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# This I Believe

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A JOURNEY THROUGH THE APOSTLE'S CREED

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**Week 6:** Jesus will return to judge the living and the dead.

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# Day One

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This week's portion of the creed closes out the part dealing with the person and work of Jesus. Having described Jesus' past and present ministry, this phrase describes His future work. These words direct our attention to Jesus' return. Remember what was said to the disciples on the Mount of Olives? The ascension was not only proof of Jesus' authority, but also a promise of His return.

## **READ ACTS 1:6-11**

**Why would Jesus' return be promised at the moment of His ascension?**

**What do Jesus' past ascension to heaven and His future return from heaven have to do with our present life on earth?**

To understand the purpose of our lives and what it means to be witnesses (see Acts 1:8), it's important to consider the meaning and purpose of Jesus' coming.

## **READ HEBREWS 9:27-28**

**With regard to believers, what was the purpose of Jesus' first coming?**

**What will be the purpose of His second coming?**

Only a handful of disciples witnessed the Lord ascend into heaven. His birth was even less conspicuous. Even with a sky full of angels singing, Jesus' coming into the world was witnessed only by Mary, Joseph, and a few shepherds. However, His second coming will be unlike His first.

**What names and phrases are ascribed to Jesus?  
What do they emphasize?**

**Who will witness the second coming?  
How will those witnesses respond?**

**Rate how often you think about the fact that Jesus will return. Use  
a circle for your answer.**

**1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10**

**Never**

**Constantly**

*Using the same scale, how would you rank your belief that Jesus will  
physically return to earth? Use a square for your answer.*

**Consider your answers to the two previous questions and compare  
the rankings marked by the circle and the square. What do your  
two scores reveal about your belief that Jesus could return any  
day-even today?**

**Why does it matter whether we believe Jesus will return?**

## **Prayer**

Heavenly Father, teach me to hope in the return of Jesus. Show me how to walk in wisdom as someone who expects to stand before Him, not to be punished but to give an account for my joyful obedience. Thank You that His return means the end of sin and suffering. In Jesus' name, amen.

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# Day Two

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Although it hasn't happened yet, the second coming of Jesus is just as certain as the first coming. The question to ask yourself is not whether He will return, because He will. The question to ask yourself is not even a matter of when He will return, because we can't know.

The only question you need to ask yourself is whether you're ready to stand before Him when He returns to judge the living and the dead.

## **READ MATTHEW 24:36-44**

The Bible teaches us that we can't know when Jesus will return and that we shouldn't waste time wondering but should always be ready.

**Why did Jesus emphasize that nobody knows when He will return?**

**What would change if you knew Jesus would return this week?**

**I would ...**

**I would not ...**

**If you would change something because you knew the time of Jesus' return, what keeps you from making those changes in your life now?**

**Read the following parables and summarize key points in each.**

**Matthew 24:45-51:**

**Matthew 25:1-13:**

**Matthew 25:14-30:**

**Matthew 25:31-46:**

**Are the imagery and intensity of Jesus' stories surprising to you?  
What do they reveal about the nature of His return?**

**Based on the previous parables, what does it look like to  
eagerly anticipate Jesus' return? Explain.**

## **Prayer**

Thank God for His justice and mercy. Ask Him for a spirit of anticipation as you eagerly watch for His return and make the most of every opportunity to share the gospel and to treat each day as if it could be your last opportunity to show Christ's love to the world.

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# Day Three

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Most of the time we don't like to think about God's judgment. Unless we're seeking comfort in the fact that God will judge blatantly wicked people, we prefer to dwell on the God who "so loved the world, that he gave his only Son" (John 3:16). The grace of God through the sacrificial death of Jesus is indeed unique among major religions throughout history, but it's also because God is holy and good that He judges sin with incredible wrath.

The gospel is good news because without faith in Jesus, we would all rightfully receive the punishment we deserve for our sin. For those who belong to Christ, though, He has taken the punishment of death and God's wrath on Himself. But for those who haven't placed their faith in Jesus, refusing to bow their knee to Him as Lord, they'll receive the judgment they're due.

## **READ ROMANS 14:11-12**

### **How does giving an account for ourselves relate to praying and confessing Jesus as Lord?**

People today debate religious beliefs or ignore Jesus altogether. They may view Him in various ways, some even positive, but the truth will be made clear in the end. There will be a day when all the nations and all the angels will sit around His glorious throne, and no one will dispute that He is King.

As we all give an account for every single thing we've done, there's no amount of good that will outweigh the bad-not for any of us. Justice will be served, and all sin will be accounted for. Ultimately, Jesus is the only reason we don't stand condemned in the sight of God. It was Jesus who completely took on our sin and paid the price in full, nailing our certificate of debt to His cross (see Col. 2:13-14).

## READ REVELATION 20:11-15

**What does God promise to do in the end according to these verses?**

The incomparable beauty of the gospel is that the King, who's also the Judge, sitting in glory on His throne, associates Himself with the lowly and saves us.

### Prayer

#### **1. SYMMETRY**

Take a moment to let the weight of eternal judgment sink in. You'll stand before God's throne to give an account for everything. That's a reality. Thank God that He's a just Judge who's right to punish sin and that you've been declared innocent because you stand in Christ and not on your own merits.

#### **2. CLARITY**

Ask God to break your heart over sin and to give you a burden to see people saved rather than judged. Keep in mind that Christ takes no pleasure in the destruction of the wicked (see Ezek. 33:11). He gave His only Son to die for us while we were still His enemies so that we could be made righteous in His sight (see Rom. 5:8).

#### **3. COMMUNITY**

Pray for the gospel to spread to every tribe, tongue, and nation. Pray for brothers and sisters in Christ throughout the world who are being persecuted.

#### **4. COUNSEL**

Pray for faithful endurance in the midst of all circumstances. Ask God to help you and your brothers and sisters in Christ keep your hope fixed on Jesus, knowing that in the end every knee will bow and every tongue confess that He is Lord (see Phil. 2:10-11).

