

Join us in being on mission with God!

OUR VISION

To continually mature and grow as a united body of Jesus-imitators who live out God's greatest commandment to "Love" by exalting God and serving one another, and His greatest commission to "Go" by reaching into and shaping our local, regional, and global communities.

"Unshakable Hope"

Titus 2:12-13

Getting Started

After an introductory time, discuss the following questions in your group or class.

1. Sometimes you find yourself at a supermarket or large retail outlet where you have to wait in line before you can leave. Imagine yourself there right now. What are some of the things you might see other people doing as they wait? If the store is unusually busy, what kinds of things will people do?

Thinking about God

We believe in the personal, bodily and premillennial return of our Lord Jesus Christ. The coming of Christ, at a time known only to God, demands constant expectancy and, as our blessed hope, motivates the believer to godly living, sacrificial service and energetic mission.

2. None of us like delays, whether it is traffic backups on the highways or long waits in the clinic for a doctor's appointment. Why can waiting for something be a difficult activity for us to do?

3. God understands that we don't like waiting. Yet he has scheduled the return of Christ according to his own plan. Look at the verse below. What does the Bible predict will be the behavior of some as they watch time pass and do not see the return of Christ as early as they expect? How do you see signs of this in our culture today when we mention the return of Christ?

2 Peter 3:3-4 First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. ⁴ They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation."



Blessed Hope

Titus 2:12-13

It [grace] teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, ¹³ while we wait for the blessed hope-- the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ,

4. Even in the first century the perceived delay in the return of Christ caused problems. What difficulty arose in the church because Christ did not come back as some expected?
2 Thessalonians 2:1-2 Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers, ² not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come.
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5. What events did Paul remind the Thessalonians about that would precede the return of Jesus?
2 Thessalonians 2:3 Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. ⁴ He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God.
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6. What is one of the differences between Jesus' first coming and his second coming, according to the writer of Hebrews?
Hebrews 9:28 so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.
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7. In what sense is the "salvation" Jesus will bring at the second coming different from the salvation he brought when he was born of Joseph and Mary?
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8. In what way does the second coming of Christ bring comfort to us when we attend the funerals of Christians?
1 Thessalonians 4:13 Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope.
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9. When Jesus was on trial he spoke of his return. What does he tell us about it in the verse below?
Mark 14:62 "I am," said Jesus. "And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven."
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Endgame

10. Who will accompany Christ at his return?

Mark 8:38 If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."

Within Christianity, there are three views about the relationship of Christ's kingdom rule on earth and the timing of the second coming.

- A. Premillennialism = teaches that there is a literal 1,000 year reign of Christ on the earth. He will return for the saints (both living and dead) before he establishes that earthly rule.
 - B. Postmillennialism = teaches that the church will flourish in the world and usher in a 1,000 year earthly period of peace and spiritual glory. Evil will not be eradicated, but the preaching and teaching of Christ will cause the gospel to prosper over the earth as in the parable of the mustard seed. This will occur while Christ is still in heaven. After this period in which the world is largely Christianized, Jesus will come back to earth as king. One of the most noted postmillennialists was Jonathan Edwards.
 - C. Amillennialism = teaches that the idea of Christ ruling on earth is not literal. Christ will not rule on this earth. He is present now through the church and does not need to come back to literally rule mankind in any way. Jesus will return to judge the world and create a new earth rather than to set up any kind of earthly kingdom. Most Lutheran denominations do not discuss Christ's return much, but when they do they often embrace amillennialism.
11. Jot down the strengths and weaknesses of each of these perspectives. Why do you think the EFCA statement of faith is limited to Premillennialism only?

Premillennialism (the belief that Jesus will come before he establishes a kingdom on earth) is commonly separated into three forms. Each one views the timing of the rapture differently. The Evangelical Free Church does not prescribe which of these sub-categories should be adopted. All three are accepted, provided they can be supported from scripture.

The word *rapture* does not occur in scripture. It is a term we have coined to describe the event described in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.

12. What do you picture happening here?



Reaching Up and Reaching Out

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13. What details does Matthew 24:30-31 and Matthew 24:40-41 add to the description of this event?

The three most common chronologies regarding the rapture are:

- A. **Pre-tribulation:** Jesus will rapture the church before the 7 years of affliction known as the tribulation.
- B. **Mid-tribulation:** Jesus will rapture the church after the first 3½ years of affliction known as the tribulation.
- C. **Post-tribulation:** Jesus will rapture the church after the 7 years of affliction known as the tribulation.

14. What verses of scripture do you know of that would assert or imply that one of these positions might be more likely than the other two? Do you believe the evidence for any one position is conclusive, suggestive, or speculative?

15. Unfortunately, Christians sometimes squabble about the chronology of the second coming while they ignore the purpose of it. Look at the following verses and describe some of the purposes behind Christ's return:

Acts 10:42; Acts 17:31; 1 Corinthians 4:5; 2 Timothy 4:8; 1 Peter 4:5; Jude 14-15

16. Look at the verses below. What are we to do in anticipation of the Lord's return? Jude 21; 1 Corinthians 1:7; James 5:7-9; Hebrews 10:23-25; Matthew 22:42-51.

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