

Open Bible Stories — Jesus Returns

Introduction

Key Idea

The story of Jesus' return teaches us about the great things God will do when Jesus returns to the earth.

Core Belief Verse

"Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. 3 And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure." 1 John 3:2-3

God's Big Story

The eternal God created all things in six days.

He made a good and perfect world.

He made humans in his image to fill the earth and rule over creation.

But humans rebelled against God and ruined God's creation.

God set to restore his world through his promise.

God made a covenant with Abraham. He promised to bless all nations through Abraham.

God kept his promises across the generations.

God provided Abraham with a promised child, Isaac.

God gave Isaac a wife, and she bore twins, Jacob and Esau.

God blessed Jacob and his sons, and the blessing continued to the next generation.

God rescued Joseph, one of Jacob's sons, and used him to rescue his family.

God caused his people, the Israelites, to multiply in the land of Egypt; eventually, they became slaves.

But God raised up a deliverer, Moses, to deliver his people from slavery.

God judged the Egyptians with harsh plagues; in the final judgment, he passed over his people, who covered their doorposts with the blood of a sacrificed lamb.

Then, God delivered the Israelites by bringing them out of Egypt and crossing the Red Sea on dry land.

God made a covenant with the Israelites and made them his people.

God tested Israel in a series of wilderness wanderings and eventually brought his people into the promised land of Canaan.

God raised up deliverers to lead Israel and rescue them from their enemies.

God formed Israel into a kingdom. He made a covenant with King David and promised to send a king that would rule his people forever.

Many of Israel's kings were evil, and the kingdom of Israel was divided into two kingdoms.

God sent prophets to warn his people of God's judgment and call them to repent.

When Israel did not repent, God sent his people into exile. After many years, he brought them back to the land.

Throughout the Old Testament, God promised to send his Messiah to deliver his people from their sin.

After many years, the prophet John was born. He would prepare people for the coming Messiah.

At the perfect time, God sent his Son, Jesus, to be born of a virgin Mary.

When John and Jesus grew up, John baptized Jesus as a sign that Jesus was God's beloved Son.

Jesus endured all manner of temptation without ever sinning.

When he was thirty years old, he launched a public ministry of preaching, teaching, and healing.

He taught his disciples about the life of compassion, sacrifice, and forgiveness.

Jesus performed many miracles: he fed a crowd of five thousand, he walked on water, he healed the sick, and he cast out demons.

He proclaimed to people the nature of real faith, God's kingdom, and the how fallen humans can be restored in relationship with God.

Toward the end of his ministry, Jesus revealed his power and glory to his disciples.

He raised a dead man to life.

Jesus was betrayed by one of his disciples and put on trial before a Roman governor.

Jesus was sentenced to death and crucified on a cross. Three days later, Jesus rose again from the dead.

After meeting with many of his disciples, Jesus went back to heaven.

The Holy Spirit empowered Jesus' followers and formed them into his church. Jesus' disciples, like Peter and John, performed miracles and preached the good news about Jesus.

New leaders like Stephen and Philip served the church and preached about Jesus.

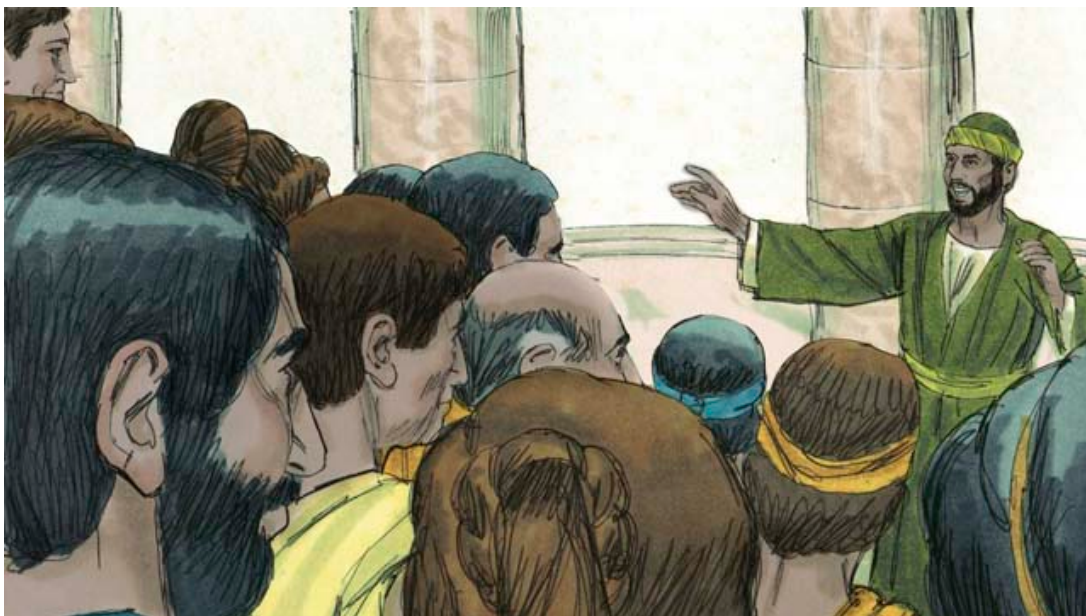
Even Saul, a persecutor of Jesus' followers, became a Christian and preached the gospel to many people.

Jesus is the promised Messiah and brings in blessings of a New Covenant.

At the end of the world, Jesus will return to earth, the dead will come back to life, God will punish Satan and those who rejected Jesus, and God will recreate the world where God's people will live with God forever in complete peace.

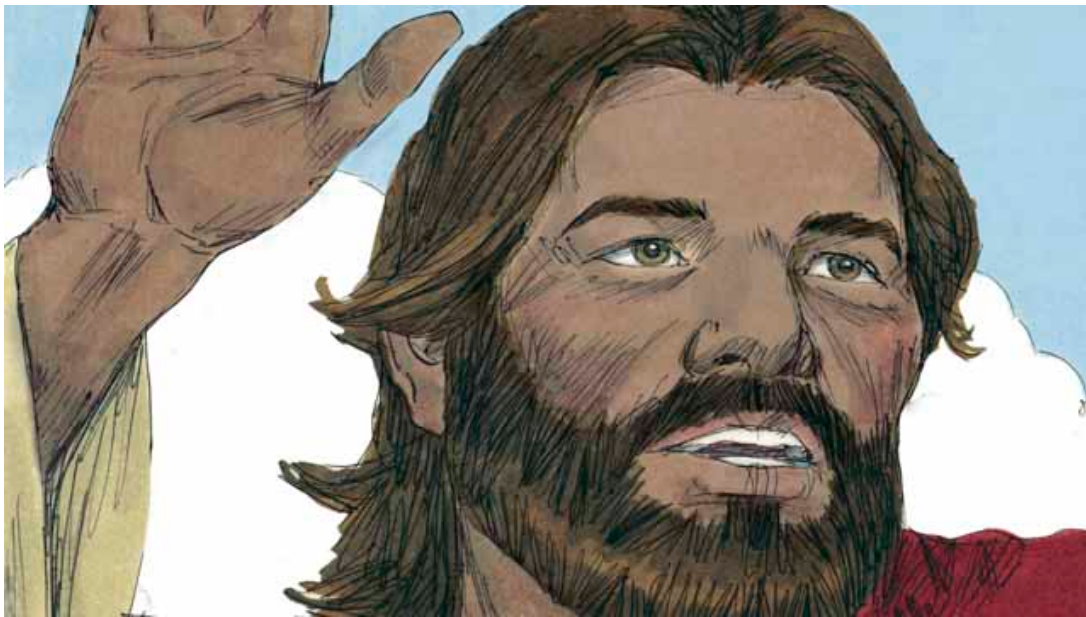
The Story: Jesus Returns

50-01



For almost 2,000 years, more and more people around the world have been hearing the good news about Jesus the Messiah. The Church has been growing. Jesus promised he would return at the end of the world. Though he has not yet come back, he will keep his promise.

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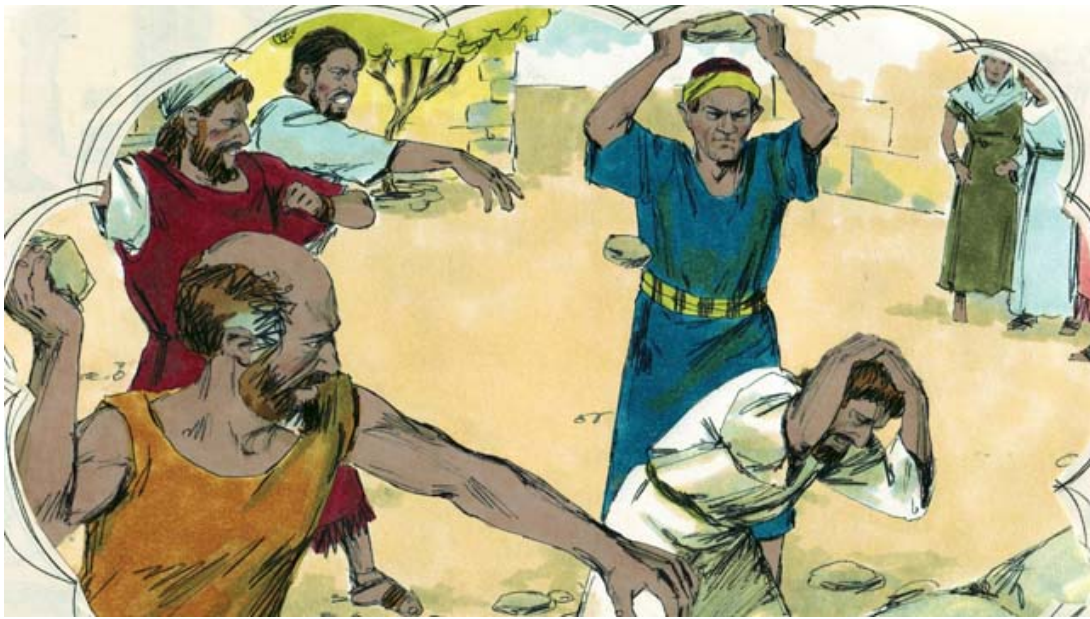
As we wait for Jesus to return, God wants us to live in a holy way that honors him. He also wants us to tell others about his kingdom. When Jesus was living on earth, he said, "My disciples will preach the good news about the kingdom of God to people everywhere in the world, and then the end will come."

50-03



Many people groups still have not heard about Jesus. Before he returned to heaven, Jesus told his followers to proclaim the good news to people who have never heard it. He said, "Go and make disciples in all people groups!" and "The fields are ripe for harvest!"

50-04



Jesus also said, "A man's servant is not greater than his master. The important people in this world have hated me, and they will also torture you and kill you because of me. In this world you will suffer, but be strong, because I have defeated Satan, the one who rules this world. If you remain faithful to me to the end, then God will save you!"

50-05



Jesus told his disciples a story to explain what will happen to people when the world ends. He said, "A man planted good seed in his field. While he was sleeping, his enemy came and planted weed seeds among the wheat seeds, and then he went away."

50-06



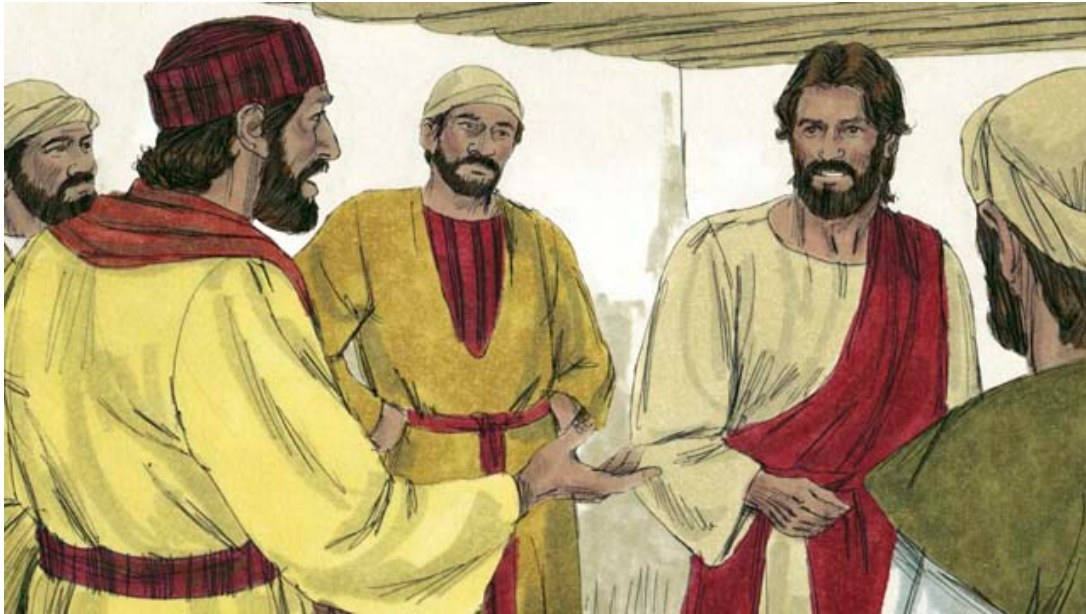
"When the plants sprouted, the servants of the man said, 'Master, you planted good seed in that field. So why are there weeds in it?' The man answered, 'Only my enemies would want to plant them. It is one of my enemies who did this.'"

50-07



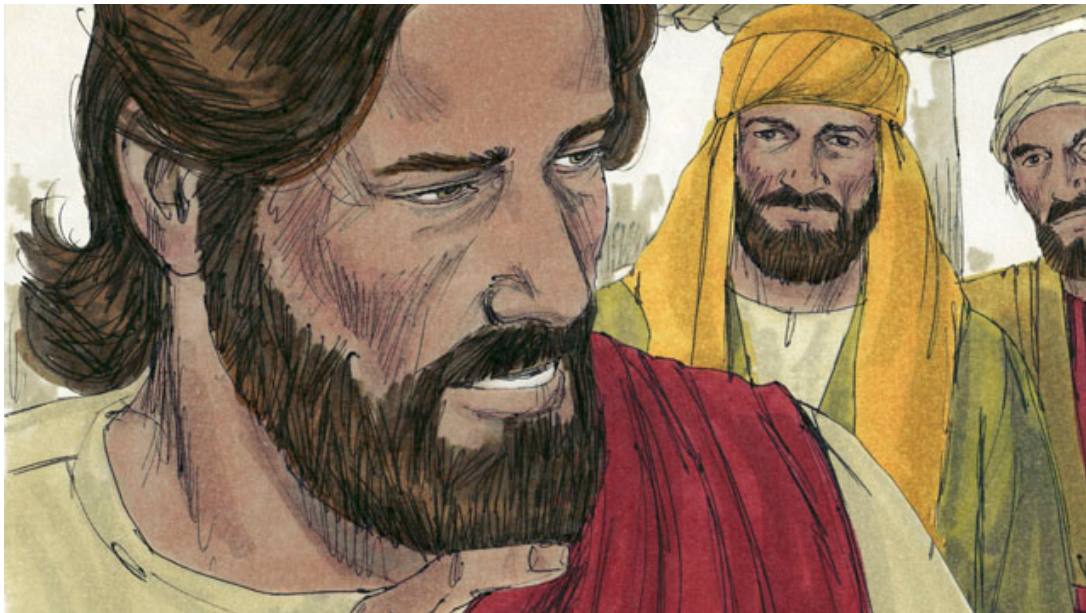
"The servants responded to their master, 'Should we pull out the weeds?' The master said, 'No. If you do that, you will pull out some of the wheat as well. Wait until the harvest. Then gather the weeds into piles so you can burn them. But bring the wheat into my barn.'"

50-08



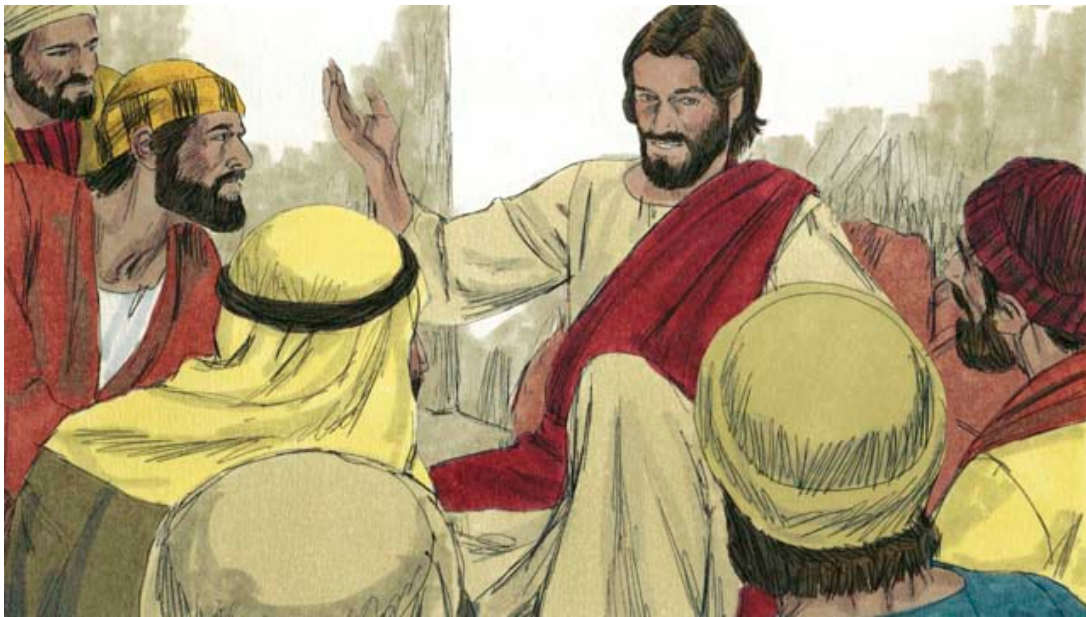
The disciples did not understand the meaning of the story, so they asked Jesus to explain it to them. Jesus said, "The man who planted the good seed represents the Messiah. The field represents the world. The good seed represents the people of God's kingdom."

50-09



"The weeds represent the people who belong to the devil, the evil one. The man's enemy, the one who planted the weeds, represents the devil. The harvest represents the end of the world, and the harvesters represent God's angels."

50-10



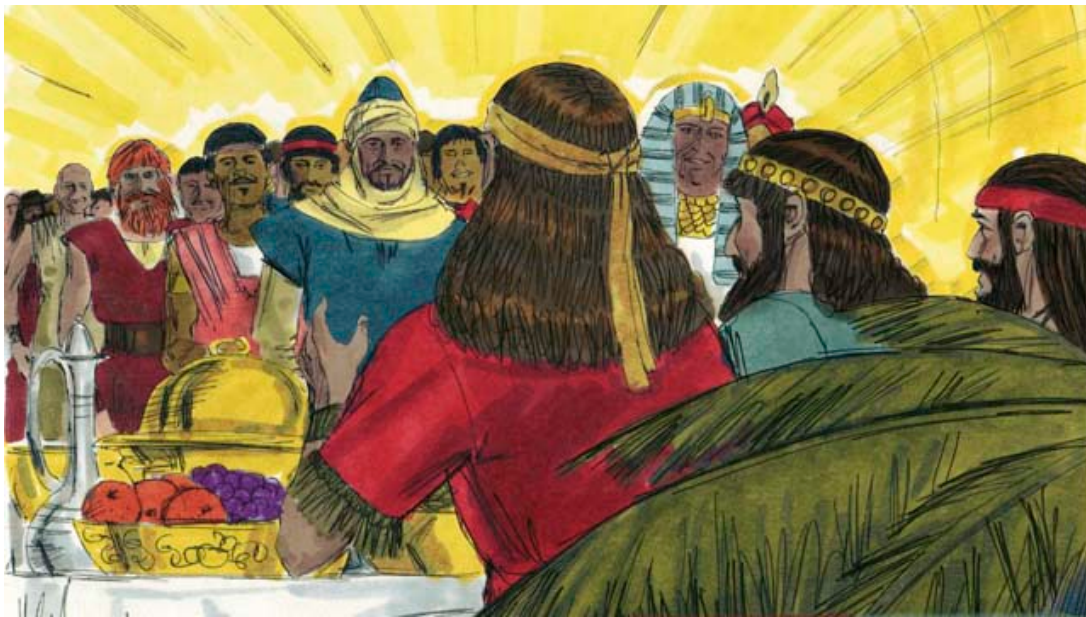
"When the world ends, the angels will gather together all the people who belong to the devil. The angels will throw them into a very hot fire. There those people will cry and grind their teeth in terrible suffering. But the people who are righteous, who have followed Jesus, will shine like the sun in the kingdom of God their Father."

50-11



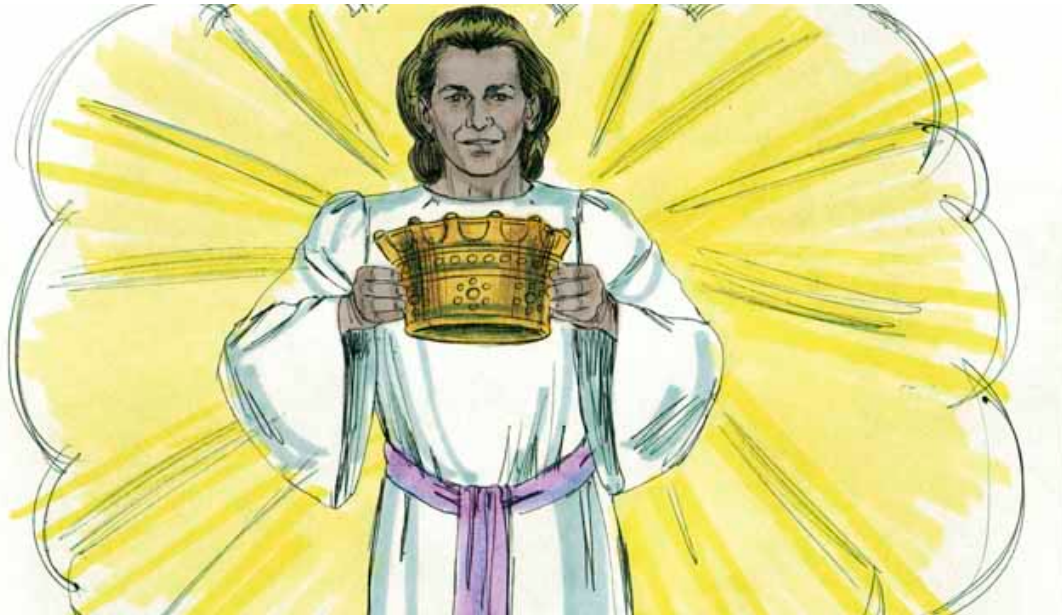
Jesus also said he would return to Earth just before the world ended. He will come back the same way that he left. That is, he will have a real body and come on the clouds in the sky. When Jesus returns, every follower of Jesus who has died will rise from the dead and meet him in the sky.

50-12



Then the followers of Jesus who are still alive will rise up into the sky and join with the other followers of Jesus who rose from the dead. They will all be with Jesus there. After that, Jesus will live with his people. They will have complete peace forever as they live together.

50-13



Jesus promised to give a crown to everyone who believes in him. They will rule with God over everything forever. They will have perfect peace.

50-14



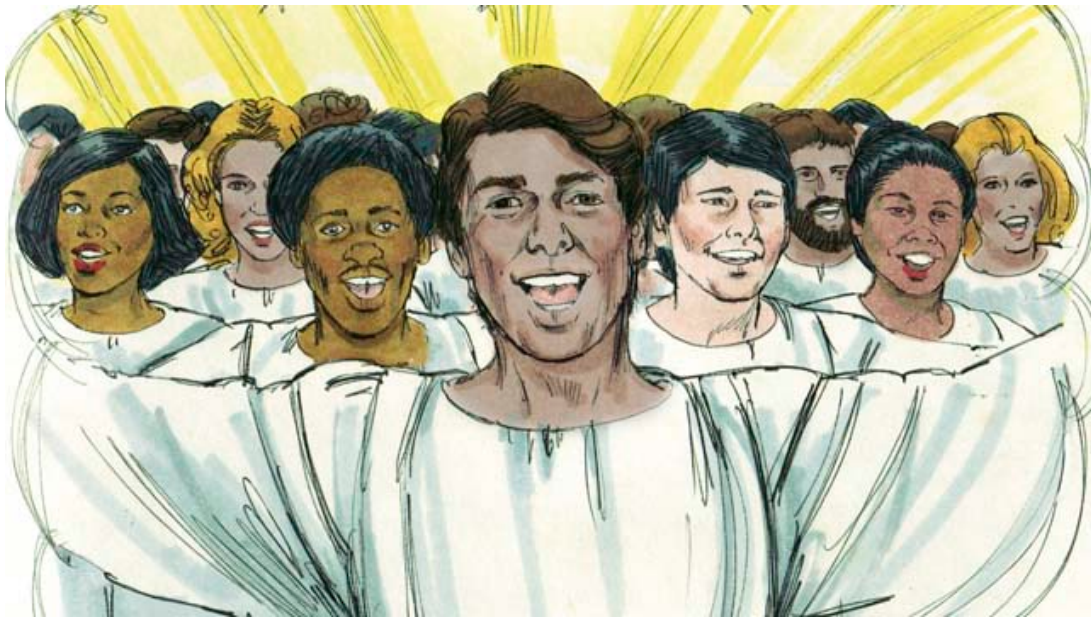
But God will judge everyone who does not believe in Jesus. He will throw them into hell. There they will weep and grind their teeth and suffer forever. A fire that never goes out will continually burn them, and worms will never stop eating them.

50-15



When Jesus returns, he will completely destroy Satan and his kingdom. He will throw Satan into hell. Satan will burn there forever, along with everyone who chose to follow him rather than obey God.

50-16



Because Adam and Eve disobeyed God and brought sin into this world, God cursed it and decided to destroy it. But someday, God will create a new heaven and a new earth that will be perfect.

50-17



Jesus and his people will live on the new earth, and he will reign forever over everything. He will wipe away every tear from people's eyes. No one will suffer or be sad any longer. They will not cry. They will not be sick or die. And there will be nothing evil there. Jesus will rule his kingdom justly and with peace. He will be with his people forever.

A Bible story from: Matthew 13:24-42; 22:13; 24:14; 28:18; John 4:35; 15:20; 16:33; 1 Thessalonians 4:13- 5:11; James 1:12; Revelation 2:10; 20:10; 21-22

Community Study: Corporate Praise—Telling God of His Greatness

- **Key Idea:** worshiping God as a community
- **Key Passage:** Hebrews 13:14-16
- **Main Session:** OBS 50 (Jesus Returns)

Recite the Core Belief Verse (3–5 minutes)

The verse below summarizes the teaching of the current passage. Read the verse out loud as a community. Read it again several times as a group until the whole community can recite it from memory.

27 Just as man is appointed to die once, and after that comes judgment, 28 so also, Christ was offered once to take away the sins of many, and will appear a second time, not to deal with sin, but for the salvation of those who are waiting for him Hebrews 9:27-28

OR

4 When Christ appears, who is your life, then you will also appear with him in glory Colossians 3:4

Think about the Future (5 minutes)

Think about the future return of Jesus. What are you most excited about when you think of Jesus returning to earth?

When I think about the return of Jesus, these are the things that give me great excitement and hope...

Read the Passage (3–5 minutes)

Christian community becomes strong as it expresses praise to God. Christians worship God because of what he has done in the past, what God is doing in the present, and what God will do in the future. Read the passage below to learn about the important practice of worship and praise.

4 For we do not have any permanent city here. Instead, we are looking for one that is to come. 15 Through him, then, let us always offer up sacrifices of praise to God, praise that is the fruit of lips that

acknowledge his name. 16 Let us not forget doing good and helping one another, for it is with such sacrifices that God is very pleased.
Hebrews 13:14-16

Discuss the Passage (10-15 minutes)

There are many reasons to praise God. Worshiping God is an important part of the health of a believing community. As a community, use the following questions to discuss the teaching of the biblical passage.

1. What does this passage teach us about praising God? How is praise viewed as a sacrifice to God and a service to others?
2. What motivates Christians to praise God? How does this passage help explain the motivation for praise?
3. What negative things might happen to your community if you do not practice worship and praise?
4. How can your community develop a healthy practice of praise to God and service to others?

Express Gratitude (5 minutes)

Think about the past months together as a community. Identify the reasons you have to praise God. Also, identify the moments you have served one another. Share these together as a community.

We can praise God for these reasons...

These are the moments we served one another...

Pray to God (5 minutes)

Spend time by yourself praying to God and praising him for the past months together. Then, gather as a whole group and offer the statements of praise in the above activity as you pray to God.

Sing a Song (3-5 minutes)

Sing a song of praise to God. Sing of his goodness, grace, and mercy over your ministry and community.

Movement 1: Understand the Story

Read each question aloud. Give the group time to answer before sharing the answer.

Observation Questions

50-01

During the last 2,000 years, what has happened to the number of people who believe in Jesus? More and more people have heard and believed the good news about Jesus.

What causes the church to grow? The church grows as more people believe in Jesus.

When did Jesus promise he would return? Jesus promised he would return at the end of the world.

Will Jesus keep his promise to return? Yes. Jesus will keep his promise to return even though he has not returned yet.

50-02

How does God want us to live while waiting for Jesus to return? He wants us to live in a holy way that honors him.

What did Jesus say would happen before the end of the world comes? His disciples would preach the good news of the kingdom of God to people everywhere in the world.

When will the end of the world come? The end of the world will come when God's people preach the good news about Jesus to people everywhere in the world.

50-03

How many people groups have not yet heard about Jesus? Many people groups have still not heard about Jesus.

What did Jesus tell his disciples to do before he returned to heaven? Before Jesus returned to heaven, he told his disciples to preach the good news to people who never heard it.

What assignment did Jesus give his disciples? Jesus told his disciples to go and make disciples of all people groups.

How ready are people to hear the good news about Jesus? Jesus told his disciples that the fields are ripe for harvest.

50-04

How will the world that hated Jesus treat his disciples? The world will cause his disciples to suffer just as they caused Jesus to suffer.

How did Jesus tell his disciples to endure suffering? Jesus told his disciples to expect to suffer and to be strong when they suffer.

Who did Jesus defeat? Jesus told his disciples that he defeated Satan, God's enemy who rules the world.

What is God's promise to those who remain faithful to the end? If Jesus' disciples remain faithful to the end, God promises to save them.

50-05

In Jesus' story about the end of the world, how did the weeds come to be among the wheat? An enemy planted weeds among the wheat seeds while the man was asleep.

50-06

How did the man explain to his servants that there were weeds in the field where good seed was planted? The man explained that his enemies did this.

50-07

Why didn't the servants pull out the weeds? Their master did not want them to pull out the wheat along with the weeds accidentally.

When did the man say they could pull the weeds? The man told them to wait until the harvest when they can pull out the wheat and the weeds.

How would they separate the weeds from the wheat? They would put the weeds in piles and burn them, and they would bring the wheat into the barn.

50-08

Did the disciples understand the story of the wheat and the weeds? No. The disciples did not understand this story.

Who does the man in the story represent? The man in the story represents the Messiah.

What does the field represent? The field represents the world.

What does the good seed represent? The good seed represents the people of God's kingdom.

50-09

Who do the weeds represent? The weeds represent people who belong to the devil.

Who does the man's enemy represent? The man's enemy represents the devil.

What does the harvest represent? The harvest represents the end of the world.

Who do the harvesters represent? The harvesters represent angels.

50-10

What will happen to the people who belong to the devil at the end of the world? The angels will gather them up and throw them into a very hot fire, where they will suffer terribly.

What will happen to the people who are righteous followers of Jesus at the end of the world? The righteous followers of Jesus will shine like the sun in the kingdom of God.

50-11

When will Jesus come back? Jesus will come back just before the world ends.

In what form will Jesus return to the earth? He will return the way he left, with a real body and on the clouds in the sky.

When Jesus returns, what will happen to every follower of Jesus who has died? They will also rise to meet him in the sky.

50-12

When Jesus returns, what will happen to the followers of Jesus who are still alive? The followers of Jesus who are alive will rise up into the sky and join with the other followers of Jesus who rose from the dead.

Where will God's people live forever? They will live with Jesus in complete peace forever.

50-13

What did Jesus promise those who believe in him? Jesus promised that he would give believers a crown, that believers would rule forever with God, and that they would have perfect peace.

50-14

What did God say would happen to those who do not believe in Jesus? God will judge all those who do not believe by throwing them into hell, where they will suffer forever with burning and destruction.

50-15

What will Jesus do to Satan when he returns? Jesus will completely destroy Satan by throwing him into hell, where he will burn forever.

Who else will be in hell? All people who chose to follow Satan rather than God will be in hell forever.

50-16

Why did God curse the world and decide to destroy it? God cursed the world and decided to destroy it because of the sin of Adam and Eve.

What new world will God create? Some day God will create a new heaven and a new earth that will be perfect.

50-17

Who will live on the new earth/creation? Jesus and his people will live on the new earth and reign over all things.

At this time, what will God do to sadness, suffering, and sin? When God creates the new world, God will remove all sadness, suffering, and sin.

What will life be like in the new heaven and new earth? Jesus will rule his kingdom justly and with peace and be with his people forever.

Movement 2: Theological Questions

What Does This Story Teach Us?

1. What is the mission of Jesus' disciples as they wait for his return to earth? How does this story explain the mission Jesus' disciples are called to do while they wait for Jesus to return?
2. What will take place at the final judgment at the end of the world? What does the story of the good and bad seed teach us about the future judgment?
3. What does the future (eternity) look like for people who believe in Jesus? What is the future (eternity) look like for people who do not believe in Jesus? What does this story tell us about what eternity will be like for believers (the righteous) and people who do not believe in Jesus (the unrighteous)?

Movement 3: Live It Out

Personal Implications & Applications From The Story

Guide the group to discuss practical obedience from this story and name concrete next steps.

1. How are you participating in Jesus' mission while you wait for his return?

2. Who has God put in your life with whom God wants you to share the gospel?
3. As you think of the many things God promises to give believes in the future, which of these things most motivate you and give you hope to serve Jesus and continue be faithful to follow him?
4. Think about this week. Where does "Jesus Returns" challenge you to obey God in a practical way?
5. How does this key idea shape one decision you need to make right now: The story of Jesus' return teaches us about the great things God will do when Jesus returns to the earth.

Movement 4: Retell the Story

Invite the group to retell the story several times until they can tell it clearly and faithfully.

1. Can someone retell "Jesus Returns" from beginning to end in their own words?
2. Retell this story again, but focus on what God did at each key moment.
3. Retell the story in three parts: beginning, middle, and ending. What changed in each part?
4. If you were teaching this story to your family tonight, how would you tell it simply and clearly?

Church Ministry

Ministry Preparation: Identify a ministry setting in your church or community where this story could help people understand the hope of Jesus' return and the call to faithful witness. Pray and prepare to retell the story clearly.

Ministry Implementation: Retell "Jesus Returns" in that setting. Invite listeners to name what the story teaches about Jesus' return, final judgment, and life with God forever.

Ministry Reflection: Afterward, discuss what listeners understood, what questions they asked, and how the story could be told more clearly next time.

Movement 5: Share It

Help each person plan how they will share this story with others before the next gathering.

1. Who is one specific person you will share "Jesus Returns" with this week?
2. When and where will you share this story with them?
3. What is the one main truth from this story you want them to remember?

Report-back next meeting: Who did you share with, and what happened?

Mission Engagement

Witness Preparation: Identify one person or household outside the church who needs to hear the good news of Jesus and the hope of his return. Pray for them and practice telling the story simply.

Witness Implementation: Share "Jesus Returns" with that person or household. Explain the one main truth from the story and invite them to respond to Jesus.

Witness Reflection: After sharing, record what happened, what questions were asked, and how you will continue praying or following up.