

Sermon Notes 11/14/21

**“Ready or Not, Here He Comes”**

**What should we know about the return of Christ?**

1. The return of Christ gives us \_\_\_\_\_.

1 Thessalonians 4:13

1 John 3:2-3

2. Christians will be \_\_\_\_\_ with Jesus.

1 Thessalonians 4:14

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

3. We must be \_\_\_\_\_ for the return of Christ.

1 Thessalonians 5:1-2

1 Thessalonians 5:4-6

4. This is a message of \_\_\_\_\_.

1 Thessalonians 4:18

1 Thessalonians 5:11

**Pa, when is Jesus coming back?**



**I don't rightly know. You see, we're not on the planning committee. We're on the welcoming committee.**

# Life Group Discussion Questions

**Week 6: November 14-21**

**1 Thessalonians 4:13 -5:11**

Eschatology is the study of end times. It is also one of the major themes in the book of 1 Thessalonians. The return of Christ is mentioned in every chapter (1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:14-17; 5:2-4). The Thessalonians were excited about the return of Christ, but they were confused about the details. Like many Christians today, they were focused on the timing of future events rather than the practical applications for their present lives. This passage teaches us how the future return of Christ can help us to live for God right now, in the present.

## **Read Thessalonians 4:13-18**

1. How was Paul using the word “asleep” in verse 13?

The word “asleep” in this verse is being used figuratively for death. A dead body appears to be asleep. However, this does not mean that the spirit of the person is “asleep.” We know from 2 Corinthians 5:1-10 and Philippians 1:20-23 that Christians who die before the return of Christ continue to have a conscious existence in the presence of the Lord.

2. Why did Paul not want Christians to be ignorant about death? (4:13)

The Thessalonians were grieving over the death of their brothers and sisters in Christ as if they would never see them again. They needed to know that, in Christ, we have hope, even in the face of death.

Jon Weatherly writes,

“Hope” (ἐλπίς, *elpis*) is, of course, more than optimism or positive thinking. In the context of the Christian gospel it signifies a confidence about the future which is based on God’s faithful promises, already in the process of fulfillment through Christ (cf. comments on 1:3). Christians will therefore still grieve at the death of a fellow Christian because their fellowship with that brother or sister has been interrupted. But as Paul will stress, their hope alleviates and transforms that grief because when Christ comes their fellowship will be restored.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Jon A. Weatherly, *The College Press NIV Commentary: 1 & 2 Thessalonians* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1996), 153.

3. How is a Christian's grief over the loss of a loved one different from a non-Christian's grief? Why? (4:13-14)

Paul is not suggesting that as Christians we should not grieve when another Christian dies. In Philippians 2:27, when Paul's associate, Epaphroditus was sick, Paul said that he would have had "sorrow upon sorrow" if Epaphroditus died. However, as Christians our grief is tempered with the assurance that Christ has conquered death and if we remain in Christ, we will be reunited with all our Christian loved ones when Christ returns.

4. What was the source of Paul's teaching about what happens to those who die? (4:15)

5. What sequence of events described in verse 16?

Those who teach a "premillennial" view of Bible prophecy claim that there will be a secret return of Christ with a secret resurrection and a secret rapture. However, the Bible says that the return of Christ will be announced with a loud shout and a trumpet blast. Jack Cottrell notes,

It should be obvious from all this Biblical testimony that there will be no such thing as a *secret* second coming. See 1 Thessalonians 4:16... there will not only be something to *see*, but at least three things that we will hear! You may not be expecting Him or may not be prepared for Him; but when He comes, you will know it!<sup>2</sup>

6. What is the sequence of events described in verse 17?

It is important to remember that this passage is not about what happens to unbelievers. Paul is writing to Christians about their loved ones who have died **in Christ**. There is a contrast here between what comes first and what comes after. But Paul is not showing a contrast between dead Christians and dead non-Christians. He is showing a contrast between dead Christians and living Christians. The Christians who have died will come out of their graves with immortal bodies first. Then the Christians who are still alive will be changed and caught up together with all their brothers and sisters in Christ.

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<sup>2</sup> Jack Cottrell, *From Now to Eternity: Prophecy and the End Times* (Mason, OH: The Christian Restoration Association, 2019), 119-120.

7. What effect did Paul believe this teaching about the Lord's return would have on his listeners? (4:18)

**Read Thessalonians 5:1-11**

8. What did Paul say about the time and date of the Lord's return? (5:1)

In Acts 1:6, the disciples asked Jesus about the specific time for prophecy to be fulfilled. But Jesus said, "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority." And then He talked to them about the Great Commission. The return of Christ is an important doctrine of Scripture. However, the Bible doesn't tell us about the return of Christ so we can speculate about dates on a calendar. God wants us to focus on being ready for the return of Christ every day.

9. How did Paul describe the Lord's return in verse 2? (See also Matt 24:43; Luke 12:39; 2 Pet 3:10; Rev 3:3; 16:15.)

10. What will many people be saying just before destruction comes upon them? (5:3)

11. Why should Christians not be surprised when Christ returns? (5:4-5)

12. How can we be prepared for the return of Christ? (5:6-8)

13. How can faith, hope, and love prepare us for the return of Christ? (5:8) Notice these are the same character traits that Paul mentioned at the beginning of the letter (1 Thess. 1:3).

14. According to passage, why did Jesus die for us? (5:9-10)

15. What did Paul tell the Thessalonians to do in verse 11?

16. How should we mourn the death of fellow believers?

17. How can the return of Christ help us with our lives right now?

18. What can we do to be ready for Christ's return every day?

19. How will you put on the character traits of faith, hope, and love?

20. How can you encourage someone with a reminder of God's promises?