

# GOD'S BIG PLAN

## Jesus Is Coming Back 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11

**Supporting Scriptures:** Mt 24, 25:31-46; Mk 13; Lk 12; Jn 14:1-6; Acts 1:1-11; Rom 8:18-39; 1 Cor 15; 2 Cor 5:8; Phil 1:1-10,21, 4:5; Col 3; Titus 2:11-15; Heb 9:27-28, 11:8-16; 2 Pet 3:1-18; Rev 21-22 • Jms 4:13-16



**Lesson Goals:** To see that Jesus has promised to return.  
To see that Jesus tarries only because God is patient and wants everyone to know Him.  
To see that we should be blameless until Jesus returns.

**Scripture Memory** The Lord is not slow in doing what he promised—the way some people understand slowness. But God is being patient with you. He does not want anyone to be lost. He wants everyone to change his heart and life. 2 Peter 3:9 (ICB)

**NOTE:** Familiarize yourself with this story. Don't read it. Tell it as a STORY. To reinforce that these ideas are not your own, hold your Bible as you tell the story.

**The Lesson:** Let's review what we have learned so far. (Review the previous stories, focusing on those after Christ's death and resurrection. Encourage your students to share.)

What do you remember about the letters we talked about last week? Who wrote them? (Peter, Paul, John and other believers.) What were they about? (How to live and make good decisions and the importance of loving one another.) Who were they for? (They were for the church, those who were believers and followers of Jesus.) Do you remember that just like these letters were written to the believers long ago to tell them how to live, they are for you and me, as well? The Bible tells us how to live, and these letters are practical information for the decisions we make every day. They help us know how to live pure and godly lives so that we won't have any reason to be ashamed when Jesus comes back for us.

**READ: 2 Peter 3:1-4, 8-10a (Hold your Bible open throughout the story.)**

Jesus promised he would come back. Peter wrote about that day in one of his letters. He warned believers that, "in the last days, people will make fun of the truth." They will laugh at Jesus' promise to return saying, "Where is this 'return' he promised? Things go on like they have from the beginning. He's not really going to come back." But Peter reminds us that God's timing is not like ours; one day, a thousand years - it is just time. God isn't being slow about His promise of Jesus' return, not the way we think about being slow. Jesus has not come back yet because God is patient with us. He wants everyone to believe in Him and spend forever with Him. God's good news will be shared with all kinds of people everywhere - people who speak different languages from all sorts of different countries. Then, Jesus will come back.

No one knows exactly when that will be. The angels don't know. Not even Jesus knows. Only God knows when Jesus will come back. When the time comes, when Jesus finally does return, it will happen like a thief breaking into a house to steal. It will be quick and unexpected. People will be doing usual things and then Jesus himself will come down out of heaven shouting a loud command. All of the believers who have already died and been with Him in heaven will come with Him. We will hear the leader of all the angels, and a trumpet will be blown. When that happens, the believers who are still alive will meet Jesus in the air to be with Him forever.

Peter explained that being with Jesus in heaven is something we should be looking forward to. In fact, some of the last words of the Bible are “Come, Lord Jesus!” As good as life gets here on earth, it can’t even begin to compare to how wonderful heaven will be. Until Jesus comes back, those who die will immediately wake up in God’s presence! Heaven is their new home. And when your time on this earth ends, if you have chosen to believe in and follow Jesus, as soon as your eyes close in death, you too, will wake up to find heaven as your new home. What can you expect to find there? Jesus explained it while He was still alive. “There are many places to live in my Father’s house. I would have told you if it were not the truth. I’m going there to get a place ready for you. I’ll come back to get you so that we can be together forever.” There will be places to live there and people we knew here on earth. But better than that, is Jesus. We will get to walk with Him and talk with Him, just like we have with our best friends.

Even heaven, though, is not all there is to forever with Jesus. One day, after being with Jesus in heaven, Jesus will punish all the people who have chosen not to follow Him. Believers will be with Him forever because they chose Him. Those who chose not to follow will live apart from God forever and it will be painful. Then, God will make the Earth new again the way it used to be before sin came in. As soon as sin entered the Earth in the days of Adam and Eve, everything began changing and dying little by little. One day, God will create a new Heaven and a new Earth. And just as the angels watched and cheered as God created this Earth so long ago, we will one day watch and cheer when God creates the new Earth! Animals will be peaceful again, like they were when God created the Garden of Eden for Adam. Everything will be good. Even our bodies will be better than they are now. God will change them so we can live in the wonderful place He has prepared for us. We won’t change into something else altogether, our bodies will resemble what they are now, but much, much better.

Before, when God wanted to live among His people, He lived in the tabernacle, then the temple, then in the body of Jesus. On the new Earth God will live among us forever. In a vision of this wonderful, new place that God gave to John, we learn that we will live with Him in a place where there are trees and rivers and streets of gold. It will be a bright place because Jesus, the Light of the World, will be there, too. And it will last forever. And in that vision, John writes Jesus’ message to us, “Look, I’m coming soon!”

Come quickly, Jesus!

**Review:**

Let’s review what you have learned. Who would like to retell the story? (Ask your group if anything was left out or told inaccurately.) Would anyone else like to retell the story?

How do you feel after hearing this amazing story of what forever will be like? Are you excited about the thought of spending forever with Jesus? Or are you a little scared because you don’t know him? When Jesus comes back, the believers who are still alive will meet Jesus in the air to be with Him forever. The Bible tells us that Jesus is coming soon. Life here on Earth is short compared to eternity. And for most of us, life has been pretty good, but we don’t even know the half of it! It’s better for us to be with God. The Bible says that for those who believe, it is our home. We have only known the home we have made here on Earth. But even Earth isn’t the way it should be, like it was when God created the Garden of Eden for Adam. We lost a lot when Adam and Eve sinned—we gained a lot when Jesus died for us.

Because of that wonderful gift and because Jesus will return, Peter, Paul and John warn us over and over again in their letters to keep watch and be careful. Be prepared. We don’t know exactly when Jesus will come back, but He will. He keeps His promises. You wouldn’t want Jesus to come back while you were in the middle of doing something bad, would you? Then be obedient and live the way Jesus wants you to all the time. Then you won’t be ashamed when He comes.

But if you have never chosen to believe that what God says about His Son is true and that He loved you enough to send that Son into this world to take your punishment, it’s not too late. Today can be the day of salvation for you! Don’t wait. Don’t put it off. Run to Jesus.

# PRESCHOOL LESSON

**SING:** "I'll Fly Away"

**SHARE:** What do you remember about God's creation, especially when He made man? What was the man's name?

Do you remember that God made a garden for Adam? What happened in the garden? God provided food for Adam and took care of Him. God made the animals and let Adam name them. Adam didn't have to be afraid of the animals because they were all peaceful. And God walked with Adam. Doesn't that sound awesome? Can you imagine walking and talking with God?

Do you remember what God said after he finished His creation? He said, "This is good!" But is everything so good now? Maybe where you live there hasn't been enough rain. Or maybe the people where you live don't take care of things and it's a dirty place. You might even live in a big city where the sky is really dirty and the air is hard to breathe. And what about animals? Are you afraid of an animal, maybe a dog, or a wolf, or even snakes? Wouldn't you like to live in a place where snakes and wolves and dogs aren't scary?

One day, you can. One day, we will get to walk with God and talk with God. It will be a lot like the garden of Eden. Do you remember what happened in the garden that changed things? Adam and Eve disobeyed God. Have you ever disobeyed God? I have, too. In fact, the Bible tells us that everyone has disobeyed God. Our sin separates us from God. But God gave His Son to suffer your punishment and my punishment. And one day, God will change this earth full of people who disobey into a wonderful place where we can walk with Him and talk with Him again. And animals will be peaceful again. The Bible calls this wonderful place our home. Won't it be a wonderful thing to have a home where Jesus is getting a place ready for you, a place just for you? It will happen one day and God wants us to be ready by following Him and obeying Him. And we know that obeying God means being nice to others and obeying our parents. If we obey, then we won't be embarrassed when Jesus comes for us!

**PRAY:** Thank you, God, for wanting me to be with you!

# LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Memory Verse Activity - Print the memory verse on a chalkboard, whiteboard, or poster. Begin by saying the memory verse together very slowly. Repeat the verse, saying it a little faster each time until everyone can say the verse.
- If you have trouble finding coloring pages to accompany this lesson, use pictures from Jesus' ascension and change the captions. Acts 1:11 tells us that Jesus will come back the way He went.
- Make a diorama with shoeboxes. Encourage your students to imagine what their place in heaven may look like.
- Make number puzzles with numbers from the book of Revelation.
- Have your students read through Revelation 21:10-27. Encourage them to illustrate the passage.
- Sing "Be Unto Your Name," "I'll Fly Away," "Every Day With Jesus" including extra verses, and "When We All Get to Heaven."
- For older students and adults: Do a quick, extra study on what Matthew calls "the kingdom of heaven." Look up the following passages and make a list of what the book of Matthew says about the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 13:24-30  
Matthew 13:31-32  
Matthew 13:33  
Matthew 13:44-46  
Matthew 13:47-50  
Matthew 18:23-35  
Matthew 20:1-16  
Matthew 22:2-10  
Matthew 25:1-13

The Tares and Wheat  
Mustard Seed  
Leaven  
Hidden Treasure and Costly Pearl  
Dragnet  
King Settling Accounts  
Landowner and Vineyard  
King and Wedding Feast  
Ten Virgins