



Our future: eternal fellowship with God

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Objective The confirmands know the events which Christ's return will trigger in accordance with God's plan of salvation.

Contents The return of Christ.
The marriage of the Lamb.
The great tribulation.
The coming of the Lord with power and great glory.
The first resurrection.
The further progress of salvation history.
The Ninth Article of Faith.

1 Lead-in

Ask **What events do we expect in the future?**

Hint The answers (the concepts in bold type only) are written on the board. They are then brought into the correct chronological order. Missing answers are to be supplemented.

The sequence of events that comprise the first resurrection include the following:

- The Lord Jesus will return, the dead in Christ will rise, and the living who have allowed themselves to be prepared for this event will be transformed. Together they will be caught up to the Lord (cf. 1 Thessalonians 4: 15–17; 1 Corinthians 15: 50–52): **Return of Christ**: The bride is caught up to God.
- Then the marriage of the Lamb will take place in heaven (cf. Revelation 19: 6–9): **The marriage in heaven**.
- After the return of Christ a time will begin on earth in which both mankind and the creation will be exposed to the power of Satan (cf. Revelation 3: 10): **The great tribulation**.
- After the marriage in heaven, Christ will return to the earth with the firstlings and bring the time of the great tribulation to an end. Satan will be bound and thrown into the bottomless pit (cf. Revelation 20: 1–3): **The coming of the Lord with power and great glory**.
- The martyrs from the time of the great tribulation will resurrect. This concludes the first resurrection. Christ will then establish His kingdom of peace and rule as King for "a thousand years" (cf. Revelation 20: 6): **The kingdom of peace**.

The next events to unfold are as follows:

- After the conclusion of the kingdom of peace, Satan will be released from his prison, mislead many, and subsequently be thrown into the lake of fire (cf. Revelation 20: 7, 10): **Satan is permanently defeated**.
- This is followed by the resurrection of the dead for the **Last Judgement** (cf. Revelation 20: 11–15). Christ will then judge all those who did not partake in the first resurrection.

God will then create a new heaven and a new earth to replace the old

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Workbook exercise A

The confirmands now write these key words into their workbook.

2 Christ's return

Explain

Jesus Christ has promised to return. His word is truth and will be fulfilled.

A student reads aloud

“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 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: 1–3).

Explain

In the Father’s house there are many mansions. However, Jesus speaks of preparing a place for His own. This place is in heaven. The marriage of the Lamb and the marriage supper of the Lamb will take place there (cf. Revelation 19: 6–9).

Apostle Paul describes the day of the Lord Jesus very vividly. At Christ’s return the dead in Christ will **resurrect** and those living in Christ will be transformed. Together they will be **caught up** to meet the Lord Jesus.

A student reads aloud

“For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words” (1 Thessalonians 4: 15–18).

Ask

Who will be caught up when the Lord Jesus returns?

Listen to answers and supplement

The rapture at the return of Christ is promised to those who have been reborn out of water and the Spirit, who believe in Jesus Christ, and who follow Him. Whether other Christians, who did not receive all the sacraments, will also receive the grace of the rapture eludes human understanding.

Ask

Which souls from the beyond will the Lord Jesus take to Himself?

Listen to answers and supplement

On the one hand He will take the dead in Christ: those who became God’s children during their lifetime. On the other hand He will take those who in the divine services for the departed have received Holy Baptism and Holy Sealing, as well as those to whom God grants grace. All of these souls will resurrect and be caught up to God.

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Ask

When will Christ come to take home His bride?

Listen to answers and supplement

Only the triune God knows when Christ will come to take home His own. The signs of the Holy Spirit's work of completion indicate that this promise will soon be fulfilled.

The bride's cry is becoming increasingly audible: "Come, Lord Jesus!"

Workbook exercise C

The confirmands can now work on exercise 3 in their workbook. They compare the pictures in lessons 25 and 26. If only one confirmand is present the confirmation teacher may participate.

3 The marriage in heaven

Explain

When the time is fulfilled the Lord Jesus will come again to take His own to Himself. The Holy Scriptures speak of the 'marriage of the Lamb'.

*The marriage of
the Lamb
The bride and ...*

Concerning the bridal congregation we read: "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" (Revelation 19: 8).

... the bridegroom

Jesus Christ is described in various ways

- He is the bridegroom
- He is the Lamb

The marriage of the Lamb is the high point and completion of our redemption. The Bible does not describe it further. Nevertheless this event occupies a special position within Revelation. The description of this event is introduced with the words:

A student reads aloud

"Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns! 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. ... Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!" (Revelation 19: 6–7, 9).

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Explain

*Great tribulation
on earth*

Revelation uses various images to describe what will transpire on the earth during the marriage in heaven. After the return of Christ, a time will begin in which both mankind and the creation will be exposed to the power of Satan. Holy Scripture describes this event as the "great tribulation" (cf. Revelation 7: 14). Even in this time when Satan's power will unfold, there will be human beings who profess Christ. These faithful witnesses for Christ will become martyrs (they will die for their faith in Jesus Christ).

Explain

*The Lord Jesus
establishes His
kingdom on earth;
Satan is bound*

*The thousand-year
kingdom of peace is
established*

4 The kingdom of peace

After the marriage in heaven, Christ will establish His kingdom of peace on earth. Satan will be bound and thrown into the bottomless pit. The martyrs from the great tribulation will resurrect and reign with Christ, together with the firstlings (cf. Revelation 20: 6). His rule will be unconditional. It will last "a thousand years" — a symbolic expression for a long, but limited time. During this time, the gospel will be proclaimed to both the living and the dead. By the end of the kingdom of peace, all people from all time periods will have received the glad tidings.

Ask

How do you imagine the kingdom of peace?

Listen to answers and summarise

*True peace
will prevail*

Christ's teachings will be preached to all peoples in an unhindered manner on earth and in the beyond. We will rule with Christ. It is not possible to provide an accurate description of Christ's kingdom during these thousand years. During this time the Devil will be unable to mislead anyone because he will be bound. The following Bible passage illustrates this time well:

A student reads aloud

"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 any more" (Isaiah 2: 4; see also Isaiah 11: 6–9 and 65: 20–25).

5 The Last Judgement

Ask

What will happen after the kingdom of peace? — The resurrection to judgement

Listen to answers and supplement

Satan will be released

After the thousand-year kingdom of peace the Devil will be released from his prison. He will have the opportunity to mislead humankind once more. Those who will succumb to him will be countless as the sand of the sea.

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Afterwards however, Satan will finally be subdued and “cast into the lake of fire and brimstone”. There Satan and his followers “will be tormented day and night forever and ever” (cf. Revelation 20: 7–10).

The Last Judgement

The resurrection to judgement—Following this will be the resurrection of the dead to judgement (cf. Revelation 20: 11–15). The determining factor in the verdict will be the attitude which the individual adopts toward Christ. Those who reject Him and whose names are not written into the book of life will remain in a condition of remoteness from God.

Those who find grace in the Last Judgement will become citizens of God's new creation. Like those who reigned with Christ in the kingdom of peace, they will be permitted to have eternal fellowship with God (cf. Revelation 21: 3; 22: 3–5).

Workbook exercise B

The confirmands do exercise B in their workbook. They put the elements of the Ninth Article of Faith in the correct order. Afterwards the Article of Faith is to be read aloud. At home the confirmands will then correctly write it down.

I believe that the Lord Jesus will return as surely as He ascended into heaven and that He will take to Himself the firstfruits of the dead and living who have hoped for and were prepared for His coming; that after the marriage in heaven He will return to earth with them, to establish His kingdom of peace and that they will reign with Him as a royal priesthood. After the conclusion of the kingdom of peace, He will hold the Last Judgement. Then God will create a new heaven and a new earth and dwell with His people.

6 The new heavens and the new earth

Ask

What does God have planned for the time following the Last Judgement?

Listen to answers and supplement

The old creation will disappear. God will replace it with a new creation: a new heaven and a new earth (cf. Revelation 20: 11 and 21: 1–3). The latter will be such that the former will no longer be remembered (cf. Isaiah 65: 17; also 2 Peter 3: 13).

The new creation

The city of God

New Jerusalem, God's holy city, will come down to earth “out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband” (Revelation 21: 2). It states that this city will have no temple. God will be its temple. Beyond that, it will need neither sun nor moon. There will be no more night because God's glory will illuminate it and the Lamb will be its light. Additional marvellous details with respect to this city are described in Revelation 21: 10–25 and 22: 1–5. God Himself will live in New Jerusalem. There will be peace in this city as has never before existed among human beings.



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When we apply verses 3 and 4 of Revelation 21 to ourselves we get an impression of this glory.

Read aloud

“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. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.”

Explain

The yearning for this eternal home is to intensify within us the longing for the Lord Jesus' coming. That is why we cry every day,

“Lord Jesus, please come soon!”

Hint

Many a question will probably have been awakened within the confirmands. They are to have the opportunity to ask them. The confirmation teacher may point out that it is not yet possible to answer all questions today.

The main points

I also want to ...

This time the confirmands themselves are to formulate the desire which has been awakened in their hearts during this lesson.

Homework

The confirmands write down the Ninth Article of Faith in their workbook and learn it by heart.