



The Greatest Return

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WHEN
COULD YOU
NOT WAIT
TO SEE
SOMEONE
YOU CARE
ABOUT?

The POINT ➤

Jesus will return one day, and we should be ready.

➤ 1 THESSALONIANS 4:16–5:8

¹⁶For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. ¹⁸Therefore encourage one another with these words.

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¹Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you.

²For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the

Lord will come like a thief in the night. ³While people are saying, “There is peace and security,” then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.

⁴But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. ⁵For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. ⁶So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. ⁷For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. ⁸But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation.



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

FACT:

An inventor named LaMarcus Adna Thompson was disgusted that people pursued amusement at bars and brothels, so he built a coaster at Coney Island for more wholesome entertainment.¹



LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING // JESUS

Jesus will one day return to exercise His reign over creation, and He will make all things new.

My wife loves roller coasters and theme parks, and recently she and her best friend from high school made the trip to Cedar Point in Ohio for three days. I was happy for her to go. However, another part of me was intimidated about her being away for several days. You see, we have six kiddos, and though I love my kids more than life itself, the cooking, cleaning, and home-schooling duties are outside of my comfort zone. Three days doesn't seem like a long time, but I was legitimately concerned about how things might go with my wife away.

I'm happy to report that all the kids survived, and there were no trips to the hospital. But, let's be real—both the kids and myself were thrilled when my wife pulled in the driveway. We made it, but things just weren't quite right while she was away. We couldn't wait for her return!

Jesus told His disciples that He would go away for a time but He would return for His people. When He does, He'll bring an end to sin and suffering. But in this time while we're waiting, we face challenges, frustrations, and pain. We look forward to Jesus's return. In this session, we'll dive into Paul's encouragement to a group of Thessalonian believers who, like many of us, were looking for the day of the Lord's return.

1 THESSALONIANS 4:16-18

1 What is the significance of Jesus descending with a shout?

2 Why is it important to continually remind each other of Jesus's return?

1 THESSALONIANS 5:1-3

3 What can we learn about Jesus's return from the thief in the night illustration?

4 Why did Paul compare Jesus's return to childbirth?

5 How are you living so that you're ready at all times for Jesus's return?

Not knowing the exact time of Jesus's coming is a call to live each day as if it might be that day. #BSFLTheGOAT

1 THESSALONIANS 5:4-8

6 What does it mean that believers are children of light?

7 What are some practical ways we can stay awake and ready for Jesus's return?

8 How are you continually clothing yourself with the armor of God?





LIVE IT OUT



LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING // JESUS

Jesus will one day return to exercise His reign over creation, and He will make all things new.

Jesus came to establish His kingdom on the earth and in the hearts and lives of those who submit to His reign. One day soon, though, Jesus will return and establish His reign for all the world to see. At that time, Jesus will restore all that sin has broken, and those who have trusted in Him for salvation will reign alongside Jesus for all eternity.

> CHRIST

Jesus could return at any moment. We've probably heard this before, but we might struggle to live as if it could really happen.

9 What do you have planned this week? Whatever it is, consider each day as if Jesus could return. What would you change?

10 Make some changes if necessary. Do your best to ensure you're making the most of your time.

GOD

JESUS

HOLY SPIRIT

BIBLE

SALVATION

CREATION

CHURCH

PEOPLE

FAMILY

COMMUNITY
& WORLD



>COMMUNITY

We live in a world where because of the fall, pain and brokenness are naturally a part of it. Life is tough, and we are called to love and encourage the people in our church family even more when we see the day of Jesus's return approaching (Heb. 10:25).

11 This week, identify someone in your church who might be discouraged.

12 Find a way to offer this person real encouragement. Remind him or her that Jesus will return soon and restore all that sin has broken.

>CULTURE

When Jesus returns, He will judge the people of the world according to the ways we've lived. Have we lived by faith in obedience or in pursuit of selfish desires?

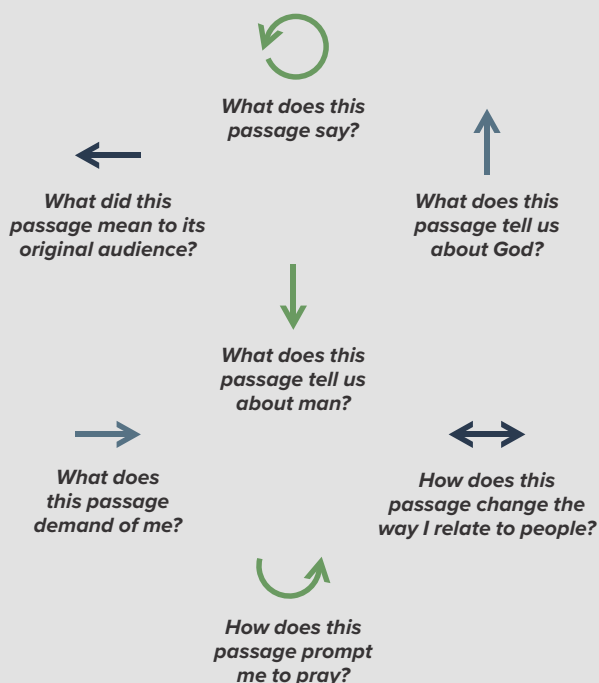
13 This week, identify at least one non-believing friend. Help this person to understand that Jesus will return soon and that His return has huge implications for our lives.

14 Consider asking your friend what he or she would say to Jesus if He came back this week.

DAILY DEVOTIONS



The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



Day One

HEBREWS 9:22-23

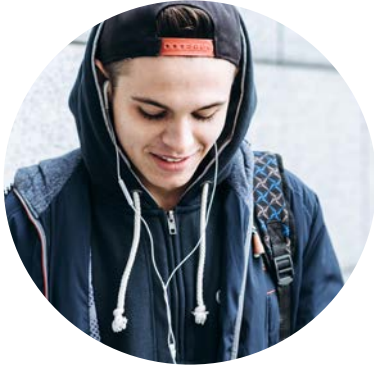
Under the Old Testament law, worship was expressed through sacrifice. At times, water, incense, or fire were used in ritual purification; this is why the author of Hebrews used the language of “almost” or “nearly” in verse 22. But the most common means of purification was, by far, the blood of sacrifices. Ever since the fall, people are sinful and all stand in need of God’s forgiveness. There are consequences for sin, and the ultimate result is death. Because God is just, His character doesn’t allow for Him to simply excuse our sin, and because we have sinned, we must die. However, God did allow for one exception: Someone could die in our place. In the Old Testament, God offered forgiveness when the life of an animal was offered in place of the people. However, the tabernacle and the sacrifices were only symbols that pointed to Jesus, who would ultimately pay the price for our sin. Jesus is the better sacrifice! Only His blood could truly pay the price for our sin.

➤ **Why did God require a sacrifice for sin?**

➤ **What was the purpose of the Old Testament sacrifices and the tabernacle?**

Day Two

HEBREWS 9:24



On the Day of Atonement, the high priest entered the holy of holies to present a sacrifice before God as payment for the sins of the people. This was the sacrifice that allowed the people to experience God's forgiveness. But there was a catch: The sacrifice only applied in a temporary sense, and the forgiveness was offered only for another year. The sacrifice would have to be completed over and over again, for the ritual was only symbolic of something better to come. The high priest entered into an earthly tabernacle, but Jesus entered into heaven, directly into the presence of God as our great and perfect High Priest. And He went not with an animal as His offering but with His own blood for the eternal forgiveness of all who would trust in Him. Our salvation is secure, and we don't have to worry about future sacrifices for the forgiveness of sin. Jesus paid the eternal price with His own blood.

- **What is the significance of Jesus entering heaven, directly into the presence of God?**
- **How is Jesus's blood a better sacrifice than animals?**

Day Three

HEBREWS 9:25-26

The high priests entered into the holy of holies on the Day of Atonement every year. The animal sacrifices demonstrated the people's trust in God and their commitment to obeying Him. However, the forgiveness from God was only offered for one year at a time. When Jesus offered Himself, everything changed. When Jesus died on the cross, His blood paid the price for sin in a way that no other sacrifice was required—ever! God requires no more sacrifices for the forgiveness of sin. When Jesus entered the presence of God with His blood, our debt was paid in full! Jesus suffered once and bore the weight of God's wrath on sin, and this sacrifice was sufficient. Because Jesus is sinless, death had no claim on Him. He rose from the grave and defeated sin and Satan, and He's allowed us to share in His victory. This is the reason He came to earth: to preach the gospel, die for the sins of the world, and defeat death. Further, He came to invite sinful people who would trust Him to experience the forgiveness He's made available.

- **Why did Jesus need to sacrifice Himself only once and not every year like the priests' sacrifices in the Old Testament?**
- **Why did Jesus come to earth?**

Day Four

HEBREWS 9:27

Because we have sinned, all people will die. Physical death is the natural consequence of our pride and rebellion. However, even worse than physical death is the spiritual death all people will experience apart from knowing Jesus. The Bible speaks of multiple judgments to be carried out in the future, including the judgment seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10), the judgment of the nations (Matt. 25:31-46), and the great white throne judgment (Rev. 20:11-15). This verse in Hebrews speaks of individual judgment (see also Luke 16:19-31; 2 Cor. 5:8), where our eternal destiny is determined based on our faith and the ways we've lived while on earth. God has called all people to take responsibility for their choices. He's called us all to repent of sins and to trust in Jesus. We will die, and after, we will be judged. For those who refuse Jesus, it will be too late after death. Today is the day of salvation.

- **Why is it so important to trust Jesus today?**
- **What is required for us to receive God's forgiveness? How does your life show evidence of trusting Jesus?**

Day Five

HEBREWS 9:28



On the Day of Atonement during Old Testament times, the people waited anxiously for the high priest to come out of the holy of holies. The priest was responsible for offering a sacrifice before God on behalf of the people, and when he came out, the people knew that the sacrifice had been accepted by God and their sins were forgiven. Jesus offered Himself as a sacrifice for the sins of the world, and He entered into heaven, the true holy of holies, before God on our behalf. When Jesus returns, it will be a sign to all believers that Jesus's sacrifice was sufficient and accepted by God as payment for our sins. Because of sin, all people will die, and we will face judgment. But, thank God, Jesus will come again and bring final, complete, and eternal salvation to all who trust and follow Him.

- **According to this verse, what will the return of Christ signify?**
- **Why are you confident that Jesus's sacrifice has paid the price for your sin?**