

Defending and Building Your Faith Christian Apologetics – Worksheet 04

Week 4 – End Times Topics – Part 1

As the title indicates, this week we will begin to discuss topics related to end times. A big word you might sometimes hear used to describe the study of end times is _____. It comes from the Greek “eschatos” meaning “last,” and the English suffix “ology” meaning “the study of,” which is in turn adapted from the Greek “-logia.” So, don’t let the word intimidate you. Simply understand it means the study of the end times.

Our end times topics for the week is the thirteenth Assemblies of God Fundamental Truth and related subjects:

- The Blessed Hope – AG Fundamental Truth #13
- The Resurrection and Translation of Believers
- The Return of Christ
- The Rapture and Tribulation

These topics and the ones we will cover next week should excite and comfort all of us who are saved! At the same time these topics should motivate us to share our faith with others. So, let’s start examining our blessed hope.

The Blessed Hope – AG Fundamental Truth #13

The _____ of Christ and the _____ and translation of believers is the blessed hope of the true church and our first end time topic. This is well stated in the Assemblies of God thirteenth Fundamental Truth:

The resurrection of those who have fallen asleep in Christ and their translation together with those who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord is the imminent and blessed hope of the Church (1 Thessalonians 4:16,17; Romans 8:23; Titus 2:13; 1 Corinthians 15:51,52).
AG1

To help us better understand and appropriate our blessed hope, it’s been divided into three separate sections. We’ll begin with the first part of our blessed hope, our resurrection and translation.

The Resurrection and Translation of Believers

A central theme of the preaching in the Early Church was the _____ of Jesus and how His resurrection also becomes the _____ of ours. His resurrection is the ground for our faith and hope. One of the great affirmations of the New Testament is found in the words of Jesus: “Because I live, you also will live” (John 14:19). Paul calls it a mystery, something not revealed in the Old Testament times but now made clear.^{HSM1}

1 Corinthians 15:51-54 Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, (52) In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall

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be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. (53) For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. (54) So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

“We” simply means all true believers, all who are “in Christ.” Paul previously compared the present body to a bare grain, which must be buried if it is to be changed into a whole wheat plant (1 Cor. 15:37). Here he qualifies this by saying we shall not all die. He is not saying that he himself would be alive when Jesus comes. Rather, he is emphasizing that all believers, both living and dead, will be changed at the time of the Resurrection. ^{HSM1}

The Bible states that we shall be like Jesus when we see Him as He is (1 John 3:2). Our bodies will be _____ like His after the Resurrection (Luke 24:39). They will be glorious (endowed with splendor and beauty), powerful, and heavenly (like Jesus’ body, ready to ascend into heaven). That change will be _____ and _____. The trumpet call, unlike the trumpets of the Book of Revelation, which are trumpets of judgment, will be a call to assemble to meet the Lord in the air. Then “shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 Thess. 4:17). Some today are saying that there is no hope, fearing that if the nuclear bombs do not destroy the earth, pollution will. But God is not going to let _____ go that far. Jesus will come again and bring an end to human corruption as He brings in His glorious kingdom. ^{HSM1}

Our hope for _____ proceeds only from the resurrection of Jesus, as already stated. And the resurrection of Jesus demonstrates His _____ as noted in Fundamental Truth 3, part e in lesson two of this series. This demonstration of His deity not only gives us hope for our resurrection, but is also uniquely Christian and _____ to our faith.

All but four of the major world religions are based on mere philosophical propositions. Of the four that are based on personalities rather than on a philosophical system, only Christianity claims an empty tomb for its founder. ^{MJ1}

But when He said that He himself would rise again from the dead, the third day after He was crucified, He said something that only a fool would dare say, if he expected longer the devotion of any disciples – unless He was sure He was going to rise. No founder of any world religion known to men ever dared say a thing like that! (Wilbur Smith) ^{MJ1}

Without the belief in the resurrection the Christian faith could not have come into being. The disciples would have remained crushed and defeated men. Even had they continued to remember Jesus as their beloved teacher, his crucifixion would have forever silenced any hopes of his being the Messiah. The cross would have remained the sad and shameful end of his career. The origin of Christianity therefore hinges on the belief of the early disciples that God had raised Jesus from the dead. (William Lane Craig) ^{MJ1}

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The Return of Christ

A second part of our blessed hope is the return of Jesus Christ.

More than ____ times – an average of one verse in every ____ – the New Testament refers to the truth of the second coming of Jesus Christ. Therefore, in spite of the fact that some have exercised more zeal than wisdom in making spectacular predictions about events surrounding the Second Coming, let us not mistake the truth that the Scriptures place great emphasis on this strategic teaching.^{HSM1}

Reasons for the Importance of the Teaching of the Return of Christ

It is a key to history

We are moving inexorably to a consummation of all things. Most non-Christian religions and philosophies have a cyclical view of history. The Hindus look at history as a wheel of life, endlessly going around and around, no beginning and no end. But the Bible teaches a _____ view of history. There was a _____, a _____ event – the cross (and the resurrection) – and there will be a _____ consummation, in which God will bring His plan to its glorious fulfillment. He will announce, “It is enough,” and Jesus will once again _____ invade the world order. All things are pointing to His coming. Jesus Christ is the _____ of all history. Apart from Him there is no meaning to our existence (Col. 1:16-17).^{HSM1}

It is the hope of the Church

Death is not our hope, nor is the prospect of converting the world (See Matt. 13:18-30; 36-43). Our hope as the Church is for the _____ of the bridegroom. This concept of the sure hope of resurrection is inseparably linked with the picture of the Church as the Bride of Christ (Acts 23:6; Rom. 8:20-25; 1 Cor. 15:19; Titus 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:3; 2 Pet. 3:9-13).^{HSM1}

It is an incentive to holy living

The awareness that our Lord may come without _____ stirs believers from their lethargy, to rekindle the fire of first love. Self-purification is the responsibility of alert believers, for to us has been given the spiritual resources to live in a manner pleasing to our Lord (Matt. 25:6-7; 2 Pet. 3:11; 1 John 3:3).

_____ is the proper attitude of believers; we are to be keen, alert, looking continually for the coming of Christ (Matt. 24:44; Mark 13:35-36; 1 Thess. 5:8; 1 John 2:28).^{HSM1}

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It stimulates Christian service

Believers who ardently look for the return of Christ will constantly be reevaluating the _____ that govern their manner of living. They will put in highest place a vital relationship to the Lord, and very near the top will be the rendering of service in the name of the Lord – for this alone has eternal value. **They will be _____, warning their unsaved neighbors and colleagues to flee from the wrath to come, and to be preparing for the coming of the Lord** (Matt. 24:45-46; Luke 19:13; 2 Cor. 5:10-11). [**Emphasis added**]^{HSM1}

How Jesus Will Return

The chart below provides some descriptions of how Jesus will return along with some related Scripture references.

Jesus will return...	Scripture
Personally	Dan 7:13; John 14:1-3; 21:20-23; Acts 1:11
Unexpectedly	Mat 24:27, 32-51; Mark 13:33-37
In Glory	Mat 16:27; 19:28; Luke 19:11-27
Physically	Acts 1:11; 1 Thes 4:16; Rev 1:7

Acts 1:11 states:

Acts 1:11 Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

After Jesus rose from the dead, He ministered for forty days to the disciples before He ascended into Heaven. Acts 1:11 teaches us that His _____ was physical, and that it was _____ by _____ people. The angels declared that Jesus would return just as they saw Him ascend. Therefore, we may confidently look forward to the physical return of Christ. His return is not a " _____ " return; it is a _____ one. He came the first time as a humble servant, hardly noticed except by a few. But, He shall return as a conquering King, and every eye will see Him. His return will be magnificent, glorious, and even frightening to many - to those who do not know Jesus.^{SMJ2}

Why Jesus Will Return

Jesus is coming to _____ His own unto himself (John 14:3; 1 Cor 15:35-54; 2 Cor 5:1-5; 1 Thes 4:17). He is also coming to _____ believers, apportioning _____ commensurate with deeds done in this life, especially with regard to _____ (Matt 25:14-30; Luke 19:11-27; 1 Cor 13:3; 2 Pet 1:11). The use of opportunity, talent, and time will be appropriately recognized. This is the believers' judgment (sometimes called the judgment seat of Christ, or the *Bēma* judgment).^{HSM1} Some theologians believe this will come before the beginning of the millennial reign (the next topic main topic), but others think it will happen at the end of the millennial reign at the final judgment (the third main topic). Whatever view is taken, the fact remains that we need to focus on Jesus Christ and glorifying God with our lives.

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When Will Jesus Return

Although there are differences of opinion as to when Christ will return, the Christian Church acknowledges that He will. However, we do not know the actual day or time of Christ's return.^{SMJ2} Jesus said:

Matthew 24:35-36 Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. (36) But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.

We can, however, know the _____ of His coming. In the last days, many false christs and false prophets will arise and _____ many (Matt. 24:24). We have seen this fulfillment with the rise of the cults such as Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, etc., and the increase in popularity of the false religions like Islam, Buddhism, the New Age, etc. Also, before the return of Christ, there will be earthquakes, plagues, famine, and persecutions:^{SMJ2}

Luke 21:10-12 Then said he unto them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: (11) And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven. (12) But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake.

These predictions are coming true. The time of His return is drawing near.^{SMJ2}

From time to time there have been different Christian theologians who have attempted to set a date for Christ's return. This is an unwise thing to do. After all, Jesus says that no one will know the day or hour. So, anyone who sets a date is trying to do that which Scripture says cannot be done.^{SMJ2}

Nevertheless, even though we cannot know the day or hour of His return, we can know the _____. It would seem from looking around us, seeing the rise of false religion, the increase in earthquakes, famine, plagues, etc., that Jesus' Second Coming is getting very close.^{SMJ2}

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The Rapture and Tribulation

The rapture and tribulation are tied together and to the return of Christ. They are all also tied to our resurrection and translation. In this section of study we will examine the rapture and the tribulation.

The Rapture

The Rapture is the teaching that shortly before, or at the return of Christ, the Christians who are alive will be _____ instantaneously into their _____ state, and will _____ into the air to meet Jesus. The word, "rapture," comes from the Latin, "rapio," which means, "to carry away," or, "to snatch." ^{SMJ2}

The Scripture typically cited for the Rapture is, 1 Thess. 4:16-17, "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. ¹⁷Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord." These verses teach that Jesus will descend from Heaven (which will fulfill the prophecy of Acts 1:11), accompanied by the _____ of the archangel. The word, "voice," in Greek means tone, voice, or speech. It may be that the voice is the trumpet sound, or is accompanied by a trumpet sound: "⁵¹Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, ⁵²in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed," (1 Cor. 15:51-52). Whichever it is, the occurrence will be loud and dramatic. ^{SMJ2}

The Tribulation

Not all Christians believe in the Rapture doctrine. But of those who do, there are three main views: _____-tribulation, _____-tribulation, and _____-tribulation. The Tribulation will take place over the period of _____ years, before the return of Christ. This seven-year period includes the first 3 1/2 years as a time of peace, and the second 3 1/2 years as a time of great distress, death, wrath, and sorrow. Generally speaking, it is believed that the Antichrist will gain control, probably over the European area, and will be able to establish a time of peace. Midway through the Tribulation period, he will claim to be divine, and seek worship. This brings distress to the world through factions and war. ^{SMJ2}

In relation to this seven-year Tribulation period, the Pre-tribulation Rapture view holds that at the _____, or right before the beginning of the Tribulation, there will be a _____ of Jesus during which the Christians are raptured; they will ascend into heaven, meet Jesus, experience the judgment seat of Christ regarding their works (2 Cor. 5:10), and then participate in the marriage of the Lamb (Rev. 19:7). ^{SMJ2}

The Mid-tribulation view holds that the Rapture occurs at the halfway point of the seven-year Tribulation, when the Antichrist reveals himself. This view, like the Pre-tribulation view, teaches that the Christian Church does not experience the terrors of the last half of the Tribulation period. ^{SMJ2}

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The Post-tribulation view holds that the Church will not escape the Tribulation period, but will go through it. They further hold that the wrath of God that is released upon the earth, and upon the ungodly during the last half of the Tribulation, will not fall upon the believers since God will providentially protect the believers from His divine wrath on the earth. The Rapture, then, occurs at the time of the Second Coming of Christ.^{SMJ2}

The reason there is such debate on when it will occur, is because the Bible does not tell us when the _____ will occur in relationship to the _____ period.^{SMJ2} However, based on evidence found in Scripture, our church and the Assemblies of God generally believe in a pre-tribulation rapture.

One final note, some popular writers and theologians teach that people that have heard the Gospel and rejected it can still be saved during the tribulation period. However, based on 2 Thessalonians 2:11-12 this teaching seems to be incorrect.

2 Thessalonians 2:11-12 And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: (12) That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

To help you better understand the various rapture and tribulation views, charts illustrating them are provided on the following page.

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Rapture and Tribulation Views Charts

Pretribulation Rapture

The Church Age <i>Rapture- Resurrection</i>	The 7 Year Tribulation Period		The Millennium <i>Christ Descends to Defeat Antichrist</i>
	3.5 Years (1260 days)	3.5 Years (1260 days)	1000 Years
	Antichrist Signs 7 Year Treaty with Israel	Antichrist Defiles Temple Battle of Armageddon	

Midtribulation Rapture

The Church Age	The 7 Year Tribulation Period <i>Rapture- Resurrection</i>	The Millennium <i>Christ Descends to Defeat Antichrist</i>	
	3.5 Years (1260 days)	3.5 Years (1260 days)	1000 Years
	Antichrist Signs 7 Year Treaty with Israel	Antichrist Defiles Temple Battle of Armageddon	

Posttribulation Theory

The Church Age	The 7 Year Tribulation Period <i>Christ Descends to Defeat Antichrist</i> <i>Rapture-Resurrection</i>	The Millennium	
	3.5 Years (1260 days)	3.5 Years (1260 days)	1000 Years
	Antichrist Signs 7 Year Treaty with Israel	Antichrist Defiles Temple Battle of Armageddon	

The charts above are based on those found on page 1380 of reference material JGR1.

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Week 4 Conclusion and Challenge

Today we learned the basics about our Blessed Hope. Next week we will continue and conclude our study of the end times.

Week 4 Challenge

I challenge you to memorize the following Bible verses (as shown below) by next Sunday. At the beginning of class next week I'll ask for someone to say the verses from memory. The first one to raise their hand and say them from memory will earn a prize. I hope to see you all next week. Until then, I pray you have a blessed week.

Titus 2:13 Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ;

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: ¹⁷Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

Week 4 Review Questions

What brings us the hope of our resurrection and translation?

Approximately how many times is the return of Christ referred to in the New Testament?

What were the reasons given for the Importance of the Teaching of the Return of Christ?

What are the three common views for the timing of the rapture and tribulation and to which view does our church (and the Assemblies of God) subscribe?

What are two names for the believers' judgment?

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