

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

1 & 2 THESSALONIANS LESSON 3 **(1 Thessalonians 4 & 5)**

Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Ben Bailey.

“You yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night” (1 Thess. 5:2). Welcome to our study of the Second Coming of Christ as taught in 1 Thessalonians 4 and 5. The Second Coming ought to be an event that Christians look forward to, that ought to be a motivating factor in our faith, and that ought to be a sort of vindication for the child of God against the evil, sinful world in which we live. But, like it was in Thessalonica, so it is today. There is a lot of religious error being taught about the Second Coming of Christ. To understand the Books of 1 & 2 Thessalonians, we must know what was going on at that time related to the Second Coming of Christ. There was a key misunderstanding in that day and age. The Christians in Thessalonica evidently thought that the Second Coming was going to occur during their lifetimes. They were convinced of this. And, it very well could have. Jesus said that no one knew the day or the hour of His Second Coming. But those Christians were so sure that Christ was coming that they had given up. They had gotten lazy, and had quit their jobs (2 Thess. 3). They were so convinced of the Second Coming that they had given up on everything else and had pretty much quit living life. Paul therefore wrote to encourage them not to do that.

There also was a key misapplication at play. The Thessalonian Christians believed that if someone died before the Second Coming, then that person had missed out on this great event of Christian triumph. Paul writes to tell them that if someone had died before, he or she would be coming with the Lord. Those people would not miss out. They also would take part in this event. Thus, the key question became, “What will happen to faithful Christians who die before the Second Coming of Christ occurs?” They will be in the grave (Jn. 5:28-29). They will come forth, and, as Paul says, those who are alive will then meet them in the air. But just as there was then, there is today much error being taught about the Second Coming of Christ. This lesson deals with the nature and timing of Christ’s coming. Many people are saying, and have said in the past, that Christ is coming on such-and-such a day, and that certain events will take place that will allow us to know for sure when Christ is going to come. But those are lies; they are not true. Jesus said in Matthew 24 that no man knows the day or the hour when the Lord will return. So, what can we know about the nature and timing of the Second Coming?

We can know that there are two extremes concerning the timing of Christ’s coming. The Thessalonian Christians were looking for it to happen at any moment—so much so that they quit their jobs and became lazy. Paul writes and tells them that if they do not stop their disorderly conduct, other Christians will have to withdraw fellowship from them. Then there is the other extreme. We rarely stop to think that the Lord’s coming could happen at any moment, and we tend to live our lives without factoring that in. Thus, on the one extreme people are so convinced that Christ is going to return that they give up on life, while on the other end of the pendulum there are people who never think about it and live their lives without Christ. There must be a balance. We must realize that, yes, the Lord could come

at any moment. Thus, we must be faithful, and must make sure that we are living the way God wants us to live. Paul paints a beautiful picture in 1 Thessalonians 4 and 5. So what do we know about the Second Coming of Christ?

Ignorance may not be bliss, but it certainly is rampant concerning the Second Coming of Christ. Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 4:13, "I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope." There is a lot of ignorance on the subject of the Second Coming. Paul was writing to help get rid of it. He said that he was writing so that people would not be ignorant and be in sorrow as those who have no hope. The Bible is written so that we can know the truth, and so that the truth can make us free. In Ephesians 5:17 Paul said, "Do not be ignorant, but understand what the will of the Lord is." We can understand the will of the Lord because the Word of God is His will. In John 17:17 Jesus said, "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth." To be right on the Second Coming, we must "study to show ourselves approved unto God" (2 Tim. 2:15). We must search the Scriptures daily to ensure that we are not involved in ignorance or error, but that instead we know what God teaches.

What is some of the ignorance today on the Second Coming? Some think that the Second Coming has already happened. That is just not true. The Lord has not yet returned. Hebrews 9:27-28 teaches that there will be a Second Coming. It will be apart from sin, and for salvation. The fact that we are alive today, and that the world still exists (2 Pet. 3:10-12) clearly teaches that the Second Coming has not yet happened. Others believe (in ignorance) that we can see signs that Christ's coming is near (based on Matthew 24). Yet the problem is that in Matthew 24, in verses 1-34, Jesus said that those signs would occur during the generation of the people who were alive at that time. There is a big problem, then. Either we have some very old people running around today, or those things happened back then. Clearly, the great divide in Matthew 24:36 teaches us that no one knows the day or the hour of the Second Coming. Some people wonder if the Second Coming will occur. The people mentioned in 2 Peter 3 said that all things remained the same, just as they had since the beginning of time. They said, "The Lord said He was going to return, but He hasn't." But Peter said that the Lord **is** going to return! However, He is not on our time schedule; rather, we are on His time schedule. God is not bound by time. So, let's not be ignorant on this subject. Instead, let's realize what God has said.

What do we know about the Second Coming? In 1 Thessalonians 4:13 we read, "I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope." Death in Christ is not the end. A figure used to describe death is "sleep." How is death like sleep? It is peaceful. People who die are no longer in a world of sin and sorrow. They are in peace, and are at rest. In Luke 16 we see the beggar Lazarus who was carried by angels to Abraham's bosom—a place of great rest and peace. The dead who die in the Lord are in a place of calm. We know that when Christ returns, those who sleep will come up out of the grave. But there also will be a regeneration that occurs. We know from Philippians 3:21 that we will be transformed into the image of our Lord Jesus Christ. Death is like a sleep or rest. It is for a period of time from which people will eventually be awakened (Jn. 5:28-29). After that, they will be changed (which is like the regeneration that occurs during sleep).

But here's what's great about the Second Coming and those who have already died. Paul said that those of us who are still living should not "sorrow as others who have no hope." The dead in Christ still have hope. What kind of hope is it? We have hope of forgiveness. We know that our sins have been forgiven (Acts 2:38). Those whose sins have been forgiven by being washed in the blood of the Lamb (Rev. 1:4) will live eternally with God. We have the hope of living with God in a great paradise of rest. Hebrews 4:9 tells us, "There

remains therefore a rest for the people of God.” We have the promise of the constant care and protection of God. We have victory over this world. If we die in Christ, we are victorious! We also will experience a great reunion with the faithful who have gone before us. Our hope of an afterlife is based on the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We may sorrow, but we do not sorrow as those who have no hope. When a loved one dies, and when someone in Christ perishes, it does bring our hearts sorrow. Even Jesus wept (Jn. 11:35). But our tears are not tears of eternal sadness; instead, they are tears of temporary sadness. We may be saddened at the loss of such people, but we would not bring them back if we could. If someone dies in Christ, there is no better thing that could happen, according to the Bible. In Psalm 116:15, “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.” Revelation 14:13 says, “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, that they may rest from their labors, and their works do follow them.” If a child of God passes on before the Second Coming, that is not a bad thing. It is a good thing. We would not want to bring them back, even if we had the power to do so.

Our hope lies in the fact of the resurrection. Notice 1 Thessalonians 4:14—“If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.” Based on the empty tomb associated with Christ’s resurrection, the fact that we have obeyed the Gospel, the fact that we have died to sin, the fact that we were buried with Christ in baptism, the fact that we were raised to walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:1-4), and the fact that we died faithfully in Christ, 1 Corinthians 15 teaches that we will be raised from the grave. Our hope of an afterlife is based on the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. The Bible teaches that those who die in Christ will rise again, and that those who are still alive will meet them and Christ in the air. This teaches that there is going to be a great reunion between all of God’s people who died prior to the Second Coming, and those who are faithful at Christ’s coming. In 2 Samuel 12:23 David said (speaking of his infant son who had died), “I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.” David realized that there would be a reunion. The only way he would see his son again would be to live faithfully. If we have loved ones who have gone on, we need to be sure that we are right with God so that one day we can be reunited with them.

In 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18 we learn of some events that will transpire at the Second Coming of Christ.

“For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.”

Paul clearly says that the dead will rise first. In John 5:28-29 Jesus said, “All who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.” When the Lord returns, the dead will be raised to meet Him in the air. Then, those who are alive will also be brought up. The Lord Himself will descend from Heaven with a voice, with the trumpet of God, and with the shout of the archangel. Christ’s coming will be clearly announced. Every knee will bow, and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Christ, to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:9-11). There is an error that is being taught about the Second Coming of Christ, which this passage clearly shows will not happen. Many teach that at the Second Coming of Christ, Jesus will return and re-establish the throne of David, that there will be a thousand-year reign, and that a rapture and tribulation will take place. Those things are **not** going to happen. Look in 1 Thessalonians 4, and those things are not there. Jesus, we are told, will come in the air. The dead will be raised to meet Him. Those who are living

also will meet Him in the air. According to this text, Jesus will never again set foot on the Earth. He is not an earthly King, but reigns in Heaven (Jn. 18). He is the spiritual King Who reigns in the hearts and lives of men and women today. According to this text, Jesus will not come back to the Earth. At the Second Coming (2 Pet. 3:10-12), the world and all that in it will be destroyed. These are the events that will occur at the Second Coming of Christ.

In 1 Thessalonians 4:18 Paul said, "Therefore, comfort one another with these words." It is comforting to know that when Christ returns, the saints will be rewarded, will be brought up together to be with Him, and will always be with the Lord. There will be no more separation or sin. There will be no more sorrow, crying, or death. All the former things will have passed away (Rev. 21:4). There is the hope, comfort, and joy that Christians have.

But what about the timing of Christ's Second Coming? The events surrounding that Second Coming are described in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, but Paul picks up in 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 to discuss the timing of Christ's coming. What will be the timing of Christian's coming? Paul said in verse 2, "You yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night." It will be unannounced and surprising. People will not know the day or time when Christ is going to return. That is why Jesus said in Mark 13:35, "What I say to you, I say to all: Watch and be ready." So many people say that they can predict the Second Coming because "this will happen" or "that will happen." Some said that Christ would return in the year 2000. Before that, some said He would return at the turn of the twentieth century. Before that, they had chosen other dates. You can know this: no one knows when Christ will return. He will return like a thief in the night. A Gospel preacher said one time, "A thief does not call you at ten minutes until 2:00 and say, 'Get ready; I'm coming!'" A thief surprises you and catches you unaware. That is how Christ's Second Coming will be. It will not be at a time that people know in advance. How do we know that? Look at Matthew 24, and notice what it says about the Second Coming. In Matthew 24:34 Jesus said, "Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place." Everything He had said previous to that statement was to occur in that generation. In verses 35 and 36 He then said, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away. But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only." No one knows when the Lord will return. If someone says, "Jesus is coming back on such-and-such a day," you can say, "You are a liar. Jesus said that no one knows when He will return." If someone says, "Here are the signs we can look for," you can say, "No, no one knows the day or the hour when Jesus will return. He will come like a thief. There will be no signs. There will be no warning. He will arrive unannounced." It is not for us to know the exact time when Christ will return.

But what will it be like when He does return? In 1 Thessalonians 5:3 Paul uses a vivid illustration when he says that it will be like labor pains upon a pregnant woman. What are those labor pains like? They are sudden, violent, and unexpected. That is the idea. They hit out of nowhere. That is how Jesus will come. It will be sudden. It will occur with a shout, with the noise of the trumpet of God, and with the voice of the archangel. All of those things will occur at that time.

The Second Coming should not catch Christians off guard. We need to always be ready for the coming of the Lord so that we can be sure that we are right with Him. The Second Coming should not catch us off guard. What does that mean? We must stay ready. In Mark 13:35 Jesus said, "What I say to you, I say to all: Watch and be ready. Do not get caught unaware." In Revelation 2:10 Jesus said, "Be faithful unto death, and will give you the crown of life." How is it that we can stay ready? We must live faithfully before Jesus every day. That is what it means to be faithful unto death. It means that walk every day in the footsteps of Jesus. In Luke 9:23 Jesus said, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him

deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.” Not being caught off guard means that we live for Jesus every day. Do we really understand that our lives ought to be a sacrifice for Christ every day? In Romans 12:1 the apostle Paul said, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.” Being on guard means that we must do what God says to stay faithful. We need to study our Bibles. We need to be faithful in assembling with the saints (Heb. 10:25). We need to do the works that God has taught us to do.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 Paul then says that the Second Coming ought to cause us to want to encourage one another. Hebrews 3:12 says, “Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, and so much so as you see the day approaching.” Hebrews 10:24 says pretty much the same thing. We are to encourage and uplift one another. Wouldn’t it be horrible if we slipped out of faithfulness and the Lord came? Think about that. And think about people you might know who have been unfaithful.

We know that when the Lord returns, it will be all over. Matthew 25 is a very vivid scene of a bridegroom and ten virgins. Five were ready, but five were not. The five who were not ready asked the others who were ready for some oil for their lamps. But they were not given any. So, they went away to get oil, and the door was shut forever more. They did not have another chance to go in. This life is our chance to get right with God. At Christ’s Second Coming, the world in which we live will be rolled up and done away with like an old cloak or garment (Heb. 1:9-11). The Scriptures teach that the world, and all that is in it, will one day pass away (Mt. 24:35), but that the Word of God will live forever. In 2 Peter 3:10-12 we are told that the Earth and all that is on it will be melted with a fervent heat; thus, we must live holy lives. The Earth will be destroyed, and then we will stand before God in judgment. When this Earth is destroyed at Christ’s Second Coming, we will stand before God and be judged. Romans 14:12 says, “So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.” In 2 Corinthians 5:10 we are told that we will be judged by our deeds and works in this life. We will stand before God in judgment, and every secret thing will be judged (Eccl. 12:14). Revelation 20:12 tells us that “the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.” When Christ comes, each of us will stand before God and give an account of the things we have done in this life. Jesus said in John 12:48, “He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.” We will be judged by what we have done in this life, as well as by the words of Jesus Christ.

If we are faithful children of God who have lived faithfully, then there will be a great separation. We see in Matthew 25 that Jesus separated the sheep from the goats. The goats were evil, and the sheep were those who had done good.” There was a great separation. There will be a great separation after the Second Coming of the Lord. There will be separation of the righteous, who will go into Heaven itself. In John 5:28-29 Jesus said that the righteous will be raised to eternal life. As children of God, if we live faithfully, we can be encouraged by the Second Coming, knowing that after we have been judged faithful because we have been true to the Lord, we will have a home in Heaven. Can you imagine the beauty and splendor of the wonderful place called Heaven? The Bible describes it as a place of rest (Heb. 4:9). It is a place made without hands (2 Cor. 5:1-2) that is eternal in the heavens. It is a place of true joy and happiness (Rev. 21:4). But the greatest thing about Heaven is this. Jesus said in Matthew 6:9, “Pray, our Father who art in heaven.”

What is the greatest thing about Heaven? It is not the streets of gold. It is not the river of life. The greatest thing about Heaven is that it is where God is. If we have lived faithfully, at the Second Coming of Christ we will be judged and vindicated by the blood of Jesus, and will have a home in Heaven with God.

But we also need to look at the other side. When Christ comes, if your life has not been lived correctly, you will be judged by your deeds and the words of Christ. If you have not been pardoned by the blood of Jesus, that will be a horrible day for you. The day of the Lord's Second Coming is a great day, but it also is a horrible day for some because, according to John 5:28-29, they will be raised to eternal destruction. Do you realize that Hell is going to be like? Jesus said in Mark 9:44 that Hell is a place where the worm never dies, and the fire is not quenched. Think of the horror of such a place. It is described in the Books of Matthew and Luke as a place where there will be great weeping and gnashing of teeth. Matthew 25 shows the unprofitable servant being cast into outer darkness. Imagine the darkest darkness you can—"the blackness of darkness" (as Jude and 2 Peter call it). It will be a place of weeping and the gnashing of teeth—eternal crying and sorrow. That is the horror of Hell. Hell is described in Luke 16 as a place of eternal torment. In that chapter we see that the rich man was lost. He wanted just one drop of water to quench his thirst, because he was in torment where he was. Can you imagine the torment associated with being in Hell forever? Can you imagine what it will be like or how horrible it will be? It will be the worst thing that could ever happen. Imagine being on fire for eternity. That is how Hell is depicted in the Scriptures. The Second Coming of Christ ought to be a day we look forward to.

But let me ask you, "Are you really ready for the Second Coming of Jesus? Is your life right, so that you can hear the good call that Jesus will offer: 'Well done, good and faithful servant; enter into the joys of your Lord?'" If you are not ready, you need desperately to become a Christian today. Only those who are children of God can look forward to that great day. Jesus said in John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." Are you ready for the Second Coming? Are you sure you are a child of God? If you are not a Christian, here's what you need to do to become one. You must believe that Jesus is the Son of God. In Acts 8:36, as the Ethiopian eunuch looked at a certain water, he asked, "Here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?" Philip then said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may" (vs. 37). Having believed in Jesus, you must be willing to repent of your sins. In Luke 13:3 Jesus said, "Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish." Having repented and changed your will (which leads to a changed way), you then must confess the name of Jesus. In Romans 10:10 the Bible says, "With the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Having confessed the name of Jesus, you then must be baptized in water for the forgiveness of your sins. You are not ready for the Judgment Day or the Second Coming of Christ if you have not obeyed what God says concerning baptism. In Acts 2:37 the Jews who had killed Christ called out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" They realized they had crucified the Messiah. They realized there were in sin. So, Peter responded in verse 38 by saying, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." In Acts 9:4-6 Saul was traveling down the road. Christ confronted him, and Saul asked, "Lord, what would you have me do?" Jesus told him to go into Damascus, where he would be told what to do. In Acts 22:16 he was told, "Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord." At what point are sins washed away? According to Acts 22:16, it is at the point of baptism. This is why Jesus said, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved" (Mk. 16:16). According to Romans 6:4, we rise from the waters of baptism to walk in newness of life. If you have obeyed God's plan of salvation, let me ask you if you have been living faithfully? Are you really ready for the Second

Coming of Christ? Have you been faithful up to this point? Have you avoided sin? Have you repented of sin in your life when you knew it was there? Have you truly striven to live true to the teachings of Jesus Christ? At the Lord's Second Coming, there will not be anything that can compare to it. But we must be ready. We are hoping and praying, in view of the great day of the Second Coming of Christ, that you will get ready for it before it is too late.

Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

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**STUDY QUESTIONS FOR 1 & 2 THESSALONIANS LESSON 3
(1 THESSALONIANS CHAPTER 4 & 5)**

1. What is the main topic under discussion in 1 Thessalonians 4 and 5?
2. According to John 17:17, what is God's Word?
3. What did the apostle Paul say in Ephesians 5:17?
4. What does Hebrews 9:27 teach?
5. What does 2 Peter 3:10-12 teach us about the Second Coming of Christ?
6. What does Matthew 24:36 teach us about the Second Coming of Christ?
7. In 2 Peter 3:4, what were some people saying about the Second Coming of Christ?
8. What did the apostle Paul say in 1 Thessalonians 4:13?
9. What does John 5:28-29 teach?
10. According to Psalm 116:15, how does God view the death of Christians?
11. What does Revelation 14:13 say about faithful Christians?
12. What important point is found in 1 Thessalonians 4:14?
13. Describe, according to 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18, what will happen at Christ's Second Coming?
14. How does Philippians 2:9-11 tie into the Second Coming of Christ?
15. According to 1 Thessalonians 4, when Jesus returns, will He set foot on the Earth?
16. How is Christ's Second Coming described in 1 Thessalonians 5:2?
17. How is Christ's Second Coming described in 1 Thessalonians 5:3?
18. According to Paul's statement in 1 Thessalonians 5:11, what should Christians' knowledge of the events surrounding Christ's Second Coming allow them to do for one another?
19. What does the latter part of Romans 14:10 say?
20. What does Romans 14:12 say?
21. What does Ecclesiastes 12:14 say?
22. What does 2 Corinthians 5:10 say?