REGULAR LESSON · ABOUT 50 MINUTES

Is Jesus Really Coming Back?

BIG IDEA	Christians confess that Jesus will return bodily and visibly to judge and to make all things new. That hope changes how we live now.
MAIN READING	Mark 13:24–37, with 1 Corinthians 1:3–9
MEMORY VERSE	1 Corinthians 1:9, "God is faithful, through whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord."
YOU WILL NEED	Bibles or phones, whiteboard, sticky notes, copies of the Apostles' Creed
BACKGROUND TO READ	The Olivet Discourse; the rapture debate

1 Honest poll 7 min

Hand out sticky notes. Anonymous poll: "On a scale of 1 to 10, how much do you actually think about Jesus coming back?" Collect and read a few aloud.

Then ask: "Why do you think most Christians rarely think about it?" Let them talk. Likely answers: it sounds strange; it's been 2,000 years; failed predictions made it embarrassing; life feels busy enough; it's scary. Affirm honesty; teens can smell a fake answer.

2 Read and discuss 20 min

Mark 13:24–27 But in those days, after that oppression, the sun will be darkened, the moon will not give its light, the stars will be falling from the sky, and the powers that are in the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. Then he will send out his angels, and will gather together his chosen ones from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the sky.

1. **Jesus quotes the prophets' picture language (Isaiah 13:10; Daniel 7:13). Why use cosmic images instead of plain description?**

   TEACHER'S NOTE

   The prophets used these images for world-changing acts of God. In Daniel 7, "one like a son of man" comes on the clouds to God's throne and receives an everlasting kingdom. By using that title, Jesus is claiming to be that figure. It is one of the biggest claims he ever made; at his trial it is what gets him condemned (Mark 14:62–64).

2. **Is this a private, secret return?**

   TEACHER'S NOTE

   No: "they will see." Public, visible, final. Revelation 1:7 says "every eye will see him." This matters for the rapture debate in the deep-dive lesson.

Mark 13:30–33 Most certainly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things happen. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. But of that day or that hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Watch, keep alert, and pray; for you don't know when the time is.

1. **Skeptics say verse 30 proves Jesus was wrong. How have Christians answered?**

   TEACHER'S NOTE

   Three main answers: (1) "all these things" refers to the fall of the Temple in AD 70, which did happen within one generation; (2) "generation" can mean "this kind of people"; (3) near and far events are telescoped together, the way prophets often saw two mountain peaks as one. Ask which seems strongest and why. C. S. Lewis took this objection head-on in his essay "The World's Last Night" (see Good Books).

2. **Why does verse 32 matter for how we talk about the end?**

> **TEACHER'S NOTE**
> Anyone who claims to know the date contradicts Jesus directly. It also teaches humility: we don't need to map the future to be faithful in it.

1 Corinthians 1:7–9 so that you come behind in no gift; waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ; who will also confirm you until the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, through whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

1. **According to Paul, who keeps a Christian ready until the end?**

> **TEACHER'S NOTE**
> God does: "who will also confirm you," and "God is faithful." Our readiness rests on his faithfulness, not our willpower. This is very freeing for anxious teens.

2. **So what is our part?**

> **TEACHER'S NOTE**
> Mark 13:34: each servant has "his work." Faith always works; it isn't passive. Luther said faith is "a living, busy, active, mighty thing."

3 The creed in one line 8 min

Have them find the line in the Apostles' Creed about Christ's return. Ask what "quick" means (living). Point out that every Christian tradition confesses this line: Orthodox, Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed, Baptist, Pentecostal.

> "From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead." — The Apostles' Creed · Read the creeds

> “That in all my sorrows and persecutions, with uplifted head I look for the very same person, who before offered himself for my sake, to the tribunal of God, and has removed all curse from me, to come as judge from heaven.”
>
> Heidelberg Catechism, Q. 52 (1563) · Read it in the Reading Room

1. **Why does the catechism say “with uplifted head” instead of “with fear and trembling”?**

   TEACHER’S NOTE

   Because the judge is “the very same person” who already took our judgment on the cross. Luke 21:28 uses the same picture: “look up, and lift up your heads, because your redemption is near.” Christians face the end like someone whose debt is already paid.

4 What would change? 10 min

Small groups of three or four. Question: “If you were certain Jesus would return within your lifetime, what would you do differently this week? Is anything on that list something you should be doing anyway?”

Debrief: often the list is ordinary things (forgive someone, stop a habit, be honest, pray). That is exactly what Jesus means by “watch.”

Keep the balance. Christ’s coming is good news because he comes to save sinners, not to reward the good. But “watch” is a real command. Grace that makes no one watchful is not the grace of the New Testament. God forgives us in order to make us like his Son (1 John 3:2–3).

5 Pray 5 min

Pray the ancient Advent collect “Stir up thy power, O Lord, and come” (see Prayers for the week), then pray silently for one person who doesn’t yet know Christ.

“Stir up thy power, O Lord, and come.” Pray silently for one person who doesn’t yet know Jesus.

Scripture: World English Bible (public domain). Free to print and copy.