



Date: _____
Series: Jesus Now...
Spring Year 1, Lesson 52

Last Day—Jesus Returns As Judge

Take Home Point: *Jesus will return. Be ready!
*Repeat this phrase throughout the lesson.

Bible Event: Matthew 24-25; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; 2 Peter 3:7-13.
Jesus will return to bring a close to earth and judge all people according to their relationship with him.

Key Verses: Hebrews 9:28, "Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of humanity, and after that he will appear a second time. This time he will not deal with sin, but he will save those who eagerly wait for him."

We will help kids know:

- Jesus will return on the last day to bring all those who know him as Savior to live with him in heaven and to judge those who have rejected him.
- We don't know when Jesus will return, but we can be ready by trusting and following him now.
- On the last day, this world passes away and heaven is given to all believers.




We will help kids feel:

- Excitement anticipating Christ's return.
- Compassion for those who do not yet know Jesus.
- A desire to share the Good News of Jesus and his salvation.

We will help kids do:

- Make a list of things to do if Jesus were to return at certain times of their lives.
- Pray for hope and excitement to see Jesus.

THIS LESSON'S ROADMAP

DESTINATION	PAGE #	DISCOVERIES ON YOUR JOURNEY	SUPPLIES NEEDED
Small Group Warm-Up 	3	Kids discuss how it feels to be called in to see the principal. Is it a good or bad feeling? This sets kids up to understand the difference of what believers and unbelievers will experience at Jesus' return.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • none
Large Group 	4 8 9	Overview Bible reading: Matthew 24-25; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; 2 Peter 3:7-13 —Kids read portions of the Bible passage. Christ Candle Object Lesson – The mood in the room is set with lighting and music, while an illustrative teaching with flash paper shows how when Jesus returns, the world is destroyed while believers meet him in the air.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • two to six volunteer readers • Christ Candle –this can be a large thick plain white candle or it can have some ornamentation that signifies it as a Christ Candle • matches • flash paper with landscape pictures traced onto it and attached to a wire coat hanger (<i>see picture on p. 8</i>) • <i>Option:</i> instead of flash paper, use a bright, handheld spot light • a fancy crown • background music
Small Group Application 	4	Kids discuss events on the Last Day and make a list of things to do if Jesus were to return at certain times of their lives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a bookmark titled, "The List" for each child (<i>p. 14</i>) • fine tip markers or pens

Small Group Warm-Up: 15 minutes



Purpose: *Get pointed in the right direction!* Build relationships and help guests feel at ease. Do the learning readiness activity that will point your group in the right direction for the lesson.

As kids gather: Listen to memory verses from last week and give coupons for memory verses, remembering to bring your Bible and bringing a guest.

Discuss the following:

Recall a time you were sent to the principal's office. Did the teacher send you or was your name announced over the intercom? Tell the reason why you were asked to go there and how it made you feel. *(Kids may have been called to the principal's office to receive an honor or to pick something up as well as being sent for disciplinary reasons.)*

If kids are having a hard time answering, ask the following questions.

For what reasons are kids asked to go to visit the principal of your school? Are kids only asked to go there because they caused trouble? For what other reasons are kids sent there? How does it feel to have to go see the principal if you are in trouble? How does it feel if you are going to be recognized or honored?

After all have had a chance to share, discuss the following:

Now imagine that Jesus is waiting outside of this room. You hear him call you by name and he says he wants to see you immediately. How would you feel? *(Some kids may feel scared; some may feel excited. All answers are acceptable.)*

We have learned in the past weeks that after Jesus died and rose again, he ascended into heaven and sits on his throne. The Bible tells us that he will come back again to judge the living and the dead and will take all who believe in him back to heaven. What will the last day be like? Today we will learn that **Jesus will return—be ready!*

Encourage kids to bring their Bibles to large group and follow along with the Bible readings.

Large Group Overview: 20-30 minutes



Purpose: *Help kids observe what the Bible says. Present the Bible event in creative fashion. Help kids begin to interpret what it means.*

Bible reading: Matthew 24-25; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; 2 Peter 3:7-13— Kids read portions of the Bible passage.

Christ Candle Object Lesson – The mood in the room is set with lighting and music, while an illustrative teaching with flash paper shows how when Jesus returns, the world is destroyed while believers meet him in the air.

Small Group Application: 20-25 minutes



Purpose: *Help kids map out the meaning of the Bible event in their lives. Use the questions to stimulate discussion, but don't feel tied to them. Allow the Holy Spirit to guide you. Include personal examples from your own faith journey. The example of Christ at work in your life will leave lasting impressions of how Christ can work in the children's lives.*

Use your Bibles! Children need to learn how to look up references and follow along when scripture is read aloud. Allow for quality time of prayer at the close of the lesson.

Observation Questions: What happened?

NOTE: There is much scripture included in the following sections. Don't feel that you must look up every reference.

Read Matthew 26:64.

Where is Jesus now and how will he return? *(He is in the highest position in heaven. He will be coming on the clouds of heaven.)*

Read Matthew 24: 27, 30-31.

How will Jesus appear on the Last Day? *(He will come just as lightning flashes from east to the west, appearing in the sky. All people will see him coming on the clouds in power and great glory. He will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call and those whom God has chosen will gather with him.)*

Read Matthew 25:31-46.

What will happen to all people? *(Matthew 25:31. The people of every nation will gather before Jesus on his glorious throne.)*

What are believers in Christ compared to and on which side of Jesus will they be placed? *(Matthew 25:32-33. Believers are like God's sheep separated from the goats and put on Jesus' right side.)*

What are those who reject Jesus compared to? *(Matthew 25:33. Goats.)*

What will happen to the "goats" and the "sheep?" *(Matthew 25:34, 41, 46. The goats will go away into eternal punishment, but those with God's approval will go into eternal life.)*

Interpretation Questions: What does this mean?

In Warm-Up, we discussed how you might feel if you were called out to appear before the principal of your school. Some might be excited if they were expecting to be honored. Others might be troubled and scared if they thought they might be punished.

How do you think the two categories of people (*sheep and goats*) will respond differently when they see Jesus on the Last Day?

On the Last Day, Jesus will return as judge, but what does 2 Peter 3:9 say is the reason for him waiting? *(God is patient for our sake, because he doesn't want to destroy anyone but wants all people to have an opportunity to turn to him and change.)*

How does that make you feel? Why? Does it make you want to share the good news of Jesus with those who don't know him?

Application Questions: What does this mean to me?

Our key verse today from Hebrews 9:28 is a promise. It says, "*Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of humanity, and after that he will appear a second time. This time he will not deal with sin, but he will save those who eagerly wait for him.*"

How can you be prepared for Jesus to come again? *(In John 6:40, Jesus says, "My Father wants all those who see the Son and believe in him to have eternal life. He wants me to bring them back to life on the last day." And Romans 10:9-10 says, "If you declare that Jesus is Lord, and believe that God brought him back to life, you will be saved. By believing*

you receive God's approval, and by declaring your faith you are saved."
For God's approval refer back to Matthew 25:46.)

What should our attitude or mindset be as we await the second coming of Christ? (*Excited, expectant, hopeful.*)

For additional references see:

1 John 2:28, "...Live in Christ. Then when he appears we will have confidence, and when he comes we won't turn from him in shame."

Phil 3:20, "We, however, are citizens of heaven. We look forward to the Lord Jesus Christ coming from heaven as our Savior."

2 Peter 3:13, "But we look forward to what God has promised—a new heaven and a new earth—a place where everything that has God's approval lives."

Application Activity:

Supplies: each child will need a bookmark called "The List" and a pen or fine tip marker

Give kids bookmark and pen, then say:

Let's imagine that you know Jesus will return when you are 70 years old. On your list write one thing you want to do before Jesus comes back at that time.

Discuss. Then continue with:

Let's imagine Jesus will come back when you are 30 years old. What is something you want to do before then?

Have kids write a goal to be reached by age 30 and then continue in like manner with the following:

Imagine that Jesus will return when you are in high school. What is one thing you want to do before then?

Let's imagine that Jesus will return, tomorrow. What is one thing you want to do before then?

As you discuss, lead the kids to understand what it means to be ready by finding God's approval through faith in Christ.

The one thing we all want to make sure of is that we believe in Christ Jesus—whether Jesus comes back tomorrow, 70 years from now, or if he takes us home (*we die*) before he returns.

At the top of “The List” is #1: Trust in Jesus as my Savior. Numbers 2, 3, 4, and 5 are those things you would like to do before Jesus returns. How many of those apply whether Jesus returns tomorrow or 70 years from now?

Today we learned that **Jesus will return—be ready!* Not only should we be ready ourselves, but we should encourage others to also be ready.

Closing Prayer:

Pray for the Holy Spirit to prepare our hearts for Jesus’ second coming by believing in him as Lord and Savior. Pray to have excitement and anticipation of seeing Jesus face-to-face and living with him forever in heaven. Pray for priorities in our lives to be focused heavenward. Encourage kids to pray for their unbelieving friends and family.

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Large Group Presentation: 20-30 minutes

Last Day—Jesus Returns As Judge

Supplies:

- a Christ Candle—this can be a large thick plain white candle or it can have some ornamentation that signifies it as a Christ Candle
- matches
- a fancy crown
- background music
- flash paper with landscape pictures traced onto it and attached to a wire coat hanger
- Option: instead of flash paper, use a bright, handheld spot light



INTRODUCTION

During these last weeks, we have been looking at the life of Jesus since the crucifixion. We see how he was raised from the dead and how he ascended into heaven, where he rules now, and how he then sent the promised Holy Spirit. Jesus left us with a promise. He said, “I will return.” His return is called the Last Day. What will happen then? Let’s take a look at what the Bible says.

READING THE BIBLE: Acts 1 and 1 Thessalonians 4

For the reading of the Bible passages, ask for a few volunteers to come forward to read the different passages of scripture. Students can take turns reading the italicized passages. *(They can read from their own Bible, if they have the verse bookmarked. Point to the volunteer when it is his/her turn to speak. Or you give kids the Bible verses printed on cards.)*

Presenter begins reading the first passage.

The first reading comes from the book of Acts. This book describes the acts of the apostles. At the very beginning, it describes how Jesus left this world and went to heaven. Listen carefully for similarities on the way Jesus will return.

Acts 1:9, “After he (Jesus) had said this, he was taken to heaven. A cloud hid him so that they could no longer see him. They were staring into the sky as he departed.”

Think about how Jesus was taken into heaven. He probably just started rising up off the ground and kept going until a cloud covered him. What happened after that? The reading continues:

Acts 1:10-11, “Suddenly, two men in white clothes (angels) stood near them (the disciples). They asked, “Why are you men from Galilee standing here looking at the sky? Jesus, who was taken from you to heaven, will come back in the same way that you saw him go to heaven.”

So if Jesus went to heaven disappearing into the clouds and sky, then someday when he returns he will come back the same way. Other Bible verses also describe this. The next reading is from a letter that Paul wrote to the church at Thessalonica. Will Jesus’ return be quiet or noisy? Will it be flashy and showy or secret?

Have first volunteer read:

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, “The Lord will come from heaven with a command, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God. First, the dead who believed in Christ will come back to life. Then, together with them, we who are still alive will be taken in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. In this way we will always be with the Lord.”

Next volunteer:

Matthew 24:30-31, “Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky. All the people on earth will cry in agony when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds in the sky with power and great glory. He will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and from every direction under the sky, they will gather those whom God has chosen.”

CHRIST CANDLE AS AN OBJECT LESSON: JESUS IS REIGNING NOW

Hold up Christ candle, and refer to the crown while speaking.

Right now, we know that Jesus is reigning in heaven. He defeated Satan when he gave his life for us on the cross. Because of Jesus’ victory, we can have forgiveness that frees us from the penalty of God’s punishment. To receive God’s forgiveness, we must trust in Jesus as our Savior. That means we choose to follow Jesus and live for him.

Many people, however, choose to reject what Jesus has done. They say to themselves and to God, “I think I have done enough good things on my own to earn my way to heaven.” When believing this, they in effect say, “I don’t need Jesus.” Or some will even say, “I

don't believe that Jesus was really God's Son. He was just a great teacher." Others will say, "I don't believe in God or Jesus at all."

If people don't believe in Jesus, does that make him not real? Does that make him not the Son of God? Of course not. But remember he will never force anyone to believe in him.

WHEN WILL JESUS RETURN?

When will Jesus come back? We don't know. The Bible says no one knows. But the Bible does say that the Father has set the date and every person is to be ready, just as if they would expect Jesus to come back tomorrow.

What will it look like when he returns? When Jesus returns, the Bible says he will appear in the sky coming on the clouds with power and great glory. (*Matthew 24:30-31.*) He will send out his angels and a loud trumpet call and they will gather everyone God has chosen. Another verse describes Jesus appearing in the sky like lighting that flashes from the east to the west. (*Matthew 24:27.*) Many people believe that at this time every person in the whole world will be able to see him even if they live on the other side of the earth. That is because this physical world is beginning to pass away and will be replaced by a new heaven and new earth.

THIS EARTH PASSES AWAY

Listen to these verses from 2 Peter 3:10-13:

Reader:

"The day of the Lord will come like a thief. On that day heaven will pass away with a roaring sound. Everything that makes up the universe will burn and be destroyed. ... When that day comes, heaven will be on fire and will be destroyed. Everything that makes up the universe will burn and melt."

Use the candle to light the flash paper drawing as you say the following:

NOTE: When the flame touches the corner of the flash paper, it burns extremely bright and quick for one second and is completely consumed. It will certainly be a "wow" moment for the kids. As this happens, make sure that you hold the coat hanger away from you and do not have your hand over the coat hanger in any way, because the flame will quickly flare up.

This is a depiction of what it might be like. Let this Christ candle represent Christ coming into our world. The drawings on this paper remind us of our physical world, the earth and the universe. See the landscape and the sun.



Watch what happens when this flame touches it.



WHAT HAPPENS TO PEOPLE: THOSE THAT TRUST AND LOVE JESUS

For those who trust and love Jesus, this will be a time they look forward to. It will be a victory party. All those still alive at that time will have their bodies changed into perfect bodies as they rise up into the air to meet Jesus and begin a new life in a wonderful place called heaven, sometimes called the new heaven and the new earth. (Revelation 21.)

Reader:

2 Peter 3:13, "But we look forward to what God has promised—a new heaven and a new earth—a place where everything that has God's approval lives."

WHAT HAPPENS TO THOSE WHO HAVE ALREADY DIED?

As we read earlier, "...the dead who believed in Christ will come back to life. Then, together with them, we who are still alive will be taken in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. In this way we will always be with the Lord." (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17.)

People who have already died are given new bodies at that time. Many people believe that their souls are already with Jesus after they died and then on the Last Day, when Jesus returns, they return with him and all the other angels. They are given their new bodies and are joined by those who are still alive. (Philippians 3:21.)

WHAT ABOUT THOSE WHO HAVE REJECTED CHRIST?

When Jesus returns, everyone will see him for who he is: God's Son and the King of all kings. For those that trust him, it is a happy event. What do you think it will be like for those who have rejected him or denied him? It will be a terrible event. On the Last Day, they will be judged. It says in the Bible, that the ungodly people will be judged and destroyed. (2 Peter 3:7.)

Jesus describes this as a big judgment in which he will separate all people into two groups: one he calls sheep and the others he calls goats. The ones he calls sheep are the ones who have trusted him and followed him. To the ones he calls goats, he says this in Matthew 25:41, 46...

Reader:

“Get away from me. God has cursed you. Go into everlasting fire that was prepared for the devil and his angels...These people will go away into eternal punishment. While those who have God’s approval, will go to eternal life.”

A PICTURE OF HELL

Set the candle back on the table, inside the crown. Say:

This is a picture of Jesus now ruling in heaven or sometimes described as the new heaven and the new earth. With him are all believers. They live face to face with his brightness.

What about those who have rejected Christ and are judged? Where are they? The Bible describes this place as hell. It might seem mean for God to send people to hell. But think of it another way. Those who have declared to God, “I don’t need you and don’t want you to be part of my life” are finally getting just what they asked for, absolutely no part of God. Hell is described as utter darkness, completely away from the light in which people are in constant pain forever. They are cast away because they have rejected God’s presence and God’s way of salvation.

Jesus talks about hell more often than heaven. He always warned people to not reject God or God’s way of salvation, which is given through Jesus. If any does reject Jesus, then when they die or when Jesus returns, they will be judged and cast out of God’s presence forever.

WHAT DO WE NEED TO DO? BE READY!

The Bible says in Mark 13:32-33...

Reader:

“No one knows when that day or hour will come. Even the angels in heaven and the Son don’t know. Only the Father knows. Be careful! Watch! You don’t know the exact time.”

The way to be ready is to make sure we trust Jesus now. If Jesus came back today, do you know for sure you are ready? It is a good question to think about, but is a very important answer to *know*. Every person can know for sure, if Jesus were to return, that they would have God’s approval and be with him in heaven. You can know for sure by sincerely turning to him and admitting that you need him to be your Savior, because you have sinned and cannot be good enough to earn your way to heaven.

Tell the Father, now, you trust Jesus as your Savior.

Let's pray:

Dear God, thank you for sending Jesus the first time to give his life on the cross for us. Thank you that Jesus will come again the second time to bring the Last Day and begin the new heaven and the new earth, where we can live with you forever. God, we admit that we are sinners and we cannot earn heaven by our own power, or do enough good things to win your approval. We pray you would forgive our sins and shortcomings and that you would give us your approval because we trust in Jesus. Thank you for your promise, that because of Jesus, we can live with you forever. Help us to live our lives so that more people can find out about you, so that on the Last Day there would be more people excited to meet you instead of afraid because they have rejected you. In Jesus' name, Amen.

THE LIST:

- 1) Trust in
Jesus as
Savior.
- 2) _____

- 3) _____

- 4) _____

- 5) _____

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