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Welcome Back, Jesus!

Grace in Action

We share the good news of Jesus' return.

POWER TEXT

" 'Men of Galilee,' they said, 'why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven' " (Acts 1:11).

KEY REFERENCES

- Isaiah 25:9
- Matthew 24; 25:31; 26:64
- Luke 21:25-31
- John 5:28, 29; 14:2, 3
- Acts 1:7-11
- 1 Corinthians 15:51, 52
- 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17
- 2 Timothy 3:1-5
- Titus 2:11-13
- Hebrews 10:36, 37
- 2 Peter 3:11, 12
- Revelation 1:7; 14:12-16; 22:7
- *The Great Controversy*, chap. 40, pp. 635-652
- *The Bible Story* (1994), vol. 10, pp. 145-148
- Student story on page 142 of this guide

OUR BELIEFS

- No. 25, The Second Coming of Christ
- No. 26, Death and Resurrection
- No. 28, The New Earth

OBJECTIVES

The students will:

- **Know** that Jesus is coming to earth again.
- **Feel** happy anticipation that Jesus will return soon.
- **Respond** by sharing with others that Jesus is coming back.



God's Spirit empowers us to tell others about the blessed hope of Jesus' soon return.

The Bible Lesson at a Glance

Jesus promised that He would return to earth one day—our "blessed hope." While we are patiently waiting for this event we are working to tell the world about Jesus. Before He comes the earth will be thrown into turmoil, and God's people will live through persecution. Jesus' second coming will not be a quiet event for only some. He will be seen and heard by everyone.

This is a lesson about grace in action.

The faithful will be overjoyed to see Jesus appear and will welcome Him with praise and adoration. God's chosen will be thrilled to live with God and see their loved ones return to vigorous healthy life and their own bodies made whole. This wonderful event will evoke their deepest thanksgiving and highest worship for God's matchless grace.

Teacher Enrichment

"Jesus is coming . . . in the glory of the Father and with all the retinue of holy angels to escort Him on His way to earth. All heaven will be emptied of the angels, while the waiting saints will be looking for Him and gazing into heaven, as were the men of Galilee when He ascended from the Mount of Olivet. Then only those who are holy, those who have followed fully the meek Pattern, will with rapturous joy exclaim as they behold Him, 'Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us'" (*Early Writings*, p. 110).

"The coming of the Lord has been in all ages the hope of His true followers. The Saviour's parting promise upon Olivet, that He would come again, lighted up the future for His disciples, filling their hearts with joy and hope that sorrow could not quench nor trials dim. Amid suffering and persecution, the 'appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ' was the 'blessed hope'" (*The Great Controversy*, p. 302).

Do I expect that Jesus will come in my lifetime? What am I doing to help spread the good news of His soon return? Am I truly living life as if He were coming soon?

Welcome

Welcome students at the door and direct them to their seats. Ask them how their week has been. Encourage learners to study their Sabbath School lesson regularly, and use several minutes to debrief students on the previous week's lesson. Ask: **What was the most interesting part of the Bible story? What activity did you find the most helpful? Which activity was the most fun?** Invite students to share their experiences and/or the handiworks they created for Sabbath School during the week. (The leader should be familiar with the previous lesson to be able to direct the discussion.) This is also a good time to have students recite the power text.

Have students begin the Readiness Activity of your choice.

Program notes

LESSON SECTION	MINUTES	ACTIVITIES	MATERIALS NEEDED
Welcome	Ongoing	Greet students at the door. Ask about their week.	
1 Readiness	10-15	A. Signs of the Times	newspapers and news magazines, *Signs of the Times* magazine (optional), chalkboard/whiteboard, chalk/marker
		B. Prediction and Prophecy	small balls or other objects
		C. Welcome in Any Language	handouts (p. 154), pencils or pens
* Prayer & Praise	15-20	See page 137. Prayer & Praise may be used at any time during the program.	songbooks, world map, pushpins, offering container
2 Bible Lesson	15-20	Introducing the Bible Story	
		Experiencing the Story	Bibles; letter-size or larger sheets of paper; colored pencils, pens, markers, or crayons
		Exploring the Bible	Bibles, large picture of Jesus, paper, pencils or pens
3 Applying the Lesson	10-15	*Get Ready, Get Set, Wait!*	small surprises
4 Sharing the Lesson	10-15	*"Welcome Back, Jesus" Party**	banner paper, colored markers or crayons, tape, party decorations, recorded music, paperware, healthy snacks
* Closing		A. Prayer and closing comments	
		B. Reminder to parents	
		C. Coming up next week	

*Be aware of any food allergies and adjust accordingly.

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READINESS ACTIVITIES

Select the activity or activities that are most appropriate for your situation.

A

YOU NEED:

- ☐ newspapers and news magazines
- ☐ *Signs of the Times* magazine (optional)
- ☐ chalkboard/whiteboard
- ☐ chalk/marker

Signs of the Times

Say: **Today we're going to be talking about Jesus' second coming to earth. Jesus gave us clues to look for that point to His soon return to the earth. We're going to read Jesus' words.** Ask: **Can someone read Matthew 24:3-8, another person read Luke 21:25-28, and someone else read 2 Timothy 3:1-5?** As the verses are read, list the signs on a chalkboard or whiteboard for all to see. **Are things like this happening now? Are people acting like this now?** Distribute several newspapers or news magazines to the students. **I'd like everyone to take a newspaper or magazine and find headlines or articles that describe signs that are pointing to Jesus' soon return.**

Debriefing

Ask: **Was it easy or difficult to find things that could be "signs of the times" we are living in? Do you know that our Seventh-day Adventist Church has a magazine called *Signs of the Times*?** Hold up the magazine and pass around for the students. **Conditions in the world will continue to get worse; but that just means that Jesus' return is even closer. Daniel 12:1 says: "At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people—everyone whose name is found written in the book—will be delivered." Imagine how awesome it will be to praise and worship Jesus when He returns. Let's say together the power text, Acts 1:11:**

" 'Men of Galilee,' they said, 'why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven' " (Acts 1:11).

In the meantime, the power point reminds us that

God's Spirit empowers us to tell others about the blessed hope of Jesus' soon return.

B

YOU NEED:

- ☐ small balls or other objects

Prediction and Prophecy

Give each student a small ball or other object and ask them to hold it out in front of them. Ask: **Can you predict what will happen if you let go of your ball?** (Allow answers.) **Let's see. Drop your ball. Of course, you knew it would fall to the floor because of gravity. Does that work like that every time? Let's try it again.**

Debriefing

Ask: **Why did it fall every time?** Say: **When scientists want to learn something new, they test their ideas using the "scientific method." First they predict the outcome of their experiment, then they go about doing it, and then they see if their prediction, or theory, is true. Sometimes we can predict something that we definitely know will happen, such as the ball falling because of gravity. Do you know what a prophecy is? How is a prediction and a prophecy both alike and different?** (They both tell about something that will happen in the future. A prediction is a guess made by humans that doesn't always come true. A prophecy is a prediction made by God that comes true with certainty.)

The Bible has prophecies in it. There are many that foretold about the Messiah coming, and they all came true in Jesus. Because we trust Jesus, we know that prophecies will come true just as the Bible says they will. There is a prophecy found in Daniel that tells us what is going on in heaven right now, and our lesson today is about that. Jesus is defending us against Satan's accusations that we don't deserve to go to heaven.

Let's say together the power text, Acts 1:11,

" 'Men of Galilee,' they said, 'why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven' " (Acts 1:11).

Our power point today is:

God's Spirit empowers us to tell others about the blessed hope of Jesus' soon return.

Prayer & Praise

C

YOU NEED:
- ☐ handouts (p. 154)
- ☐ pencils or pens

Welcome in Any Language

Distribute a handout along with a pen or pencil to each student. Ask: **Do any of you know another language?** Ask what that might be. **On the paper you have is a list of different languages along with the word for "welcome" in that language. You need to draw a line matching the two. We'll see how many you got right—take a few minutes to do this working alone.**

Debriefing

Ask: **How do you think you did? Let's check your answers.** Read off the correct answers while the students check theirs. The answers are on page 155. Ask: **How did you do? Did you like that? Was it easy or difficult? Have you ever welcomed someone back home? Today we're going to be talking about Jesus' coming back to earth. People from all lands and languages will join together in welcoming and worshipping Jesus. It will be a very happy day when we see Him. Let's say together the power text, Acts 1:11:**

" 'Men of Galilee,' they said, 'why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven' " (Acts 1:11).

Remember our power point:

God's Spirit empowers us to tell others about the blessed hope of Jesus' soon return.

Fellowship

Report the students' joys and sorrows (pleased and troubled) as reported to you at the door (as appropriate). If they have given you permission, share one or two special items from students' Bible study during the week. Acknowledge any birthdays, special events, or achievements. Give a special, warm greeting to all visitors.

Suggested Songs

"Do, Lord" (*He Is Our Song*, no. 107)
"Soon and Very Soon" (*He Is Our Song*, no. 121)
"We Shall Behold Him" (*He Is Our Song*, no. 122)
"Side by Side" (*He Is Our Song*, no. 123)
"Therefore the Redeemed" (*He Is Our Song*, no. 124)
"I Want to Be Ready" (*He Is Our Song*, no. 151)

Mission

YOU NEED:
- ☐ world map
- ☐ pushpins

Use Adventist *Mission* for youth and adults (go to www.juniorpowerpoints.org and click on MISSION), or another mission report available to you. Using a world map, have the students identify and mark with pushpins the location where the mission story is taking place.

Offering

YOU NEED:
- ☐ offering container

Say: **We need to let people around the world know that Jesus is coming very soon. When Jesus was on the earth the first time, He called us to the special work of telling others about Him. By giving our offering, we support the work of reaching others who still need to learn of Jesus' coming.**

Prayer

Say: **Let's have a "popcorn prayer." I'll start off, and then you can add a country of the world where Jesus will be seen when He comes. Dear Jesus, Thank You for promising to come again to earth to take us home to heaven. We want everyone in (country) to know You are coming soon. And we want everyone in** _____ (pause and let children name countries randomly aloud) **to know. We're patiently waiting for You to come soon, Jesus, so we can all praise You and welcome You back!** Close by praying for the students' joys and sorrows, for the birthday and other special event celebrants, as well as for the visitors.

2

BIBLE LESSON

Introducing the Bible Story

Ask: **Have you ever waited for someone to come back to your house?** Give time for students to answer questions. **Maybe you've had an older sister go away to college, or your dad leave on a business trip, or a grandparent go to the hospital for an operation.** Allow time for answers. **Were you anxiously waiting their arrival back home? What things did you do to prepare? Did you keep looking out the window for them? When you saw them coming to your door, did you run and shout, "They're coming!"? How did you feel when you first saw them? Did you do anything special to let them know how happy you were to see them? Today we're talking about Jesus' second coming to earth. When was Jesus' first coming to earth?** (2,000 years ago when He was born in Bethlehem as a baby) **After Jesus lived on earth, was crucified, and was resurrected, He went back to heaven. We are now eagerly anticipating Jesus' return to earth. Our power text, Acts 1:11, tells us: "This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven." Repeat that after me so that you can start to learn the text. We will one day see Jesus return in the sky. As the power point tells us, until then,**

God's Spirit empowers us to tell others about the blessed hope of Jesus' soon return.

YOU NEED:

- ☐ Bibles
- ☐ letter-size or larger sheets of paper
- ☐ colored pencils, pens, markers, or crayons

Experiencing the Story

Say: **Jesus made a promise to us that He would return to earth one day soon. Let's read that promise in Matthew 26:64 and John 14:2, 3. Does Jesus keep His promises? Absolutely!** Hand out paper and colored pencils, pens, markers, or crayons. Say: **The Bible tells us what it's going to be like on earth before Jesus comes, and what His actual second coming will look like. I've given you paper so that you can draw a picture of what will happen when Jesus comes. We're going to look up a lot of Bible texts today, and after each section I'll give you a few minutes to draw on your paper. You will keep adding things to it as we go along.** You may want to assign groups or individuals to each section.

1. We'll start with what will be happening on the earth before He comes. Let's read Matthew 24:4-14 and Luke 21:25, 26. Now take a few minutes and draw that.

2. Next let's read about how Jesus will come in Revelation 16:17, 18; 1:7; Matthew 24:27, 30, 31; 25:31; and 16:27; and Psalm 50:3. Give students time to add more aspects to their picture.

3. Now let's read the description about Jesus based on Revelation 14:14-16 and 19:11-16. Give students a few minutes to draw.

4. There are only two groups of people who will meet Jesus, and they will react very differently to His coming. Let's look up Luke 21:27, 28 and Isaiah 25:9 to see what one group of people will do and say. Now let's look up Revelation 6:15-17 to see what the other group of people will do. Continue with your drawing and coloring.

5. There will also be two groups of people that Jesus will bring back to life. Let's look at John 5:28, 29 to find out who they are. Now let's read Revelation 1:7 to see who the other group is. Those who crucified Jesus will see Him coming in His glory and will bow and worship Him too. Give students time to draw.

6. Something will also happen to the living people who love Jesus. Let's look at 1 Corinthians 15:51, 52 to find out. Won't it be wonderful to see your grandmas and grandpas like you never knew them—youthful, strong, and healthy? Allow students time to add more to their drawing.

7. Now we're ready to get going to heaven! Let's check out 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17 to see who will be resurrected first (the dead who loved Jesus). Let students continue with their picture. **The righteous people will be taken to heaven. The evil people who crucified Jesus who are raised when He comes will realize how wrong they were, and they will die a second time.**

Debriefing

Ask: **Do you like what you see in your picture? How does it make you feel? (**happy, scared, excited, anxious, confused) **Why does it make you feel that way? Why do you think God wants us to know what will happen before and during Jesus' coming?** (to inform us, to warn us, to

give us hope) **Jesus' coming will not be secret, for only a few people to see. Everyone will see and hear His coming, and He is coming soon! Jesus doesn't want you to be afraid about the bad things that will happen before He comes. He will always be with you. What do you think it will feel like being lifted up in the air to Jesus? That will be a wonderful day! Remember our power point says:**

God's Spirit empowers us to tell others about the blessed hope of Jesus' soon return.

YOU NEED:

- ☐ Bibles
- ☐ large picture of Jesus
- ☐ paper
- ☐ pencils or pens

Exploring the Bible

Ask: **Do we know when Jesus will come? Does Jesus even know? Who does? Let's look up two verses: Matthew 24:36 and Acts 1:7. So who does know?** (God the Father)

Have you ever heard someone say (or thought to yourself), "I want Jesus to come, but not quite yet." Maybe you think you want to grow up first. We need to remember that this life is only temporary, and we shouldn't let things of this earth distract us from our goal to prepare for heaven. We must keep our eyes on Jesus. Now bring out a large picture of Jesus and tape it to the wall or prop it up on a table so all the students can see. **Now I want you to literally keep your eyes on this picture of Jesus.** Now do something distracting off to the side, such as talking loudly, playing background music, moving/arranging things around the room, etc.

Debriefing

Ask: **Was it easy or difficult to keep your eyes on the picture of Jesus? I wasn't doing anything you haven't seen before, but I was distracting, right? Satan loves to distract us. What kinds of things distract you from Jesus? Titus 2:11-13 says: "For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ." What if we knew Jesus was coming in two months? How would you live your life differently? Let's take a minute to write down one thing that you would be doing, and one thing that you wouldn't be doing.** Afterward, ask for volunteers to share something they wrote, but don't press for answers. **How is the power text encouraging as we are waiting for Jesus' soon return? We'll repeat it together:**

" 'Men of Galilee,' they said, 'why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven' " (Acts 1:11).

Let's not get distracted while:

God's Spirit empowers us to tell others about the blessed hope of Jesus' soon return.

3

APPLYING THE LESSON

YOU NEED:
- ☐ small surprises

Get Ready, Get Set, Wait!

Tell the students you have a surprise for them that you have to get and that you'll be back very soon, and then leave the room. Have an adult remain with the students while you leave the room. Wait one minute and then stick your head in and tell them again you'll be right back. Wait two minutes. Again remind them that their surprise is coming soon. Wait another minute. Now return to the room with a small surprise (pretty pencils or erasers, bookmarks, fruit, etc.). Note: If using fruit, be aware of any food allergies and adjust accordingly.

Debriefing

Ask: **Did you think I took a long time? While you were waiting, were you patient or impatient? The Bible tells us in Revelation 14:12 that while we're waiting for Jesus to come again, we should be patient: "This calls for patient endurance on the part of the people of God who keep his commands and remain faithful to Jesus."** Ask: **Did you think I came back with your surprise "soon"? What amount of time do you think of when I say "soon"?** (Allow answers.) **Jesus said He is coming soon, but it's been more than 2,000 years! Does that seem like a long time? Why hasn't Jesus come back by now?** (Allow thoughts and answers.) **Ellen White says: "In mercy to the world, Jesus delays His coming, that sinners may have an opportunity to hear the warning and find in Him a shelter before the wrath of God shall be poured out"** (*The Great Controversy*, p. 458). The Bible tells us in **2 Peter 3:15 that "our Lord's patience means salvation." Wow! God's love for all people of the world is keeping Jesus from returning yet.**

Ask: **So can we do anything to help Jesus come sooner? Second Peter 3:11, 12 says: "You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming." We can also obey Jesus' command that He gave to His disciples when He left this earth: to tell the whole world about Him. Jesus has given us a very important job. Hebrews 10:36, 37 says: "You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. For, 'In just a little while, he who is coming will come and will not delay.'"**

Does anyone know what the "Adventist" in our name means? (Allow guesses. It means that we're expecting Jesus to come again.) **Did you hear the Titus verse a few minutes ago that talked about the "blessed hope"? Have you ever heard of that?** (Give time for answers.) **What does it mean?** (It's the promise of Jesus' second coming and the hope of seeing our dead loved ones again.) **How does having that hope make you feel? How would you feel if you didn't know about it at all? How can you share the blessed hope with people who don't have that hope?** (Allow for answers; suggest sharing the picture they drew during Experiencing the Story with someone who doesn't know about Jesus.) **Jesus' coming won't be secret or quiet. While we're waiting for Him, let's not be secret or quiet about our love for Jesus. Let's tell others about the blessed hope Jesus promised us.**

God's Spirit empowers us to tell others about the blessed hope of Jesus' soon return.

4

SHARING THE LESSON

YOU NEED:

- ☐ banner paper
- ☐ colored markers or crayons
- ☐ tape
- ☐ party decorations
- ☐ recorded music
- ☐ paperware
- ☐ healthy snacks

"Welcome Back, Jesus" Party*

Have students tell about recent situations when they shared with someone the good news that Jesus is coming soon to take us home. Ask: **What makes you excited about the second coming of Jesus? With whom did you share about Jesus' coming? How did people respond?**

Beforehand, make a banner out of one long piece of paper, or many pieces taped together, with the words "Welcome Back, Jesus" written in large letters. Tape the banner to a wall in the Sabbath School room.

Debriefing

Ask: **Have you ever had or been to a welcome-back party? Have you ever been in an airport and seen people with "Welcome Home" banners for someone? Maybe it was a military person who had been serving their country, or it was a missionary who had been in a foreign land telling others about Jesus. The people waiting for them are so happy, anticipating their joy when they see their loved one's face. We too will feel like having a welcome-back party for Jesus when He comes!**

Say: **After Jesus was crucified and resurrected and was taken up into a cloud to heaven, two angels appeared to His disciples and said, "'Men of Galilee,' . . . 'why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven'" (Acts 1:11). When Jesus comes in the same way He left, we will be waiting for Him with open arms and smiles on our faces.** Have the students write something such as "I'm waiting for you!" or "Come back soon!" or "We miss you!" and/or sign their name on the banner. After Sabbath School you can hang it in the hallway or foyer for others to see too. **While we are waiting for Jesus we should be busy sharing His love with others so they too can be part of the welcome-back party for Jesus. Let's say our power point together:**

God's Spirit empowers us to tell others about the blessed hope of Jesus' soon return.

*Be aware of any food allergies and adjust accordingly.

Closing

Prayer and closing comments:

Say: **Let's remember to keep our eyes on Jesus and heaven. Let's close by singing "Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus"** (*He Is Our Song*, no. 45).

Reminder to parents:

Say: **Check out the student Bible study guide to find Parents' Pages for your use in family worship, or however you wish to use them to spiritually guide your children. You may listen to the podcast of the lesson online at www.juniorpowerpoints.org/podcast.php?channel=1.**

Coming up next week:

Say: **War breaks out in heaven. We live in harmony with God's will when we observe His law.**

Student lesson

Welcome Back, Jesus!

Have you ever had a family member die? How did it make you feel? Wesley experiences a family death for the first time. Although sad, it turns out to be a good opportunity to share the hope that Jesus brings.

Wesley's eyes were big, and he looked a little frightened when Mom returned home. "What happened, Mom? How did Grandpa die? What did he look like? What's going to happen now?" Mom smiled at all the questions her anxious 10-year-old son spewed out. She bent down and gave Wesley a big hug. Her eyes were red and puffy from crying.

"Well, Grandpa's heart just stopped beating. He had another heart attack, but this time it was a big one. He died very quickly. When I saw him, he just looked as if he were sleeping—actually, very peaceful."

"What will Grandma do now?" Wesley asked.

"She will live by herself now. She's very sad, and I know she will miss him a lot. They'd been married more than 50 years," Mom replied.

"That's a long time!" said Wesley in amazement.

"I'm so glad Jesus will come back soon and make Grandpa young and healthy again. He had so many health problems these past few years, and he had a lot of pain. I can't wait for Jesus to come," said Mom.

"Me too!" said Wesley. "When we meet in heaven, I want Grandpa to give me a piggyback ride the way he used to!"

"I'm sure he'll want to give you a piggyback ride too!" Mom said with a smile. Wesley giggled at the thought of that. "It's just such a shock to think that he's gone," Mom said with a sigh.

The next week brought many family members into town for Grandpa's memorial service at Wesley's church. Some stayed at Wesley's house, including his aunt Jane and his uncle Steve, who was not a Christian. The memorial service was attended by many church members, family, and friends. Beautiful flowers decorated the front of the church. Peaceful music played while people filed into the church.

Uncle John spoke about Grandpa's life—where he was born and lived, how he had been a math teacher, about his love of horses and apple pies, about meeting his future wife in college, and about his many children and grandchildren. Pastor Williams talked about "the blessed hope" of Jesus' promise of returning to earth, and about seeing Grandpa again when Jesus raises him from the grave. The congregation sang "We Have This Hope," which Wesley thought was beautiful in its words and music. *There was a lot of talk about hope*, he thought afterward. Wesley wondered what Uncle Steve thought of Grandpa's death. He wondered if Uncle Steve believed in any of what Pastor Williams said at the memorial service. He wondered if his uncle had any hope in his heart.

Later that afternoon Wesley and his family all had a meal together that had been prepared by families from the church. Everyone enjoyed the delicious variety of food and the fact that they didn't have to cook, but could just spend time together reminiscing about Grandpa and family events. Some laughed as they remembered a family camping trip when their tent had collapsed in the middle of the night. Others talked about how they should now help Grandma with things that Grandpa used to take care of around the house. Uncle Steve asked if anyone had heard on the news about the big earthquake that day that had killed thousands of people. Grandma shook her head and said, "No, but it's just another sign that Jesus is coming soon, and praise the Lord, He is! I'll be able to see Grandpa again." All nodded their heads in agreement. Someone hugged Grandma as her eyes teared up.

Wesley looked at Uncle Steve to see his reaction. He was surprised to see him nodding his head also. Wesley nudged his mom. "I thought Uncle Steve didn't believe in Jesus," he whispered to her. She winked back at him and smiled.

The next day after everyone had gone back home, Wesley asked if they could plan a "Welcome Back, Jesus" party for Friday evening supper. Mom looked surprised and asked, "What's that?" Wesley explained that several months ago he remembered his Sabbath School teacher talking about Jesus' second coming and how we'll celebrate and welcome Him back to earth when He comes. "Sure, we can do that," Mom said.

Friday evening Mom spread a colorful tablecloth over the kitchen table, lit a few candles, and placed some festive napkins beside their dinner plates. Wesley blew up a few balloons and taped them to the walls with some streamers. He made a sign that said, "Welcome Back, Jesus!" and he placed it in the center of the table propped up against the salad bowl.

"Yea, pizza!" Wesley exclaimed as Mom carried the food to the table from the oven.

"I thought you'd like that for our party!" she said.

KEY REFERENCES

Isaiah 25:9; Matthew 24; 25:31; 26:64; Luke 21:25-31; John 5:28, 29; 14:2, 3; Acts 1:7-11; 1 Corinthians 15:51, 52; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17; 2 Timothy 3:1-5; Titus 2:11-13; Hebrews 10:36, 37; 2 Peter 3:11, 12; Revelation 1:7; 14:12-16; 19:11-16; 22:7
The Great Controversy, chap. 40, pp. 635-652
The Bible Story (1994), vol. 10, pp. 145-148
Our Beliefs nos. 25, 26, 28

POWER TEXT

"'Men of Galilee,' they said, 'why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven'" (Acts 1:11).

POWER POINT

God's Spirit empowers us to tell others about the blessed hope of Jesus' soon return.

"Before we eat I thought we'd read something from the Bible." She opened her Bible to 1 Thessalonians 4 and asked Wesley to read verses 13-18. He read: "'Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord's word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage one another with these words.'" Wesley closed the Bible and smiled. "I love hearing about Jesus' coming. I can't wait. It gives me hope." Mom smiled, and nodded in agreement. "Oh, I almost forgot. What did you think about Uncle Steve when Grandma brought up Jesus' coming?" Wesley asked.

Mom replied, "I think seeds of hope were planted in his heart. I talked to Aunt Jane later about that. You know she's been praying for him for years. We all have. She said he has been asking questions lately, and he is beginning to be interested in Jesus. We'll just keep praying for him," she said.

Wesley smiled. "I will keep praying for him because I want him to be happy to see Jesus come. I want him to be a part of our whole family in heaven."

Sabbath

DO Do the activity on page 102.

Sunday

READ Read Matthew 24:36-44 and this week's story, "Welcome Back, Jesus!"

REVIEW Review the power text.

THINK Why are you looking forward to the resurrection at Jesus' second coming?

PRAY Ask God to help you prepare for Jesus' coming.

Monday

READ Read Matthew 24:45-51.

NOTICE Notice clouds this week, and think about Jesus coming in them with His angels.

PLAN Plan a "Welcome Back, Jesus" party for your Friday night supper.

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Pray for someone who doesn't know Jesus.

Tuesday

READ Look up Luke 21:25-31 and 2 Timothy 3:1-5.

THINK What signs do you recognize that predict Jesus' soon return as you hear world news this week?

ASK Ask people what they believe about Jesus' coming.

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Ask for wisdom to tell others about Jesus' return.

Wednesday

READ Look up Acts 1:8.

THINK Where is God sending you to witness for Him?

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Ask for the Holy Spirit's power in your life.

Thursday

READ Read John 5:28, 29.

IMAGINE Imagine people coming back to life again. Whom do you most want to see alive again?

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Thank Jesus for the blessed hope of His return.

Friday

READ Read Isaiah 25:9.

ACT Act out the coming of Jesus with your family.

THINK Ask each family member to tell the reason they look forward to seeing Jesus. What will each of them ask Him or tell Him?

SING Sing "Lift Up the Trumpet" or another song about Jesus' coming.

REPEAT Repeat the power text aloud by memory.

PRAY Stand in a circle holding hands and pray sentence prayers. Tell Jesus how much you wait for His return. Ask Him to enable you to be one of His faithful messengers until He comes. Ask that through you others might hear about Him and accept Him as their personal Savior and Friend.