the person is without Christ.

## B. Assembling of the armies (Rev. 19:19)

**READ:** Revelation 19:19.

Armageddon will be the climax of a series of battles by major powers to seize the land of Israel. The Antichrist leads a group of ten nations from Europe. His army will be in Israel.

**DISPLAY:** Resource 81-R8. The picture shows the Valley of Megiddo from Mount Carmel in northern Israel. The Antichrist will assemble his troops in this location.



81-R8

Much earlier, God will destroy an army from the north of Israel (probably Russia) (Ezek. 38:22, 23), and the Antichrist will beat another army from the south of Israel (Dan. 11:41, 42). The Antichrist will then break his covenant with Israel and will set himself up as a political-religious god (Dan. 9:27b). The armies of the east (perhaps China and other far east nations) will then move toward the Promised Land (Rev. 16:12). Before the armies of the Antichrist collide with the armies of the east, they will unite to face off against the descending Christ (16:14, 16). The false spirits that Satan, the Antichrist, and the false prophet send out will be instrumental in bringing the world's armies together.

## C. Destruction of the leaders (Rev. 19:20)

**READ:** Revelation 19:20.

Christ will destroy the Antichrist with the breath of his mouth and with the brightness of His coming (2 Thess. 2:8). In other words, the battle will be over as soon as Christ appears and opens His mouth.

Unlike the enemy soldiers, the Beast and false prophet will not die on the field of battle. Christ will send them directly to the Lake of Fire where they will experience eternal torment in bodies divinely conditioned to endure such eternal fire. They will be the first two individuals Christ will cast into the Lake of Fire. After the millennial Kingdom, Christ will cast Satan, the unholy angels, and all unbelievers of all the ages into the Lake of Fire, their eternal place of torment.

### **D. Slaying of unbelievers (Rev. 19:21)**

**READ:** Revelation 19:21.

John's vision included the destruction of the rebellious armies and the consumption of their flesh by the birds, just as the angel said would happen. Christ will not immediately kill all unbelievers at His return, just those who assemble to fight against Him. When He sits on His throne at the beginning of His Kingdom, He will separate the Tribulation survivors into the sheep (saved) and the goats (unsaved) (Matt. 25:31–46). Christ will kill all unbelievers and send them to Hell where they will await their resurrection and judgment at the end of Christ's Kingdom. Christ will find all unbelievers guilty of sin and condemn them all to the Lake of Fire before ushering in eternity on the new earth.

**ASK:** Should we rejoice because Christ will slay the wicked or should we be sad? Explain. *We should be glad that Christ will remove unbelievers from the earth. But the thought of people entering Hell with no hope of eternal life should sadden us. It saddens God too. He loves all people and wants everyone to trust in Christ for salvation.*

## **Memory Builder**

### **Gather**

- Whiteboard and markers.

### **Steps**

1. Write Revelation 19:11 on the board and review its meaning.

John saw a vision of Christ's return to earth. The heavens will open to reveal Christ on a white horse. Jesus will ride the horse in victory over Satan, the Antichrist, false prophet, and the world's armies. Jesus' names will be Faithful and True because He will return as He promised and will expose Satan and his leaders as liars and deceivers. Christ will act righteously in judging unbelievers and making war with those who oppose Him.

2. Write "FAITHFUL" vertically down the board. Students suggest ways



Christ has been faithful to His word and promises. Their answers can be general or personal statements. Their answers should start with or include one of the letters in FAITHFUL. Write some of the answers on the board.

**ASK:** What should be our response to Christ's perfect record of faithfulness?

3. Repeat the verse a couple times as a class.

## Session Application

### Gather

- Whiteboard and marker.

### Steps

1. Review the lesson.

Christ will return to earth riding a white horse, signifying His intent to judge unbelievers and to make war with Satan's armies. Christ's armies will follow Him on white horses and in white robes. On Christ's robe will be the titles "King of Kings" and "Lord of Lords." An angel will call birds to dine on the corpses that will cover the ground. Christ will simply speak, and His adversaries will collapse before Him. He will capture the Antichrist and the false prophet and send them directly to the Lake of Fire. And He will gather and slay the remaining unbelievers on earth.

2. Discuss taking Christ at His word in our daily lives.

**ASK:** What will unbelievers believe about Jesus in the moments before He returns to earth? *That Jesus is a fraud and that they can overcome Him.*

**ASK:** Do you ever function as if what Jesus has said isn't true? For instance, do you function as if what He says about your need to honor your parents isn't true?

When we let our sin natures direct our lives, we are living according to the Antichrist. Our sin natures agree with the world. But by God's grace and through the power of His Spirit and His Word, we can grow in Christlikeness and say no to our flesh.

**ASK:** What are you doing to grow to be like Christ and say no to your flesh?

3. Thank God for Christ's coming defeat of the Antichrist and the Antichrist's wicked armies. And thank Him for giving us His Word and Spirit so we might grow to be like Christ.

## Session Takeaways

Before dismissing the students, draw their attention to the Time with God page in their student books. Instruct them to complete the study on their own. The activity reviews key truths about Christ and His return.

SESSION 11

**CHRIST'S  
REIGN WITH  
THE CHURCH**

**Scripture Focus**

Rev. 6:9–11; 20:1–4 and other passages

**BuildUP Theme**



LEARN DOCTRINE

Christ will rule over the earth for a thousand years with believers ruling under Him.

**Measurable Response**

Students will rejoice in the blessings Christ will bring to earth during His Kingdom.

**Memory Verse**

“He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore” (Isa. 2:4). NKJV

“He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide disputes for many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore” (Isa. 2:4). ESV

## Teacher Preparation

- ☐ Read Revelation 20:4. What comes to mind when you think about reigning with Christ in the Millennium? Over what part of the world would you like to reign? Remember that Christ will lift the curse on the earth, making everywhere on earth a pleasant place to be.
- ☐ How you live now will determine both your role in Christ's Kingdom and your capacity to glorify God in the Millennium. Serve God sincerely and by His power while you can.
- ☐ Encourage your students to develop a focus on eternity. Challenge them to think about how their decisions and actions will affect their capacity to glorify God in the Millennium and forever.

## Cultural Barrier

This lesson deals with the idea that people can set up a social utopia. Jesus will set up a perfect environment in His earthly Kingdom. People born into His Kingdom will need to trust in Christ as their Savior. Those who don't will eventually rebel against Christ, proving that even if you put a person in a perfect environment, he would ruin it. The problem is not the person's environment but the person's sin nature.



# Session Starters

## Option 1—Christ for King of the World!

### Gather

- Whiteboard and markers.

### Steps

1. Students write campaign slogans for Christ as if He were running to be elected king of the world.
2. Review and discuss the campaign slogans the students wrote.

**ASK:** Do you think Christ would win based on your slogan? Why or why not?

**ASK:** How do we know the world doesn't want Christ as its leader? *They crucified Him the last time He offered to be their King.*

3. Transition to the Bible study.

The world's nations will eventually accept Christ as their leader. They will even travel to Jerusalem to worship Him. But that won't happen until Christ makes some radical changes, including ridding the world of all who oppose His rule. Christ's Kingdom is the topic for this session.

## Option 2—Troublemaker Is Missing

### Steps

1. Discuss how troublemakers affect group dynamics. Encourage your students not to mention names when sharing their stories. Consider having your own illustration to share.

**ASK:** When have you been part of a group that had a troublemaker who kept the group from agreeing or working well together?

**ASK:** What happened when the troublemaker was absent? How did the group dynamic change?

2. Transition to the Bible study.

Satan is the troublemaker behind a lot of the world's trouble. He stirs up problems all over the world. So, Christ is going to put Satan in detention for a thousand years. Christ will rule without the

troublemaker roaming the earth. In this session we will learn more about Satan's detention and other aspects of Christ's wonderful earthly Kingdom.

## Bible Study

### Gather

- God's Plan for the End Times poster.

### I. Kingdom Preparation

**DISPLAY:** Refer to the God's Plan for the End Times poster as needed throughout this session.

#### A. Binding of Satan (Rev. 20:1–3)

**READ:** Revelation 20:1.

In his vision, John saw a holy angel descend out of Heaven, having the key to a bottomless pit and a great chain. In conjunction with the fifth trumpet judgment, God will permit the opening of the pit (abyss) and the release of locusts to escape out of the darkness and terrorize the world (Rev. 9:1–3). But there won't be anything escaping the bottomless pit into which God sends Satan.

**READ:** Revelation 20:2.

God will direct the holy angel with the strong chain to open the abyss and to cast Satan into it. Satan is the serpent of old, a description that brings to mind his role in tempting Eve in the Garden of Eden. God doesn't want the old serpent up to his usual tricks during Christ's reign. So, God will keep Satan bound for a thousand years.

**READ:** Revelation 20:3.

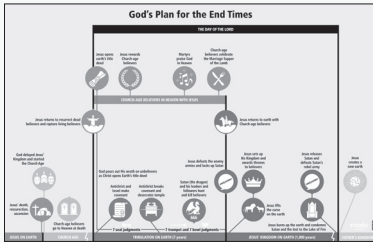
The world will be free of Satan's deception during the Millennium. The people will enjoy righteousness and peace under Christ's sovereign authority.

**ASK:** What does the binding of Satan reveal about his power and authority? *That he is subject to Christ's authority and that he is powerless to exert his will when Christ restricts it.*

God will keep Satan locked up until He is ready to release him and fulfill one more purpose.

#### B. Setting up of thrones (Rev. 20:4)

Jesus will fulfill the Davidic Covenant by sitting on David's throne in Israel (Luke 1:32, 33; cf. 2 Sam. 7:16). John then saw other thrones too.



**READ:** Revelation 20:4.

All who share in the resurrection of the righteous dead will have some aspect of reign. Jesus promised the twelve apostles that they would sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Matt. 19:28). Paul stated that Church-age believers would one day judge the world (1 Cor. 6:2). John wrote that Christ appointed believers to be kings and priests (Rev. 1:6). In addition, the elders (Church-age believers) sing that they will reign on earth (5:10). Christ will also raise Tribulation martyrs from the dead to also reign with Him. All these groups will have glorified bodies in the Millennium. They will reign over people who survived the Tribulation and are still in their natural bodies.

**ASK:** Should we be nervous about ruling in the Millennium? Explain. *No. We will have perfect minds and bodies. We will enjoy our ruling positions under Christ's authority.*

## **II. Kingdom Life**

### **A. The King (Ps. 2:7, 8; Dan. 7:13, 22)**

When Christ plants His feet on the Mount of Olives, He will claim the earth as His possession from God.

**READ:** Psalm 2:7, 8.

The names the Bible's writers use for Jesus in relation to His Kingdom position help us understand His rule. Isaiah called Jesus the "Lord of hosts" (Isa. 24:23), a name that emphasizes Jesus' sovereign control over every other power. Isaiah also recorded that Jesus will be addressed as your "God" (Isa. 52:7). Daniel wrote that Jesus is called the "Most High" (Dan. 7:22). Jesus will reign on earth as God.

**READ:** Daniel 7:22.

Christ's government during the Millennium will be completely different from the inadequate, often corrupt bureaucracies that most nations operate under today. What a different place this world will be when God reigns over it in person.

**ASK:** How do you expect Christ's rule over the earth to be different than the governmental rulers today?

**READ:** Daniel 7:13.

Jesus will also rule as the "Son of Man." As man He can fully understand the needs of our hearts (Ps. 103:14), and He will take care of our needs as the human, compassionate king. The Lord will be the world's leader and the perfect model for humanity. God the Father called Jesus His "servant" Who will bring justice to the Gentiles (Isa. 42:1).



When Christ establishes His rule over the earth, He will reign in absolute authority. He will be the king (Isa. 33:17, 22; Dan. 2:44), the judge (Isa. 11:3, 4; 16:5), and the lawgiver (Isa. 33:22). He will exercise personal judgment over all the earth, and His judgment will be absolutely true and right. Because He is the peacemaker, there will be peace among men and nations. Distrust, prejudice, and self-interest will not prevail.

Even though Christ will reign in His glory as king, no one will forget His humble life on earth when He became man in order to redeem us from our sin by His death on the cross. People will still recognize Him as Redeemer (Isa. 59:20) and Good Shepherd (Isa. 40:10, 11; Ezek. 34:11–31). In the Kingdom and throughout all eternity, we will constantly remember the supreme work of Christ for us as our redeemer.

## **B. Kingdom land (Isa. 11:6; Amos 9:13; Zech. 14:4)**

**READ:** Zechariah 14:4.

Zechariah 14:4 says that Christ's descent to the Mount of Olives will touch off a sudden and great change in the geography of Israel. Much of the land is now rocky and mountainous, but at Christ's return, the Mount of Olives will split in two and then level into a plain that farmers can use for growing crops. Furthermore, the wilderness will blossom as the rose (Isa. 35:1, 2). As king and creator, Christ will transform the land of Israel and make the whole earth beautiful and fruitful, as it was before Adam's fall.

**READ:** Amos 9:13. **ASK:** Why will the plowman overtake the reaper? *The crops will grow so fast and bountifully that farmers can have consecutive growing seasons.*

**READ:** Isaiah 11:6. **ASK:** What would a present-day headline be if a young child tried to lead a cow and lion? *Lion mauls child and cow.*

Christ will return animals to their Garden-of-Eden-like state, meaning they will eat plants instead of each other. They will be tame and non-threatening to humans.

All the promises God gave to Israel will happen during Christ's reign on earth. The people of Israel will inherit the Promised Land and enjoy the covenants given to them in the Old Testament (Jer. 12:15; Ezek. 28:25). Jerusalem will play an important part in the Kingdom, becoming the center of the worldwide worship of King Jesus (Isa. 2:2, 3; 35:8–10; 62:1–4). Israel will have a prominent place in Christ's government. Jerusalem, which means "city of peace," will finally reflect its name. Gentiles will be prominent in the millennial Kingdom too (Isa. 2:4; 11:10, 12).

### **C. Kingdom people (Dan. 12:2, 3; Matt. 25:34, 41; Rev. 6:9–11)**

At His second coming, Christ will appear in power and great glory to judge the world (Rev. 19:11). He will judge the world's armies at the battle of Armageddon. And He will judge the rest at the Judgment of the Nations. He will condemn to Hell all unbelievers who survived the Tribulation and welcome into His Kingdom all surviving believers.

**READ:** Matthew 25:34, 41. **ASK:** What two words from Christ capture the stark contrast between the saved and unsaved? *"Come" and "depart."*

Besides the saved Jewish and Gentile survivors of the Tribulation, other Kingdom residents will include resurrected tribulation martyrs (Rev. 6:9–11), resurrected Old Testament believers (Dan. 12:2, 3), and raptured believers who return with Christ (Col. 3:4; Rev. 19:14).

People who accept Christ during the Tribulation and survive until Christ's return will enter the millennial Kingdom in their mortal bodies. They will not be under the effects of the curse, so they will have long lives (Isa. 65:20). But they will not yet have their eternal, glorified bodies. Any children born to them will have sin natures and will need to trust in Christ as their Savior.

### **D. Kingdom characteristics**

Besides the peace and righteous we've already mentioned, Christ's Kingdom will have distinct characteristics.

#### **1. Obedience (Ps. 22:27, 28)**

Disobedience is one of the primary characteristics of our age. Paul called unbelievers "children of disobedience" (Eph. 2:2, 3). They follow the example of their leader Satan, who is the personification of rebellion and disobedience. When Christ locks Satan away during the Millennium, every person and animal will submit to Jesus Christ.

**READ:** Psalm 22:27, 28. **ASK:** What global conflicts in the world today will not be part of Christ's Kingdom?

Unbelievers born in the Millennium will feel the tug to disobey Christ because they will have a sin nature. But saving faith in Christ and obedience will generally characterize people born during the Kingdom.

#### **2. Knowledge (1 Cor. 13:9–12)**

**READ:** 1 Corinthians 13:9–12.

Paul expressed what it would mean to have true and complete knowledge in place of the imperfect and partial knowledge we all limp

along with today. During Christ's Kingdom, He will answer all our why and how questions.

### 3. Physical blessings (Isa. 35:3–6)

God placed a curse on creation as a punishment for Adam and Eve's sin. As a result, the world has endured pain and disease, hostility within the animal kingdom, and much labor for small reward (Gen. 3:17–19). As we've mentioned earlier in this study, Christ will lift the curse on creation during His millennial Kingdom. There will be no more sickness or physical problems for people born during the Millennium. Of course, as believers in glorified bodies, we will enjoy perfect health throughout Christ's Kingdom.

**READ:** Isaiah 35:3–6. **ASK:** What physical ailments will you be glad will be gone in the Millennium?

Problems of poverty and unemployment will not exist. Society will be a productive, prosperous, and satisfying under Christ's reign.

**READ:** Isaiah 65:21–23.

### 4. Worship (Isa. 45:23; Zech. 14:9, 16)

Best of all, the Kingdom will be a time of worshiping the Lord and rejoicing in His presence. Everything about the Kingdom will point to the King. We will worship Him with all our hearts and will lead those born into Christ's Kingdom to do the same.

**READ:** Zechariah 14:9, 16. **ASK:** What will it be like to have the world as excited about worshiping Christ as they are now about the Superbowl or the FIFA World Cup?

## Memory Builder

### Gather

- Whiteboard and markers.

### Steps

1. Write Isaiah 2:4 on the board and review its meaning.

Christ's rule during the Millennium will be perfect because He is God and knows and sees all. But people born during the Millennium won't be perfect. They will have sin natures, and they will need to submit to Christ's rule and trust in Him as their Savior. Some of them won't. So, Christ will rebuke the disobedient. Still, Christ's rule will allow for universal peace. The nations won't build war chests, and individuals will focus on making tools for harvesting rather than on making weapons of war.



2. Discuss the transformation during the Millennium.

In Bible times, a farmer used a “plowshare” to break ground for planting seeds. He used a “pruning hook” to help vines and other plants become more fruitful. Both instruments provide sustenance that promotes life. Isaiah used the tools to characterize Christ’s reign as a fruitful period with an emphasis on abundant provisions.

No one will need swords and spears in the Millennium. They bring death. The modern world has all kinds of upgraded “swords” and “spears.” Weapons are now nuclear and hypersonic. World peace is nowhere on the horizon.

**ASK:** Why do today’s political leaders have no hope of bringing peace to the world? *The world has unbelievers who are under sin’s control and Satan’s influence.*

**ASK:** What should we as believers focus on instead of bringing world peace? *Sharing the gospel, living for Christ, being strong testimonies of Christ’s love for the world.*

3. Review the verse as a class.

## Session Application

### Gather

- Whiteboard and marker.

### Steps

1. Review the lesson.

At the beginning of Christ’s Kingdom, God will imprison Satan in a bottomless pit to keep him from deceiving people born during the Millennium. Christ will appoint ruling positions to tribulation martyrs and Church-age believers. As the king, Christ will exercise personal judgment over all the earth, and His judgment will be absolutely true and right. Christ will also transform the land of Israel, lift the curse on the earth, and make the world a perfect place to live. Characteristics of Christ’s Kingdom include obedience, knowledge, and physical blessings. All nations will worship Christ throughout His reign.

2. Discuss preparing for Christ’s Kingdom.

**ASK:** Should we take leadership classes to prepare for ruling with Christ in the Millennium? Explain. *Leadership classes aren’t necessary. We will have glorified bodies and minds perfectly equipped to serve Christ in His Kingdom.*

**ASK:** How should we prepare for the Millennium? *By serving Christ well right now. Our service will enhance our ability in the Millennium to praise and glorify Christ, and it may determine the position Christ assigns to us.*

3. Praise God for revealing exciting details about the Millennium. Ask Him to help your class serve Christ well in anticipation of Christ's Kingdom.

## Session Takeaways

Before dismissing the students, draw their attention to the Time with God page in their student books. Instruct them to complete the study on their own. The activity reviews key points from the study on the Millennium.

SESSION 12

# THE UNBELIEVER'S ETERNAL STATE

## Scripture Focus

Acts 17:31; Heb. 9:27; 2 Peter 3:10–13; Rev. 14:9–11; 20:7–15; 21:8

## BuildUP Theme



LEARN DOCTRINE

God will condemn the lost of all the ages to eternity in the Lake of Fire.

## Measurable Response

Students will be challenged by the realities of the Lake of Fire to live as God's light before their unbelieving friends.

## Memory Verse

"Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire" (Rev. 20:14, 15). NKJV

"Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire" (Rev. 20:14, 15). ESV

## Teacher Preparation

- ☐ Read Revelation 20:7–15. The Great White Throne Judgment is a somber event. While we as believers rejoice because we are exempt from the judgment through the application of the blood of Christ, we cannot be flippant about the severity of this judgment. Those who die in their unbelief will be speechlessly guilty before Jesus Christ, the Judge, and their sentence is unbelievably horrible.
- ☐ As you prepare to teach this week, make a list of the people in your life who you know to be unbelievers and pray for them. Look for open doors to talk with them about Christ. And pray especially for any unsaved students you have in your classroom, that they will have their eyes opened to their need to accept Jesus as Savior instead of facing Him as judge.

## Cultural Barrier

This lesson deals with the false idea that the truth is subjective. The percent of people in the United States who deny there is a Hell is around forty percent. Those people think that they have the right to decide what is truth. If they die without trusting in Christ, they will know immediately that they didn't have that right. Truth is objective. And God says that Hell is real.



# Session Starters

## Option 1—Found Indisputably Guilty

### Steps

1. Read the following scenarios.
  - While driving down the road, you see red and blue lights flashing in your rearview mirror. You look at your speedometer. It says you were going fifteen miles over the speed limit. You pull over and wait for the officer to come to your window.
  - A quick glance at the clock on your cell phone shows you that you're twenty minutes late for curfew—again. As you let yourself in the house, you notice that a light in the kitchen is on, signaling that one of your parents is awake and waiting for you.
  - When you pull your homework out of your math book, you realize that you have finished only half of the assignment. Your teacher stops by your desk with an outstretched hand to collect your paper.

2. Discuss the scenarios.

**ASK:** What do these scenarios have in common? *The individual was found indisputably guilty.*

**ASK:** What emotions would you be feeling in any of these scenarios?

3. Transition to the Bible study.

This session is about the future moment when Christ will find each individual unbeliever indisputably guilty of sin. The stark reality of that day should motivate us to live as lights in the world.

## Option 2—Guess the Thief

### Gather

- Penny or other small object.

### Steps

1. Use the following instructions to play a game. Play at least two rounds.
  - Set one chair facing a wall.
  - Put a penny or other small object on the floor behind the chair.
  - Choose a person to be it and instruct him to sit in the chair.

- The rest of the class sits or stands behind the person who is it.
- The person in the chair closes his eyes. Motion to a student to walk up to the chair, take the penny, and return as quietly as possible.
- The student sitting in the chair opens his eyes, faces the other students, and guesses which person he thinks took the penny.

2. Discuss the game.

**ASK:** For the people who were it, on what basis did you make your guesses?

**ASK:** For the people who were guilty, how did you try to act not guilty?

3. Transition to the Bible study.

In our game, the person who was it had to determine guilt based on an educated guess. If we played this game all day, we would have many examples of a guilty person going undiscovered. Our game is not reflective of Christ's judgment of unbelievers at the end of time. There will be a record that shows that every unbeliever is guilty of sin. In this session, we will study what the Bible has to say about that stark reality.

## Bible Study

Man's first rebellion against God's rule took place in the Garden of Eden, a perfect environment. Man's final rebellion will be against Christ as He is ruling over a renewed earth filled with peace and prosperity. Both rebellions involve Satan influencing people to rebel against God.

### I. Man's Final Rebellion

#### A. The rebellion's purpose (Rev. 20:7-9)

God will loosen Satan's chains and let him out of the abyss. In response, Satan will hasten to return to earth. One thousand years of chained confinement will not soften Satan's hatred for God.

**READ:** Revelation 20:7.

Satan will go throughout the earth to deceive the nations once again. Some of those who will have been born during the millennial Kingdom will be the objects of his devious tactics. All people born in the Millennium will have a sin nature, just as happens today. They will need to trust Christ for their salvation. Some will believe, but many will only conform outwardly to Christ's rule with a rod of iron. The world system in the Millennium will be righteous. There will be no satanic or demonic forces tempting unbelievers; they will passively accept their lot in life.

When Satan tempts them, however, and offers them an organized way to rebel under his leadership, they will seize the opportunity.

**ASK:** What must unbelievers in the Millennium conclude about Christ, the perfect king, to think that rebelling against Him is in their best interest? *That He is holding out on them and keeping them from becoming better and wiser in some way.*

Eve lived in the perfect Garden of Eden and had a perfect body. Yet, she fell for Satan's lies that God was somehow holding out on her. That Satan will deceive unbelievers living under Christ's perfect rule is not surprising.

Satan will gather his rebels from throughout the earth into a region north of the land of Israel, known as Gog and Magog. Satan's army of rebels will advance toward Jerusalem, sure of their victory and Satan's promises of a better life. There will be so many of them that John wrote they were in number as the sand of the sea. They will be innumerable.

**READ:** Revelation 20:8, 9.

Having ruled with Christ for a thousand years, we will likely know many of those who march against Him. But we won't plead their case before Christ. We will recognize that their lack of faith in Christ makes them rebels and puts them under God's wrath. We won't be surprised when God sends fire from Heaven to destroy them.

## **B. The rebellion's doom (Rev. 20:10)**

Satan's army of rebels will perish as they are engaged in the siege of Jerusalem. None of them will escape God's flames. Satan won't either.

**READ:** Revelation 20:10.

Christ will judge Satan, sentencing him to be cast directly into the Lake of Fire. There he will join the Antichrist (the Beast) and the false prophet. All three will be tormented forever for daring to rebel against God's rule.

**ASK:** Nearly 2,000 years have passed since John wrote the prophecy of Satan's doom. Why does Satan continue to deny it and make plans to try to change it? *Satan is filled with pride. He honestly believes he can change God's plans by killing Christ. He thinks that getting the world to pledge allegiance to him will give him the edge against Christ.*

## **II. The Great White Throne Judgment**

### **A. The timing and place (Heb. 9:27; 2 Peter 3:10–13; Rev. 20:11)**



After dealing with Satan and the army of rebels, God will turn His attention to the unbelievers of all the ages. They will all appear before Him at the Great White Throne Judgment.

**READ:** Hebrews 9:27.

The unbeliever's final judgment follows death, but it does not come immediately after physical death. Unbelievers who physically die go to Hades (Hell) where they wait for their formal judgment. Hell is like the Lake of Fire in that it involves burning, thirst, and constant pain and unrest. It's in a location that no human can see. In this dreaded place, the unsaved person is in torment, conscious, aware of loved ones left behind on earth, and unable to do anything about his or her spiritual separation from God.

**READ:** Revelation 20:11.

The Great White Throne Judgment will not occur in any particular place in the present universe. Christ predicted that the heavens and the earth would pass away (Matt. 24:35). Peter declared that God would burn up the present universe.

**READ:** 2 Peter 3:10–13. **ASK:** What “works” done on the earth will God expose as sinful by burning up the earth? *All evil works from Satan's deception of Eve to his deception of the nations, including man's personal rebellions against God.*

After destroying the universe with fire, Christ will conduct the Great White Throne Judgment somewhere unknown to us. He will finish His judgments before creating the new heaven and the new earth. There will never be an unbeliever on the new earth.

## **B. The subjects (Rev. 14:9–11; 20:12; 21:8)**

Prior to the Great White Throne Judgment, God will call the unsaved out of Hell and unite them with a resurrected body. Christ's resurrection of the lost is the resurrection of condemnation (John 5:29), the resurrection to shame and everlasting contempt (Dan. 12:2).

**READ:** Revelation 20:12.

The “dead” are the unbelievers since the beginning of time. All levels of human society, as represented by the contrasting phrase “small and great,” will stand before Christ as resurrected from the dead.

**ASK:** What type of people were “great” people in history? *Famous actors, singers, politicians, and scientists.*

**READ:** Revelation 14:9–11; 21:8.

Hell and the Lake of Fire aren't places to hang out and have fun.

There won't be parties to attend. There won't be anything to see or any experiences to take one's mind off the torment. It will be flames everywhere all the time.

**ASK:** Why did God tell us so much about the Lake of Fire? *As a warning about His judgment coming on those who don't put their trust in Him.*

### **C. The basis (Acts 17:31; Rev. 20:12, 13)**

**READ:** Revelation 20:12, 13.

Christ will judge the unsaved by the Book of Life and by the books of works. If a person's name is missing from the Book of Life, then the person never passed from spiritual death into spiritual life through faith in Jesus Christ (John 5:24). By the time of the Great White Throne Judgment, the opportunity to trust in Jesus as Savior will be passed. No one will get a second chance to trust in Jesus and avoid the punishment for his or her sins. Today is the day of salvation. We must be faithful to share Christ's love with unbelievers while they still have time to trust in Jesus.

The books of works will give evidence that unbelievers lack justifying faith. In addition, the quantity and quality of works will determine the degree of punishment that an unsaved person will experience in the Lake of Fire. There are degrees of sins (John 19:11), and Jesus stated that some eternal judgment would be worse for some unbelievers (Matt. 11:20–24). For example, Adolf Hitler, the German leader in World War II, oversaw the killing of about eleven million people, including about six million Jews. His sin is very great. His judgment will be heavier than someone who devoted his life to helping care for the needy.

**ASK:** How does a person know if his or her name is written in the Book of Life? *Anyone who trusts in Jesus as Savior knows his or her name is in the book.*

**READ:** Acts 17:31. **ASK:** Christ will judge the world in "righteousness." Why is that important? *It means Christ's condemnation of every unbeliever will be the right decision. Christ won't accidentally send anyone to the Lake of Fire.*

It's heartbreaking to think that some of the lost will have rejected Jesus outright during their lifetimes. How tragic to think Jesus, their judge, would have declared them righteous and fit for Heaven if they had simply responded to Him by faith.

### **D. The results (Rev. 20:14, 15)**

**READ:** Revelation 20:14.

After God raises unbelievers from the dead, Hell will be empty. God will cast it into the Lake of Fire. That means there will no longer be a need for a place for people to await judgment for their sin. God will have already judged all unbelievers and there will never be more unbelievers to judge.

God will cast "Death" into the Lake of Fire too. John pictured "Death" as a person being thrown into the Lake of Fire to show that Christ defeated death for those who trust in Him. All believers from the beginning of time will never die. "Death" will lose its power. Death will cease to exist.

**ASK:** What troubles that accompany death will also cease to be a reality? *The grief of losing a loved one; the fear and uncertainty about losing one's life.*

**READ:** Revelation 20:15.

The first death happens when a person's soul is separated from his physical body. Both the saved and the unregenerate experience physical death. The second death will be both spiritual and eternal. It will occur when God banishes the unsaved person in his or her total being, meaning his or her soul in a resurrection body, to the Lake of Fire, a place of fiery torment and eternal separation from access to God's saving grace. Unbelievers will have bodies from God that endure eternal torment without destruction of the material body. They will feel pain and experience mental anguish forever.

**ASK:** Why is the unbeliever's suffering eternal? *The unbeliever is unable to satisfy God's wrath by suffering. Only Jesus' suffering and death on the cross satisfies God's wrath.*

## Memory Builder

### Gather

- Whiteboard and markers.

### Steps

1. Write Revelation 20:14 and 15 on the board and review its meaning.

God will cast "Death" into the Lake of Fire because no one will die after the Judgment Seat of Christ. He will cast "Hell" into the Lake of Fire because no will sin and go to Hell to wait for judgment. All unbelievers will not have their names in the Book of Life. Only believers have their names written in the Book of Life. God will cast all unbelievers into the Lake of Fire, and they will never return. The Bible calls their plunge into the Lake of Fire their second death.



2. Discuss being sure of salvation and witnessing.

**ASK:** Is your name written in the Book of Life? How do you know?

**ASK:** What about the people you call your good friends? Do you talk about salvation with them?

The Lake of Fire is real. We can't deny that truth. We also can't deny that those who die without trusting in Jesus as Savior will be in the Lake of Fire forever. The reality of the Lake of Fire should motivate us to share the gospel with the lost.

3. Give your students a couple minutes to work on their memory verses. Have them also use the time to meditate on the verses and ask God to help them know how to respond to the stark realities of the Lake of Fire.

## Session Application

### Steps

1. Review the lesson.

Near the end of Christ's Kingdom, He will release Satan from the Bottomless Pit. Satan will go throughout the earth to deceive unbelievers into following him in a rebellion against God. God will destroy the rebels with fire and send Satan to the Lake of Fire. God will resurrect all unbelievers, giving them bodies that will never die. The unbelievers will stand before Christ at the Great White Throne Judgment. Christ will judge them based on their works. Christ will find none of their names in the book of life, so He will cast them into the Lake of Fire. God will also cast "Death" and Hell into the Lake of Fire.

2. Discuss keeping the end of Satan and sin in mind as we live our daily lives.

**ASK:** Summarize Satan's future in just a few words. *Doomed and permanent.*

God will take Satan and all that he believes and throw it into the Lake of Fire. Sin, which he helped start, will end in flames. And anyone who dies a sinner will end up in the Lake of Fire too.

**ASK:** How does keeping the end of sin in mind help you see its ugliness and offensiveness?

When we sin, we are choosing to involve ourselves in what offends God and in what will have its end in the Lake of Fire. And when we live in sin before friends that are heading to the Lake of Fire, we

are telling them that sin is not a big deal. But it will be for them in eternity.

3. Encourage your students to see the importance of living a godly life before unbelievers. They are God's light to the truth about sin.

## Session Takeaways

Before dismissing the students, draw their attention to the Time with God page in their student books. Instruct them to complete the study on their own. The activity reviews the reality of the Lake of Fire.

## SESSION 13

# THE BELIEVER'S ETERNAL STATE

### Scripture Focus

Isa. 65:17; Heb. 11:13–16; Rev. 21:1–23; 22:1–5

### BuildUP Theme



LEARN DOCTRINE

Christ will create a new earth that will be the forever home for all believers.

### Measurable Response

Students will seek to live for God out of gratitude for what He has promised them in eternity.

### Memory Verse

“And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God” (Rev. 21:3). NKJV

“And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God” (Rev. 21:3). ESV

## Teacher Preparation

- ☐ Read Revelation 21 and 22. There are many misconceptions about Heaven, but the Bible describes for us all we need to know about our eternal habitation. The eternal state of the believer will be a literal Heaven on earth.
- ☐ The descriptions of the new heaven and the new earth contained in Revelation 21 and 22 are easy for us to read, but impossible for us to fully comprehend.
- ☐ As you prepare to teach this lesson, meditate on one truth from this week’s memory verses every day. This is your future!

## Cultural Barrier

This lesson deals with the belief that a good career and wealth guarantee a person will be happy. God didn’t call believers to be as wealthy as possible in this life. He calls believers to serve Him, even if it means sacrificing and doing without. Serving God well in this life is the key to joy. We should keep our eyes on eternity and be making eternal investments.



# Session Starters

## Option 1—Video Clip

### Gather

- *Toy Story* video clip.

### Steps

1. Play the video clip from *Toy Story* that shows Buzz bragging about having Andy's name on his foot.
2. Discuss putting our names on things.

**ASK:** On what things have you written your name?

**ASK:** What did writing your name on those things say about how you felt about them?

3. Transition to the Bible study.

Putting our name on our things shows that the things belong to us and that they are important to us. In eternity, God will put His name on us to show that we belong to Him and that we are important to Him. This session is about our amazing life in eternity.

## Option 2—My Name's on It!

### Steps

1. Students name three things on which they put their names.
2. Discuss putting our names on things.

**ASK:** What are your reasons for putting your name on things?

**ASK:** What would you think if someone wrote his or her name on you?

3. Transition to the Bible study.

Putting our name on our things shows that the things belong to us and that they are important to us. In eternity, God will put His name on us to show that we belong to Him and that we are important to Him. This session is about our amazing life in eternity.

## Bible Study

God gave the apostle John the privilege of looking beyond this present

earth system into eternity future. He gives us details that should motivate us to serve God well today.

## **I. The New Earth (Isa. 65:17; Rev. 21:1)**

Our present earth and universe will pass away (Rev. 21:1). God will destroy it with a fervent heat and an incredibly loud noise (2 Peter 3:10–13). After Adam’s sin, God cursed the earth (Gen. 3:17). And even though God will lift the curse during the Millennium, the earth will still bear the scars of the curse and of man’s sin through the ages. For example, the rock layers and the animal skeletons they contain will presumably remain in place throughout the Millennium. Those layers are evidence of God’s judgment on worldwide wickedness in the days of Noah. There may also be evidence from God’s judgments on the world during the Tribulation.

**READ:** Isaiah 65:17. **ASK:** What will happen to our memories of this old earth? *We won’t retain them.*

**ASK:** What value will our earthly goods have in eternity? *They will have no value since we won’t even remember them.*

We should view this earth as our temporary home. After Jesus renovates it for the Millennium, it will cease to exist.

**READ:** Revelation 21:1.

God didn’t reveal much about the new earth, but He did tell us that it will no longer have any sea. There will be water on the new earth but apparently no vast areas covered with saltwater oceans. The absence of oceans won’t be a problem or a disappointment to anyone on the new earth. Our new home will be a perfect place to live and will be breathtakingly beautiful.

**ASK:** Why can we know the new earth won’t be disappointing in any way? *Jesus will create it. He is the Son of God, meaning He will have no limits to His creativity. And Jesus is the Son of Man, meaning He understands us perfectly and can view the earth from a human perspective.*

## **II. New Blessings (Rev. 21:3–6)**

**READ:** Revelation 21:3.

On the new earth, believers will enjoy the presence of God forever. And Jesus will be there in His glorified body. He will enjoy talking with you, and you will be able to praise Him to His face.

**READ:** Revelation 21:4.

Second, God will eliminate tears, death, sorrow, crying, and pain and

any memory of them. Remember that we will watch people grow up in the Millennium. We will get to know them. Many of those people will not trust in Jesus as their Savior. They will be part of the rebellion that Jesus defeats. That will be sad to see. It will be especially sad for believers who were born in the Millennium. Some of them will have family members who rebel against Christ. Those memories, though, won't follow them or us into eternity. We won't have sad thoughts in eternity.

**ASK:** How would the elimination of sad thoughts improve your life right now?

**READ:** Revelation 21:5, 6.

Third, God will provide us with eternal joy and contentment. The reception of the water of everlasting life will give us perpetual satisfaction. We will never be bored, irritated, discouraged, dissatisfied, or jealous in Heaven. It will be like taking a drink of water and having your thirst quenched forever. That's hard to imagine. Nearly every day we find reasons to complain or feel discouraged. That will never happen in eternity.

### III. The New City

#### A. The city's glory (Heb. 11:13–16; Rev. 21:2, 9–11)

**READ:** Hebrews 11:13–16.

The Old Testament believers listed in Hebrews 11, including Abraham and David, looked forward to the heavenly home God would design to be the permanent dwelling place of all believers of all time.

**READ:** Revelation 21:2. **ASK:** John saw the city coming from God as a bride on her wedding day. What descriptions of a bride on her wedding day would help us understand how John perceived the city? *The bride is beautiful, adorned with beautiful things, and ready for her husband.*

John gave other details that help us understand the New Jerusalem's glory. It will be unlike any city on our present earth.

**READ:** Revelation 21:9–11.

The new Jerusalem will shine forth God's glory. In the Old Testament, God's glory was veiled in a cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. God manifested His glory only within the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle and the temple. In the holy city, however, we will live in God's revealed glory without a need to hide our eyes.

**READ:** Matthew 17:1, 2. **ASK:** How did Jesus appear to the disciples when He revealed His glory? *His face shone like the sun, and His clothes were white like light.*



## B. The city's measurements (Rev. 21:12–17)

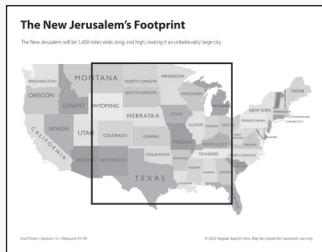
**READ:** Revelation 21:12–17.

The New Jerusalem will be surrounded by a great wall 144 cubits (216 feet) high. The wall will have twelve gates named after the twelve tribes of Israel. Three gates will be located on each of the four sides of the wall. The wall will have twelve foundation stones with the names of the twelve apostles inscribed on them. Angels will act as sentries at the gates.

The city will be approximately fourteen hundred miles in length, width, and height. Opinions differ over the exact shape of the city. Most are convinced that it will be in the form of either a cube or a pyramid.

**RESOURCE:** Display resource 81-R9. The black square represents the New Jerusalem's footprint on the existing United States.

**ASK:** What will the size of the New Jerusalem communicate to believers? *That we are welcome, that God is awesome, that God wants to share His amazing grace on them.*



81-R9

## C. The city's materials (Rev. 21:18–21)

God will use the best jewels and precious stones and metals to build His city. The wall of the holy city will be composed of jasper, probably a green stone. Both the interior construction and the street will be pure gold, clear as glass crystal. The twelve layers of the foundation will be formed out of twelve different precious stones or crystals. From what we can tell from John's descriptions, the layers of the foundation will be green (jasper), sky blue (sapphire), green copper (chalcedony), dark green (emerald), white (sardonyx), blood red (sardius), gold (chrysolite), sea green (beryl), transparent greenish gold (topaz), yellow green (chrysoprase), violet (jacinth), and blue or purple (amethyst). The twelve gates will be made of twelve individual pearls. The value and the beauty will overwhelm us, causing us to stand in awe of God, the city's omnipotent designer and builder. The city will be an eternal, visible reminder of God's greatness.

**ASK:** What would the world's grandest homes look like next to this grandest of all cities? *They would look like tool sheds or doghouses.*

## D. The city's light (Rev. 21:22, 23)

**READ:** Revelation 21:22.

The holy city will have no temple and no special place of worship. Believers will forever be in God's immediate presence and light. Like today, people will have the opportunity to worship God wherever they are.

**READ:** Revelation 21:23.

The glory of God and of the Lamb will provide the holy city's light. God's glory is the outward, radiant manifestation of the beauty of His divine being. "God is light" (1 John 1:5), so Jesus naturally called Himself the Light of the World (John 8:12). God will express His pure, moral excellence visibly within the holy city in the form of light. God's glory will fill the city, so there will be neither shadows nor dark places. And as God's glory fills the new earth with light, the translucent heavenly city will catch that light and reflect it in all different directions causing the city to shimmer like a giant precious jewel.

**ASK:** Why does God show His glory as light? *Light reveals all things, leaving nothing hidden; light always triumphs over darkness, a metaphor for sin and evil; brilliant light is unapproachable because it is blinding.*

## **E. The city's life (Rev. 22:1, 2)**

**READ:** Revelation 22:1, 2.

In the New Jerusalem, a pure river of the water of life will flow out of the dual throne of the Father and the Son. The river will be an eternal reminder that God is the source of life and satisfaction and that God freely provided the water of everlasting life through Christ's sacrificial death (John 4:14). Everyone in the city will experience the fullness of life.

The tree of life will span the river and will bear twelve different fruits, one for each of the twelve months. The changing fruit could possibly be a way for us to track the passage of time. The variety of fruits will be for our constant enjoyment of life.

The tree of life first appeared in the Garden of Eden as a symbol that eternal life comes from God. Another tree from the Garden, called the tree of knowledge of good and evil, will not be present on the new earth. There won't be a need for God to test our loyalty to Him. No one on the new earth will have a capacity to sin or even feel tempted to sin.

**ASK:** Why is it hard to imagine not being faced with temptations to sin? *We all have a sin nature that wants to sin and to control our lives.*

## **F. The city's God (Rev. 22:3–5)**

**READ:** Revelation 22:3.

There will be no more curse on creation (Gen. 3:17–19) in God's eternal presence. Every plant or animal that God puts on the new earth will for our pleasure. No one will be pulling weeds or running from a bear.

**READ:** Revelation 22:4.

We will probably see only Jesus Christ, the only visible person of the triune Godhead (John 1:18). God will put His name on our foreheads as a sign of our eternal value and relationship. We will all belong to God forever. By contrast, those who received the mark of the Beast belonged to Satan. God banned them from ever entering Heaven, sending them all to the Lake of Fire (Rev. 14:9–11).

**ASK:** How should we respond to the truth that we already belong to God? *We should seek to glorify Him with our lives, meaning we should make our lives all about pointing people to Christ.*

**READ:** Revelation 22:5.

The Lord God will give us constant light to illumine our lives. We won't need flashlights or headlamps as we reign with Christ on the new earth forever.

## Memory Builder

### Gather

- Whiteboard and markers.

### Steps

1. Write Revelation 21:3 on the board and review its meaning.

A tabernacle is a dwelling place. In the Old Testament God dwelt in the tabernacle and temple. In the present, God the Holy Spirit dwells in us. In eternity, God will come to dwell with believers on the new earth. Believers will live in the presence of God and with God the Son. They will be His people. They will belong to Him and show His glory. And God will be the believer's God. No believer will feel tempted to worship self, part of God's creation, or another person. Every believer will worship God alone for all eternity.

2. Discuss worshipping God.

**ASK:** What might other people say you worship? Would they say you worship God? Explain.

**ASK:** What are some signs that a person worships God? *The person praises God in public, spends time getting to know God, lives in obedience to God, and introduces other people to God.*

God will be with us for all eternity, and He will be our God. We will worship Him with all our being, and we will worship Him alone. That future reality is our present goal. We should be growing in our recognition of God's authority over us and in our worshipful responses to Him. God the Holy Spirit is now in us to help us do that.



3. Say the verse as a class and then alternate between saying the verse and erasing some of the words.

## Session Application

### Gather

- Video 2 from the DVD—"God's Plan for the End Times."

### Steps

1. Review the lesson.

After Christ judges the lost of all the ages, He will create a new earth as our eternal home. When we arrive there, we will enjoy God's presence forever. He will wipe our memories of any death, pain, and sorrow and will give us eternal joy and contentment. The New Jerusalem on the new earth will be massive and made with fine materials to reflect the light from God's glory. The river of life and the Tree of Life will provide eternal enjoyment. And God will put His name on us as a sign of our eternal value and relationship.

2. Discuss dealing with regrets and guilt.

**ASK:** Why should we as believers not live with regrets and guilt? *Regrets and guilt about our past rob us of the joy we can have in Christ in the present. We can know that joy through confessing our sins and relying on God to serve Him well now.*

God won't spend eternity reminding us of what we did wrong or what we should have done for Him. So, we shouldn't do that to ourselves. We should see each day as another opportunity to know God better and love Him through obeying and serving Him.

3. Encourage your students not to live with regrets and guilt that threaten to rob their opportunities to serve God well right now. Challenge them to show their gratitude to God for their eternal home on the new earth by living for Him every day.
4. Play video 2, "God's Plan for the End Times," as a good review of the end times events.

## Session Takeaways

Before dismissing the students, draw their attention to the Time with God page in their student books. Instruct them to complete the study on their own. The activity reviews key truths about the new earth.