

## CAN I ASK THAT? | FOR THE WEEK OF MAY 5 | EASTER 6

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE: "IS JESUS COMING BACK?"

*Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near. (Revelation 1:3)*

### OPENING PRAYER

Father Almighty, over and over again, you remind us to trust you and the plan you established before time began. Through your Word you train us in "watchful waiting, not anxious worrying...Jesus opens our eyes to this world of grace and commands us to pay attention...We open our lives in praise for the Christ who is with us, anticipating the time when we'll see him coming in the clouds in all his power and glory" (Eugene Peterson). It is in your Son's name we pray. Amen.

### CONNECTING QUESTION

What would you seek to accomplish today if you knew that Jesus was returning tomorrow?

(Martin Luther's answer to this question was – "Plant an apple tree.")

### SCRIPTURE READING

Read Aloud & Meditate on God's Word: James 5:7-11; Mark 13:24-27, 32-37

### WATCH VIDEO

Video Presenter: Pastor Peter Woodward

### EXPLORE THE TEXT

*Invite the Holy Spirit to lead as you work through the questions in this guide. Cover what your time allows and encourage everyone to finish the guide on his or her own.*

1. What words would you use to describe your thoughts and emotions on Jesus' return (e.g., on guard, patient, simply waiting, never pondered, other)?
2. "The return of Jesus shapes the Christian life. Confidence in his return gives us a perspective on how we relate to one another and our sufferings. God promises to remain with us and restore us to himself." (Lutheran Study Bible, footnote on James' passage.) What do you discover in James 5:7-11 that provides reassurance and encouragement, as well as challenge?
3. Peter's words (2 Peter 3:8-15) describe what will happen when Jesus returns. List the details in two columns: one for the positives and one for the negatives.

4. Jesus both taught and comforted the disciples in John 14:1-4. What do you learn about the promise he makes to each believer while also confirming he indeed is coming back? Do you believe that Jesus is coming back? Discuss.
  
5. Mark 13:32 says “only the Father” knows the exact time of Jesus’ second coming. Why do you think the Father kept it secret? As the Son of Man, why do you think Jesus did not know the hour of his return? Since you will not know either, what is your responsibility as you wait? (See Mark 13:35-37; 2 Peter 3:17-18.)
  
6. The Book of Revelation reveals the full identity of Christ, and it gives both hope and warning to all who read its words (NLT Study Bible). In the final chapter (22:12-16), John quotes Jesus’ words that he is “coming soon.” What will Jesus give to each person upon his return?

### **ANSWER THE QUESTION**

Luke (in 2:22-35) recorded the encounter between Mary, Joseph and Simeon, a man who was divinely led to them in answer to his life-long prayer. He gazed upon and held the eight-day old baby he knew was the Savior of the world. Luke said Simeon was a righteous and devout man, whom the Holy Spirit had promised that “he would not die before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah” (v. 26). Simeon witnessed the first coming of Christ. Interestingly, there is no further record of him in the Scriptures; however, there is much to learn from Simeon’s faithfulness that can prepare all believers for Jesus’ return. Through the power of the Spirit, open your heart and mind to specific ways Simeon’s example could help you better prepare for Jesus’ second coming. Please record your specific plans or goals, and discuss with others and exchange ideas that will grow your faith.

### **SCRIPTURES FOR FURTHER STUDY**

Isaiah 13:9-11; Daniel 7:13-14; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

### **CLOSING PRAYER**

Most gracious Shepherd, you are the Alpha and Omega. We believe that you are coming again, but we do not know when “for you, a thousand years are as a passing day, as brief as a few night hours. Teach us to realize the brevity of life, so that we may grow in wisdom. O Lord, come back to us! How long will you delay? Take pity on your servants! Satisfy us each morning with your unfailing love, so we may sing for joy to the end of our lives” (Psalm 90:4, 12-14 NLT). Please bring all who do not know of your grace, compassion, and mercy into your flock so they too may experience the gift of salvation. You are Emmanuel, God with us. Jesus, we humbly pray, always in your name. Amen.

*Our Father ...*

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