



## 1 Thessalonians 4:13 – 5:28

### When Jesus comes back... Part 1 – Leaders version

For a one hour study, just do the starred \* questions

**IF SOMEONE IN YOUR GROUP IS BEREAVED, PLEASE CONSIDER WHETHER THIS STUDY WOULD BE APPROPRIATE FOR THEM AT THIS TIME OR NOT**

**Check in** – with the group sitting in a semi circle go round and ask everyone, including leaders, how they are and how they're feeling about studying the Bible today.

1. What do you remember from the last study we did?

### What does the passage say and mean?

60 minutes

2. Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14. What question do you think the Thessalonians had asked, that led Paul to this topic?

*They had been asking about what happened to Christians after they died. It's not long since Paul had first shared the gospel with them, but it seems that someone has since died and they want to know what that means, since Jesus hasn't come back yet.*

3. What does Paul say is different about grieving for a Christian who has died? (v13)

*In Christ, we have hope of an eternal future, so when a Christian dies, we are able to rejoice in the fulfilment of that hope, at the same time as grieve for our loss of someone we love.*

*Be careful here, people may be grieving for someone who has died who was not a believer. Try to keep the focus of this study on believers and Jesus' return, not on what happens to unbelievers after death.*

*NB Biblical hope = a certainty, not a wish!*

4. What is the promise in v14 that we have in Christ, and what is the evidence that the promise is true?

*The promise is that those who have died in Christ (i.e. believers) will rise again and will come with Jesus when he returns. The evidence is the death and resurrection of Jesus.*

Questions 5-7 are **SELF-DIRECTED QUESTIONS**. You need to write them on flip-chart sheets for the group to work on in pairs. Let the group work on these as purely comprehension questions – give them the theological interpretation of Paul's words during the group download.

\*5. **SDL Read v16.** What will happen when Jesus comes back?

*Jesus will come to earth from heaven with a loud command, the voice of the archangel and the trumpet call of God. Then the dead in Christ will rise (first).*

*'Accompanying his return there will be a universal, authoritative, divine proclamation which presumably will both announce the end and summon the dead to rise. ... We are probably not meant to imagine three distinct noises ...but rather to understand the variety and repetition as indicating the overwhelming, irresistible nature of the summons.'* (Stott 2009, p102)

*1 Thessalonians does not have the whole picture of what will happen when Jesus comes back, other Scriptures give further information e.g. 2 Thess 1:7, 2 Peter 3.*

\*6. **SDL Read v15-17.** What will happen to believers who are alive when Jesus comes back?

*We will be 'caught up in the air' to meet Jesus and the believers who have died. And we will all be with the Lord for ever.*

*If the group ask about what happens to unbelievers at this time, the simple answer is that they will not be with the Lord for ever. Try to keep the focus on what happens to believers when Christ returns, assuming that the group are familiar with the gospel and have previously had teaching on why we need to be saved i.e. already understand the concept of hell and why Jesus doesn't want us to go there.*

\*7. **SDL Read 1 Thessalonians 4:18 – 5:2.** When will Jesus come back?

*We don't know! But it will happen 'like a thief in the night' – you can't prepare for a burglary, it takes you unexpectedly.*

\*8. What is the warning to us, as believers, in 1 Thessalonians 5:1-2?

*To be ready for Jesus coming back. We don't know when it will be, but we know that he is coming and we know how to be ready. (As believers, we are already right with God. Our responsibility now is to tell other people the good news and to live lives that please God and are consistent with the gospel).*

\*9. What false assurance do unbelievers have about the end of time? (v3)

*They think there is nothing to worry about – they will be saying 'Peace and safety' right up to the last moment.*

\*10. Read v4-6. Since believers are living in the light (not the darkness of unbelief) what does Paul say we should be, and what does this mean in our daily lives?

*Alert and self-controlled, v6. Practically, this means that we live in the knowledge that Jesus could come any time today or at any time in the future, and as believers, we live knowing that when he comes, we will be with him. This should affect our behaviour and our sharing of the gospel with others, as we know what it means to be saved or to not to be saved and that one day it will be too late.*

\*11. **SHOUT-OUT** Read v7-11. What does it mean to put on faith and love as a breastplate and salvation as a helmet? (v8)

*Similarly to Ephesians 6, Paul is talking about being equipped for the spiritual battle. The use of these particular pieces of armour could refer to faith and love protecting us from the enemy's attack (which doesn't mean he won't attack!) and salvation protecting our minds from fear / doubt.*

\*12. Read v9-11. What are we encouraged to do and why?

*We are encouraged to encourage one another (to keep walking with Jesus, whatever is happening) and to build one another up in the faith, because Jesus died so that we can be with him eternally, if we repent and believe.*

\*13. Read v12-22. Why do you think Paul ends with a list like this?

*He's talked about the power of the gospel (Ch1), defended his ministry against the rumours that were being circulated (Ch2), rejoiced in the news he heard from Timothy about the Thessalonian believers (Ch3), talked about living to please God (Ch4) and the second coming (Ch4-5). This list isn't a disjointed add-on of rules to be kept, rather it's 'in view of all the above, therefore...'.*

14. Which of the commands in v12-15 do you find easiest to do and which do you find most difficult? Why do you find that thing difficult?

15. Read v16-18. What is God's will for us in Jesus and does this surprise you?

*To be joyful, to give thanks in (not necessarily for) all circumstances and to pray about everything. Let the group discuss what they have to be always joyful about – clue, it's not their circumstances!*

16. Read v19-28. What is Paul's prayer in v23-24 and who does he say will effect this change? Now read John 14:15. How can both these verses be true at the same time?

*Paul prays that we will be sanctified (made holy) – 'the great stimulus to both holiness and endurance is our expectation of the Lord's return' (Stott 2009, p77) – and that Jesus will do it.*

*John says that if we love Jesus, we will obey him, thus we effect change.*

*They are both true at the same time! We have a responsibility to obey, but it is only by the Holy Spirit that*

*we are enabled to change. 'May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ', v23 – we cannot do this! Only God can do this, through Jesus' death in our place on the cross. But we need to repent and believe in order for God's salvation to be effective in our lives.*

### **How can I live according to these truths in my life?**

20 minutes

\*1. What difference does it make to know that Jesus is coming back?

*Allow for some of the group to not believe that he is coming back...*

\*2. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:11 again. Who encourages you and who do you encourage?

3. Read John 14:15 again. Do you love Jesus? What difference does this make to your life?

**Check out** – with the group sitting in a semi circle go round and ask everyone, including leaders, how they found the study and if they are safe to go back to the cell.



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### **When Jesus comes back...**

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4. What is the promise in v14 that we have in Christ, and what is the evidence that the promise is true?

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6. **SDL** Read v15-17. What will happen to believers who are alive when Jesus comes back?

7. **SDL** Read 1 Thessalonians 4:18 – 5:2. When will Jesus come back?

8. What is the warning to us, as believers, in 1 Thessalonians 5:1-2?
  
9. What false assurance do unbelievers have about the end of time? (v3)
  
10. Read v4-6. Since believers are living in the light (not the darkness of unbelief) what does Paul say we should be, and what does this mean in our daily lives?
  
11. **SHOUT-OUT** Read v7-11. What does it mean to put on faith and love as a breastplate and salvation as a helmet? (v8)
  
12. Read v9-11. What are we encouraged to do and why?
  
13. Read v12-22. Why do you think Paul ends with a list like this?
  
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**How can I live according to these truths in my life?**

1. What difference does it make to know that Jesus is coming back?

2. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:11 again. Who encourages you and who do you encourage?

3. Read John 14:15 again. Do you love Jesus? What difference does this make to your life?