

LESSON PLAN

THE RETURN OF CHRIST

John 14:1-6; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Lesson Memory Verse: John 14:3 - "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there you may be also."

Lesson Aim: To prepare the children for the return of Christ, which can happen at any time.

Lesson Plan: Use the KEY – HE – SEE – WE – BE plan (explained in the Introductory Notes).

KEY (for Attention): Mrs. Jensen's fourth grade class had a very special visitor. His name was Mr. Houghten. Mr. Houghten had talked to the class for a few minutes about safety and now as he was getting ready to leave, he said, "Boys and girls, I am going now, but soon I will return, and when I do, I will give a prize to the student who has the neatest desk."

"When are you coming back, Mr. Houghten?" all the children asked. He smiled, but would not give them an answer. Everyone wanted to win the prize.

Susie had been very quiet. Her desk was always untidy. Suddenly she said, "I am going to win the prize." Some of the children giggled. "How can you?" Johnny said. "You never have your desk clean." "Well, I'm going to clean it every Monday," replied Susie. "But what if Mr. Houghten comes on Friday?" "Then I'll clean it every morning," said Susie. "But what if he comes at the end of the day?" Susie thought a minute. "Well," she said, "I'll just keep it clean all the time. Then I'll be sure to be ready when Mr. Houghten comes. And I'll win the prize!" Susie had a good plan, didn't she?

Like Mr. Houghten Jesus said that He was coming back, but He did not say when He would return. He may come back at any time. When He comes He will take all believers to His Father's house in heaven to live with Him until He is ready to take them back to earth. Then He will be the king of all nations on earth for 1000 years and all believers will rule with Him. Let's look at our memory verse to see what He said.

HE (for Authority): One day the disciples were troubled because they learned that Jesus was going to leave them. Jesus told His disciples that His Father's house had many rooms and He was going away to prepare a place for them. Then Jesus gave them an encouraging promise in John 14:3. Since He was going away to prepare a place for them, He promised that He would return for them so they could be with Him. "Receive you unto Myself" means "take you with Me." At first, they did not know where He was going, but Jesus made it clear that He was going to Heaven to prepare this place for them. The place that He was preparing for them was in the New Jerusalem. The New Jerusalem is the beautiful city in Heaven. Someday it will come down from Heaven (Rev 21:2). It is the city where all the believers will live in eternity.

SEE (for Apperception) and WE (for Application): PLEASE do not read these comments until you have read the Scripture for this lesson. First let the Holy Spirit teach you directly from His Word. If you want to know more about Jesus' return, please listen carefully to the lesson for today.

OUTLINE OF THE DOCTRINE

I. Jesus' Promise to Come Again

A. In the upper room – Jn 14:3

Jesus did not give His disciples too many details about His return. He simply said that He was going to Heaven to prepare a place for them and would return for them so they could be with Him. He did not say when He would return. They maybe thought it would be quite soon--at least during their lifetime. But now we know that His return was not during their lifetime and it has been almost 2000 years since His promise to return. So, will He return? Well, did He come the first time when people waited thousands of years for Him? Yes, He came in the fullness of time (Gal 4:4). So He will return again in the fullness of time? Yes!

B. On the Mount of Olives – Acts 1:4-11

After Jesus rose from the dead, He met with believers for forty days, speaking to them about the Kingdom of God. Then He took His disciples to the Mount of Olives and told them to stay in Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit came to them; He would give them power to be witnesses of Jesus Christ in all parts of the world. Then He ascended up to Heaven. They watched Him go up until He disappeared in a cloud. While

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they were still looking up, two angels appeared and told them that Jesus would return to earth the same way that He went into Heaven. Jesus will return to finish the work for His Father on the earth. He will not allow Satan to continue to rule the earth. Jesus will return to remove Satan from the earth and He will be the King over all the nations on earth so that they will bring glory to God.

WE: We believe Jesus will return when His Father says that it is time for Him to finish His work on earth.

II. Jesus' Coming is in Two Events.

A. The rapture – 1 Cor 15:51-54; 1 Th 4:13-18; Col 3:4

The first event for Jesus' return is the Rapture. This event was revealed to the Apostle Paul after Jesus went to Heaven. It is the coming of Jesus in the clouds to take the Church believers to Heaven before the Tribulation. These are those that have received Jesus as their Savior since Pentecost when the Holy Spirit formed the first church in Jerusalem. The dead in Christ will be resurrected first with a new body and they will ascend to meet the Lord Jesus in the clouds. Then those that are alive at His coming will have their body changed in the twinkling of an eye and they will ascend to be with the Lord Jesus. Then Jesus will take them to Heaven before the Tribulation wars begin on earth.

WE: We are waiting for Jesus to take us and all believers to Heaven before the Tribulation wars begin.

B. The return – Rev 19:11-21; Zech 14:1-4

Jesus will come back to the earth to end the Tribulation wars. All believers that are in Heaven will come with Him. Old Testament believers, Church age believers and believers that die in the Tribulation will come with Him to be in His Kingdom on earth.

He will come to destroy the rule of Satan on the earth and then He will set up His Kingdom on earth so that it will bring glory to His Father once again. One clear description of His return to earth is given in Zechariah 14:1-4. Jerusalem is being attacked by the armies of Antichrist and his allies when Jesus comes to save the city. He will come to the mount of Olives as the two angels said, when He ascended into Heaven (Acts 1:11). When His feet touch the mountain, it will split and half will move to the north and half will move to the south. Since the mountain is directly to the east of Jerusalem, it probably will divide the city of Jerusalem and disrupt the armies of Antichrist fighting in Jerusalem. Then Jesus will proceed to destroy the armies that are destroying Jerusalem (Rev 19:11-21). When they are destroyed, He will make Jerusalem the capital of His Kingdom and from Jerusalem He will rule all nations of the earth (Zech 14:9).

WE: We believe Jesus will come again and this time He will be received by the leaders of Israel (Zech 12:10-13:1). We believe He will remove Satan from the earth and He will make the earth a place of peace and joy. We believe that he will rule the earth for 1000 years before the heavens and earth are destroyed by fire and a new heaven and a new earth will be created. Then the New Jerusalem will come down from Heaven and all believers will live in this amazingly beautiful city.

APPLICATION OF THE DOCTRINE “Grandpa’s Home”

Becky and Brad hugged each other and bounded around the living room in their excitement. They could hardly believe it was true. Grandpa Cole had decided to sell the farm and come to live with them! Mother and Father had been asking him to do just that for over a year – every since Grandma had gone to be with Jesus in Heaven – and now, finally, he had decided to come.

Grandpa was always happy, and was always ready to take a walk or to tell one of his many exciting stories or to teach them how to do something new. Becky and Brad could hardly wait. Mother had said that he would be coming soon. She didn't know exactly what day he would come, but it would be just as soon as Grandpa could get things taken care of at the farm. That could mean he'd come in a day or in a week or in a month. They knew he would come just as soon as he could, but that was all.

Every morning Becky and Brad thought first about Grandpa's coming. They helped Mother clean the big back room that was to be his, and Becky found some pretty pictures for the walls. Brad worked hard with Father moving tools and mowers from the garage to the storage shed so Grandpa would have a place to keep his car.

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Becky and Brad hated to go to school for fear that Grandpa would come while they were away. At school they told all their friends the big news. They raced each other home every afternoon always hoping to see Grandpa's car in the driveway.

Becky picked flowers from the garden and put them on the dining room table whenever she could find new blossoms – just to make things special in case Grandpa would arrive.

Brad fixed his old fishing rod and shined it up like new so Grandpa would have a pole for fishing in the nearby lake.

Becky worked her hardest on her new piano piece. She wanted to surprise Grandpa when he came. All in all, both children did everything they could think of to get ready for Grandpa.

Finally, one Saturday morning as Becky was dozing in bed half awake and half asleep and enjoying the yummy smell of Mother's pancakes and sausage, she thought she heard a familiar laugh.

Before she could figure out who it belonged to, she heard Brad's feet hit the floor of his bedroom next door to hers. Then she heard his door swing open. Brad shouted to her as he whizzed by her door on his way downstairs, "Hurry up, Beck! It's Grandpa! He's here at last!"

Becky grabbed her robe and ran down the stairs on Brad's heels. A moment later she was up in Grandpa's big strong arms. She hugged him hard and then slipped down to give Mother her turn at greeting Grandpa.

What a happy breakfast they had together! Mother and Father told Grandpa how excited the children had been and how eagerly they had waited for him to come.

"We really have wanted you to come, Grandpa," Brad grinned. "Yes, Grandpa," Becky giggled. "We've been looking forward to your coming as much as we look forward to Christmas."

"We are very glad to have you, Dad," Father said, as he put his arm around Grandpa's shoulders.

Grandpa sat very quietly. He was smiling, but Brad noticed that there were tears in his eyes. "Grandpa, is something wrong?" he asked softly.

"No, no, son." Grandpa's eyes shone through the tears. "It's just that all your talk about waiting so anxiously for me makes me think of Someone I'm eagerly waiting to see. I've been waiting for the Lord Jesus to come for many years to take me to His home in Heaven. He has promised to come and I believe He's coming soon. I'm really glad that I can live with you in your home, but I'm looking forward to being with Jesus in His Father's home in Heaven. Won't it be wonderful when Jesus comes?"

Mother squeezed Grandpa's hand. "It surely will be wonderful, Dad," she said.

Late that evening as Becky and Brad were sitting in the big window seat in Becky's room talking about the great time they'd had with Grandpa, Becky looked out the window at the lovely full moon and the sparkling stars. "Brad," she said, "wouldn't it be wonderful if Jesus came tonight?"

"Yes, it would, Becky," Brad agreed. "Aren't you glad you are saved? Ever since I asked Jesus to save me last summer at camp, I haven't been afraid to die. Before that I didn't want to die, nor did I want Jesus to come back because I knew I wasn't ready."

"I am glad that Jesus is my Savior, Brad. But, you know, I've learned a real lesson from what Grandpa said this morning. I'm going to start telling my friends that Jesus is coming, just like I told them that Grandpa was coming. I want them to be ready for the Lord, too."

"You're right, Beck," Brad nodded. "And I'm going to try to be ready for Jesus all the time, just like I was for Grandpa. Let's ask God to help us be kind and helpful and obedient, shall we, Beck?"

The children bowed their heads and prayed, and then, with one more long look out at the beautiful sky, they said good night and Brad headed for his room. When he reached Becky's door, he turned and said, "See you in the morning, Becky – if Jesus doesn't come tonight!"

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BE (for Action): Have you been excited about Jesus' coming like Brad and Becky were about Grandpa's coming? How many of you are excited about Jesus' coming? It really will be a wonderful time, won't it? That is if we have asked Jesus to save us and if we are living for Him, then it will be exciting.

Brad and Becky worked very hard to be ready for Grandpa, didn't they? What was the lesson that they learned from Grandpa? How did they decide to get ready for Jesus' coming? How can you get ready? (Go around the class allowing each child to suggest something he or she can do this week to be ready for Jesus' coming.) We've talked much about being ready for the Lord's coming. Let's pray now and ask the Lord to help us do those things we mentioned so we will always be ready for Him to come.

If you have never asked Jesus to save you, you certainly are not ready for Jesus to come. He will not take you with Him to heaven when He returns if you are not saved. If you would like to receive Him as your Savior, please come and talk to me right after class.