

Get Ready!

The Greatest Comeback Ever: The Return of Je- sus, the Christ

By: Jon Cheatwood



Text

1 Corinthians 15:50-58; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Key Quest Verse

“For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first” (1 Thessalonians 4:16, NIV).

Bible Background

The second coming of Christ to the earth is something that is promised throughout the entire Bible. Indeed, it is even mentioned more often than His first coming! Because God has promised Christ’s literal return, we can be sure it will happen. The only uncertainty is when. Matthew 24:36 says, “No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.” Jesus Himself has not been told when He will return. Only God in His infinite wisdom knows and will decide when the time is right.

What matters is our response to the waiting. Non-believers will be caught off-guard by His return. But, Christians can wait with eager anticipation living each day to His glory. We won’t merely be eyewitnesses to this historical event, but we will participate in it with Christ. We will be caught up together in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and we will be changed from mortal to immortal! (1 Thessalonians 4:17; 1 Corinthians 15:51-54).

We await our coming King with excitement and joy, for He brings our reward with Him. “Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done” (Revelation 22:12). What a joyous day when we see our precious Savior face to face.

Get Ready!**Lesson Quest****What I want my students to:**

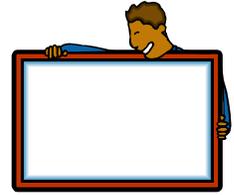
- Know:** Jesus will be returning to the earth to set up His Father's Kingdom. Those who are God's children will be raised from death to eternal life at that time.
- Feel:** The hope of the resurrection, and the joy of knowing Christ as Savior.
- Do:** Live a life that is ready for Christ's return and the Kingdom of God.

Leader's Devotion

The Return of Christ can be a difficult subject to get a handle on. We don't know when Jesus will return; even Jesus does not know when He will return. So, that leaves us with having to live our lives in preparation for that Return. That does not mean living in a bomb shelter, reading the Bible constantly, and not interacting with anyone. It means learning the Word, understanding what we, as Christians, are called to do and to understand, and doing those things.

Our students have as much difficulty grasping this concept as we often do. Some may feel that they must constantly be praying for forgiveness, because if they fail to ask forgiveness before the moment they die, they will not be considered ready for the Return. Others may not see why we must change our lives, since the grace of God is there to cover our sins. Each of these students needs to understand that God calls us to live as believers in Him, accept His Son and our Savior, and be followers of His word.

Get Set!



Option A

WHAT CAN WE KNOW?

Materials: Chalkboard or paper

Procedure: Make two columns on a chalkboard or paper. Write “Things We Can Know” at the top of the first one, and write “Things We Cannot Know” on the top of the other. In the first column have students help you list several things about life that we can know (such as: what day we were born, who the 3rd president of the USA was, that you can “dial down the center” to make a collect call). In the second column, have students list things about life that we cannot know (such as: what makes Michael Jackson do such weird things, how long ago God “built” the universe, how many grains of sand there are in the world). At the end of this list add the phrase, “The day and time when Jesus will return.”

The Bible tells us that Jesus is going to return to the earth, but it tells us that “No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father” (Mark 13:32). Not even Jesus Himself knows what day and hour He will return. Because of this, we must be ready for His return now.

GO TO THE BIBLE STORY

Option B

DUCK, DUCK, GOOSE (Yes, I said “Duck, Duck, Goose!”)

Materials: None



Procedure: Play a short game of “Duck, Duck, Goose.” **Come on, you remember how to play. Try not to break anything.** After the game, talk about who was good at the game. **Why were they good at it? What made them able to catch people? Was it only their speed, or did they seem to *know* when they were going to be ‘the goose’?**

There are things in life that some people are better prepared for than others. Some can change a flat tire in minutes, others couldn’t do it to save their lives. Some can pick up a guitar and play just about any song you name, and others couldn’t pick a guitar out in an instrument line-up. What things are you prepared for? Give time for several answers, then ask, how prepared are you for the return of Jesus?

GO TO THE BIBLE STORY

Get Set!**Bible Story**

Teacher Tip: Provide markers for students to highlight portions of the story in their Bibles

Have students read the texts in a recent, easier-to-understand translation.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 (NIV)

Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words.

1 Corinthians 15:50-58 (NIV)

I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed – in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.” Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

Go!**Signs of the Times****GROUP WORK**

Materials: Copies of “Signs of the Times” Resource Page for each student

Quest Connection

Matthew 24 tells of the signs of the end of the age. Jesus’ disciples asked, “When will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?” (Matthew 24:3, NIV). Some signs seem obvious, and others take insight to understand. Students of prophecy will be better equipped to recognize these signs, just as students of foreign language will know answers in this worksheet better than others.

Procedure: Hand out copies of “Signs of the Times” Resource Page. Have students try to identify what each sign means. Some are very easy (Stop, for instance); some are not so easy (zu verkaufen, for example). Give them a few minutes, letting them work together. If someone knows any of the foreign languages included, encourage them to help others with those signs.

Close

Read Matthew 24:36-44. Close in prayer.

Go!**Spiritual Journey****BRAINSTORMING**

Materials: Blank paper, envelopes, pens, Resource Page

Quest Connection

In 1 Corinthians 15 we are told, “Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord.”

This segment is meant to prompt students to think about how they are doing.

Procedure: Ask students to think about the first memories they have of God. Ask them to think through the ups and downs of their relationship with God from that time until now. Ask, **how fully do you think you are giving yourself to the work of the Lord?**

Have students draw a picture, a graph or some other type of drawing that represents their spiritual life from their first memory of God. Ask for volunteers to talk about what they have drawn.

Now have students write a letter to themselves telling where they hope to be in this process six months from now. Encourage them to make realistic goals for their spiritual growth. After the students write the letters, have the students address an envelope to themselves, seal their letters inside, then give it to you. Mail the letters to the students in six months (don't forget where you put them!)

Close

Read prayer from PRAYER page for “Spiritual Journey.”

Go!**What Happened to God?****OBJECT LESSON**

Materials: A box or basket filled with items of interest to a teen, including such things as: a basketball, a football, video games, DVDs, CDs, fast food containers, textbooks, fashion and sports magazines, a phone

Quest Connection

To be prepared for the return of Christ at the Second Coming, we must do what Jesus said in Matthew 6:33: Seek first the Kingdom of God.

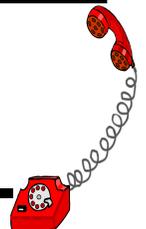
Procedure: Think of all the sports, jobs, hobbies, interests, etc. that students in your class are involved in. Collect items that can represent those interests and put them in a box or basket.

To start the lesson, open a Bible to Matthew 6:33 and place it on the floor. Leaving it there (without reading the text to them), ask them what classes they like best at school. Find something in the box that can represent those classes and place it on top of the Bible. Now ask what they like to do for fun. Again, find something that can represent those activities and put it on top of the Bible. Continue by asking about their favorite sports, extra-curricular activities and what they do to relax. For each answer, pull something out of the box that can represent that activity (you may have to really s-t-r-e-t-c-h for this part) and put it on the pile.

After a few minutes, ask, **what happened to God in all of this?** Obviously, God got buried under all of that stuff. Once students figure that out, pull the Bible out from the bottom of the stack and read Matthew 6:33. Ask, **what might happen if we put the Bible – or God – on the top of the pile?** After some discussion, say, **if we put God first, holding Him on top of the other things we do, we start right. We can still do many of the things we have talked about, but focusing on God and His Kingdom first, put us in the right place with God and God in the right place with us.**

Close

Read prayer from PRAYER page for “What Happened to God.”



Go!**Being Ready for Christ's Return****DISCUSSION**

Materials: 3x5 cards and pens for each student, Resource Page

Quest Connection

Ask, **what are the things that you want to do before you die? What are the “somedays” that you look forward to? Like, “someday I’m going to learn to play guitar,” or “someday I want to visit Australia,” or “someday I’m going to catch that wascally wabbit.”** (Brace yourself here, because some of them might answer with embarrassing honesty. Plus, they might not get that Elmer Fudd reference, because they are a lot younger than we are).

Procedure: Hand out the cards and pens, and then give these instructions: **Make a list of at least five things you want to do before Christ returns.** After several minutes, read 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 to the group. **What does this tell us about preparing for the future? What should top our list of things to do before Jesus returns? How can our plans today help us reach our goals tomorrow?**

(inspired by: Nappa, Mike and Amy. (1995). *Bore No More* (p. 108). Loveland, Colorado: Group Publishing)

Close

Close in prayer, asking God to help guide each one to follow His priorities for our lives.

Go!**France, 1943****STORY****Materials:** None**Quest Connection**

When I read this story to you, I want you to listen carefully. When I'm finished, I'm going to ask you some questions.

Procedure: Read the following story:

A crowd of men, women, and children huddled together at the train station. Dressed for a long journey and standing with their bags at their sides, they spoke in low tones. Armed men in the grim uniform of the SS, the feared wing of the Nazi army, surrounded the travelers.

The people shivering on the platform were not criminals. They were Jews, French Jews who had been hauled from their homes by the occupying soldiers and French Nazi sympathizers.

The non-Jewish French watched these events unfold with increasing concern. After all, these people were neighbors and friends. The group included the watchmaker and his family, the lad who sold newspapers, the old lady who made beautiful quilts. Now they were being “relocated.”

The plumes of smoke could be seen even before the train was heard. The townspeople cast a nervous eye toward the train platform as the clack, soot-belching locomotive ground to a halt.

Armed guards herded the Jews into the train cars. They went cooperatively, putting up no resistance. Concerned observers wondered why this was taking place; but they told themselves that things would be fine, that there was no need to worry about these friends and neighbors. They were in good hands.

How could they believe that? Because neatly printed in French on the door of every boxcar was the reassuring logo, “Charitable Transport Company.”

What made the French people think their friends and neighbors would be all right? Was it true? What happened to those people? Those innocent-looking boxcars carried people to imprisonment and death. They were *not* in good hands; they were in the hands of evil. Read 1 Peter 5:8-9. We must watch for the innocent-looking lies around us that can lead us away from God. What are some lies that we hear about God, morality, and choices we make?

After some time for discussing the lies, read Matthew 24:42, and remind students that it is important that we use the Bible to guide us in understanding right and wrong.

Close

Prayer: Father, we do not want to be blind to what is true. Help us to seek Your truth and not accept the lies we hear from the world around us. Put into our hearts a desire to know You and Your truth. Amen.

Go!**Lesson From the Dead**

VIDEO

Materials: TV, VHS or DVD player, video/DVD of “Remember the Titans” (Disney)

Quest Connection

The movie we are going to watch shows us the importance of remembering the good things the people who have died before us have done.

Procedure: Get video cued before class. Times listed are from the beginning of the movie, not the beginning of the tape.

Start at 30:48 – horns start blaring in the dormitory in the middle of the night. End at 34:00 – “maybe we’ll learn to play this game like men.”

For DVD, play Chapter 10 (30:48-34:00)

Video background: The year is 1971. After leading his team to fifteen winning seasons, football coach Bill Yoast is demoted and replaced by Herman Boone. The football team is being integrated while the school puts black and white students together for the first time. Yoast, who is white, is replaced by Boone, who is black. As the football training camp progresses, it is obvious that most of the guys are staying separate by color. In an attempt to finally get the boys to integrate, coach Boone pairs players of opposite color so that they will begin to see each other as people, not enemies. As this scene opens, we find coach Boone waking the players up to make an unorthodox attempt at showing them how crazy their continued hatred was.

Play scene.

What lessons were the players supposed to learn from this? How were the dead supposed to be teaching this lesson? What lessons can we learn from those who have died before us? In some ways, we can and should learn from the dead. Hebrews 11 lists many people who lived by faith. Abel, it says, still speaks, even though he is dead (Hebrews 11:4). By his faith, Noah “condemned the whole world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith” (Hebrews 11:7). Abraham was called to go to a place he would later eventually receive as his inheritance. He obeyed and went, “even though he did not know where he was going.” (Hebrews 11:8).

Each of the people in this text was commended for their faith, yet it said that none of them received what they had been promised. They saw it, they welcomed it from a distance, but the eternal life in the Kingdom that they were promised did not come to them when they died. “God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect” (Hebrews 11:39). Those who have been obedient to God in the past will join those of us who are being obedient to Him now, and only together will we receive the reward we have been promised.

Close

We have much to learn from those who have gone before us. Spend time getting to know someone who you can see is led by their faith in God. Start to learn from them, instead of believing that you already know all that you need to know. Soak up some of the wisdom that a life of mistakes and successes can bring. Close in prayer.

Signs of the Times



PRAYER

From *The Book of Uncommon Prayer*

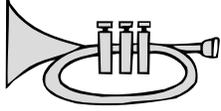
for “What Happened to God?”

GOD, we sit next to a glass of cool water, and we live our lives thirsty and dry. We stand just outside the shade, complain about the heat – when all we need is in front of us. All we need is within our reach, and we ignore it. Sometimes it’s easier to complain than receive what You freely offer us. Help us take our minds off ourselves, God. Help us focus on You, and then we will see that You’ve already given us everything we need. Open our eyes to the world around us, and we will see that the missing pieces to our puzzle were right in front of us all along. Complete us, God. *Amen.*

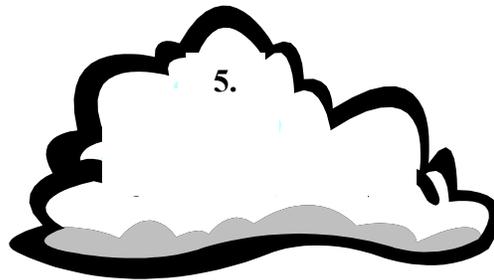
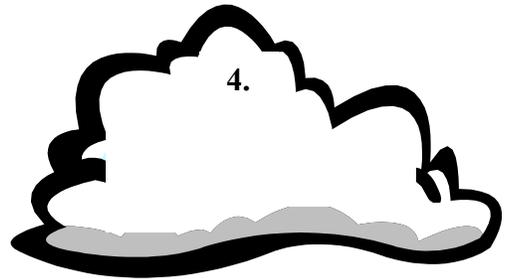
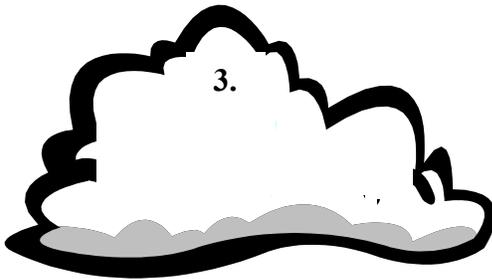
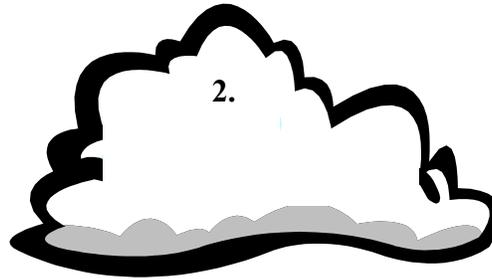
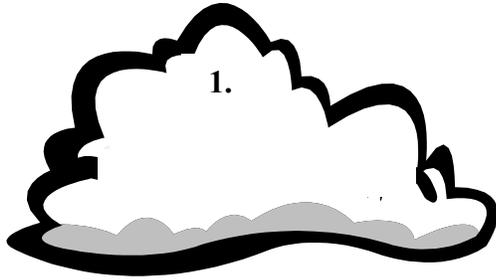
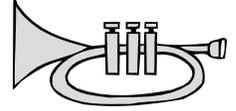
for “Spiritual Journey”

GOD, you always have been. You always will be. You are in charge, not us. From heaven You rule the angels and the ants. You are the only God. Let there be no mistake. We have every reason to be shaking in our boots. Yet we know You love us beyond measure, but You won’t always give us what we want. You will always give us what we need. You know our insecurities and our offenses. You’ve called your servants to walk through the fire before. They obeyed, and You protected them from the flames. We will praise you, God. You are the only God. *Amen.*

Case, Steven L. (2002). *The Book of Uncommon Prayer* (p. 76). Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan.



Make a list of at five things you want to do before Christ returns.



What should top our list of things to do before Jesus returns? How can our plans today help us reach our goals tomorrow?
