

## **Jesus is Coming Back**

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### **What We Believe:**

**We believe in the bodily, personal, second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, the resurrection of the Saints, and the final judgment of humanity.**

**We each have an expiration date – an appointed time when we will step outside of time.**

### **Psalm 90:10 NLT – A Psalm of Moses**

Seventy years are given to us! Some even live to eighty. But even the best years are filled with pain and trouble; soon they disappear, and we fly away.

### **1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 NLT**

And now, dear brothers and sisters, we want you to know what will happen to the believers who have died so you will not grieve like people who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and was raised to life again, we also believe that when Jesus returns, God will bring back with him the believers who have died.

We tell you this directly from the Lord: We who are still living when the Lord returns will not meet him ahead of those who have died. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a commanding shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God. First, the believers who have died will rise from their graves. Then, together with them, we who are still alive and remain on the earth will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Then we will be with the Lord forever. So encourage each other with these words.

### **Truths Concerning the Eternal Perspective**

- 1. Once a human life is conceived, that person never ceases to exist.**
- 2. We are each given a specific amount of time, though exactly how much time we have is hidden from us.**

### **Romans 2:4 NLT**

Don't you see how wonderfully kind, tolerant, and patient God is with you? Does this mean nothing to you? Can't you see that his kindness is intended to turn you from your sin?

### **Matthew 19:14–15 NLT**

But Jesus said, "Let the children come to me. Don't stop them! For the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to those who are like these children." And he placed his hands on their heads and blessed them before he left.

**3. At the end of our appointed time, we will find ourselves in heaven or hell, depending upon our relationship with Jesus Christ.**

### **Luke 23:40–43 NLT**

But the other criminal protested, "Don't you fear God even when you have been sentenced to die? We deserve to die for our crimes, but this man hasn't done anything wrong." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom." And Jesus replied, "I assure you, today you will be with me in paradise."

### **Luke 16:22–26 NLT**

Finally, the poor man died and was carried by the angels to sit beside Abraham at the heavenly banquet. The rich man also died and was buried, and he went to the place of the dead. There, in torment, he saw Abraham in the far distance with Lazarus at his side.

The rich man shouted, "Father Abraham, have some pity! Send Lazarus over here to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue. I am in anguish in these flames." But Abraham said to him, "Son, remember that during your lifetime you had everything you wanted, and Lazarus had nothing. So now he is here being comforted, and you are in anguish. And besides, there is a great chasm separating us. No one can cross over to you from here, and no one can cross over to us from there."

**Myths humanity has created to comfort themselves and avoid the truth of eternity:**

**Myth:** *There is no such thing as heaven and hell. We simply cease to exist.*

**Truth:** *Heaven and hell are real, eternal, and permanent.*

**Myth:** *Hell is not all that bad.*

**Truth:** *Hell is a place of eternal torment.*

**Myth:** *Good people get rewarded with heaven, and evil people cease to exist.*

**Truth:** *No one is “good” except Jesus. Faith in Him is the only way to heaven.*

**Myth:** *We simply “go to sleep” until Jesus comes back.*

**Truth:** *“Sleep” was used by the New Testament writers as a figure of speech alluding to death. Even in this eternal “sleep,” the person was aware of what was happening to them.*

**Myth:** *We go to Purgatory and pay for our sins and failures.*

**Truth:** *According to the Canonized Scripture, there is no “middle place” called Purgatory.*

### **John 3:16–19 NLT**

For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him.

There is no judgment against anyone who believes in him. But anyone who does not believe in him has already been judged for not believing in God’s one and only Son.

And the judgment is based on this fact: God’s light came into the world, but people loved the darkness more than the light, for their actions were evil.

### **Matthew 25:31–34 NLT**

But when the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit upon his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered in his presence, and he will separate the people as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will place the sheep at his right hand and the goats at his left.

Then the King will say to those on his right, “Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world. ...

### **Matthew 25:41 NLT**

Then the King will turn to those on the left and say, “Away with you, you cursed ones, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his demons.”

### **Hebrews 9:27–28 NLT**

And just as each person is destined to die once and after that comes judgment, so also Christ was offered once for all time as a sacrifice to take away the sins of many people. He will come again, not to deal with our sins, but to bring salvation to all who are eagerly waiting for him.

### **Why It Matters:**

**This life is temporary and will end. Jesus' return reminds us of the temporal nature of this life and the permanence of eternity.**

### **Hebrews 2:14–15 NLT**

Because God's children are human beings—made of flesh and blood—the Son also became flesh and blood. For only as a human being could he die, and only by dying could he break the power of the devil, who had the power of death. Only in this way could he set free all who have lived their lives as slaves to the fear of dying.

### **Philippians 1:20–24 NLT**

... I trust that my life will bring honor to Christ, whether I live or die. For to me, living means living for Christ, and dying is even better. But if I live, I can do more fruitful work for Christ. So I really don't know which is better. I'm torn between two desires: I long to go and be with Christ, which would be far better for me. But for your sakes, it is better that I continue to live.

### **John 14:1–7 NLT**

Don't let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me. There is more than enough room in my Father's home. If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am. And you know the way to where I am going."

"No, we don't know, Lord," Thomas said. "We have no idea where you are going, so how can we know the way?"

Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me. If you had really known me, you would know who my Father is. From now on, you do know him and have seen him!"

# Small Group Guide: Jesus is Coming Back

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## Opening Question

If you found out Jesus was returning tomorrow, what would you do today?

## We Are Eternal Beings Having a Temporary Existence

Time is one of the strangest features of human life. Einstein showed us it isn't the fixed, unchanging backdrop we assumed — it's woven into the fabric of space and matter itself. But for all its complexity, what Scripture draws our attention to is simpler and more personal: time is the medium in which we make the choices that matter forever. Most of Scripture focuses on the "now," because *now* is where we can love, where we can turn, where we can choose. Too much focus on the past and we get stuck in what was. Too much focus on the future and we lose to worry or anxiety the moment we actually inhabit. But Scripture does not leave us without an eternal horizon, because we need one.

The uncomfortable truth is that each of us has an expiration date. Moses articulated this in Psalm 90 thousands of years before modern medicine would confirm that the average human lifespan runs about seventy to eighty years, which is a clarifying observation. The enemy's strategy is to get us to live entirely inside a "temporal perspective," locked within time, focused on self-gratification and the moment, so that we never seriously reckon with eternity. The biblical alternative is an eternal perspective — one that doesn't make us fearful of death but frees us from being enslaved to it.

What that perspective rests on is the bodily, personal return of Jesus Christ. Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians 4 that the Lord himself will descend from heaven — with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, with the trumpet of God. The dead in Christ will rise first, and those still living will be caught up together with them. The return of Jesus is the event that closes the present age and opens what comes next. It is not something to fear but something to be "eagerly waiting for" (Hebrews 9:28).

Between now and then, several myths have grown up around death and eternity that soften its edges in ways Scripture does not support. Your accompanying notes walk through five of them carefully — annihilation, the mildness of hell, the idea that good people earn heaven, the notion of soul sleep, and purgatory. Each myth has its own appeal, usually because the truth it replaces is uncomfortable. But the truth it replaces is also the truth that gives life its weight and its hope: once a human life is conceived, it never ceases to exist; we are each given a specific and hidden amount of time; and at the end of that time, where we find ourselves depends on our relationship with Jesus.

The response Scripture calls for is not dread. Hebrews 2 says Jesus took on flesh and blood precisely so that by dying he could break the power of the one who held the power of death and set free those who had lived their whole lives as slaves to the fear of dying. Paul in Philippians 1 describes himself as genuinely torn: to depart and be with Christ would be far better, but to remain means more fruitful work. That is the posture of someone who has looked eternity in the face and is not afraid. And it is the posture the Second Coming is meant to produce in us: eternal perspective and a life lived with the right weight on the right things.

### **For Discussion**

1. Your notes describe the “temporal perspective” as something the enemy uses to keep us focused on self-gratification and away from eternity. Where do you see that most clearly in the culture around you — and honestly, in yourself?
2. The notes list five myths people believe about death and eternity. Which of those myths do you think is most widely held by people around you? Which has been most tempting for you personally to embrace?
3. John 3:17–19 says God sent Jesus not to judge the world but to save it, and that judgment falls on those who choose darkness over light. How does framing hell as a *choice* rather than a *sentence* change the way you think about it or talk about it with others?
4. Paul in Philippians 1 is genuinely torn between living and dying — not in a morbid way, but because being with Christ is “far better.” What would it look like in your daily life to hold eternity that lightly and that confidently at the same time?
5. Jesus tells Thomas, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” Is there someone in your life right now who is still in the window of time to make that choice? What’s one step you could take toward them this week?

### **For Reflection**

Hebrews 2 says Jesus came to free those who have lived as slaves to the fear of dying. Sit with this for a moment: Is the fear of death — or the avoidance of thinking about eternity — shaping any of your decisions right now? What might it look like to trade that fear for the confidence Paul describes? Share anything that surfaces with the group.

### **Prayer**

*Heavenly Father, You are the God who holds all of time in Your hands — our past, our present, and the eternity that waits beyond our last earthly breath. Thank You that You did not leave us in the dark about what comes next, but You revealed it through Your Word and through the death and resurrection of Your Son. Jesus, You are the way, the*

*truth, and the life — the only path to the Father's house that has been prepared for us. Free us from the fear of death that the enemy uses to keep us small and self-focused. Holy Spirit, give us an eternal perspective that shapes how we spend our days, how we love the people around us, and how urgently we share the hope we carry. May we live as people who know where we are going. In Jesus' name, amen.*