

Lesson 5- The First Letter to the Thessalonians, Chapters 4 and 5

A Life Pleasing to God, The Return of Jesus and Resurrection of the Dead.

The first twelve verses in chapter 4 begin by giving practical applications to Paul's previous teachings in this letter. This lesson also includes Paul's insights of the events surrounding the return of Jesus and judgment. We see this in the last portion of chapter 4 and the first 11 verses in chapter 5. Some of the references are a bit vague. Biblical scholars, throughout the centuries of Christian history, do not all interpret Paul's language and explanations of the "Day of the Lord" in the same way. One point however, is not disputed; Jesus Christ will return and death is not the end for those who believe and are faithful.

1. Read 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8 and footnotes. Share any interesting footnotes with your group.

a. Where do the instructions on *how to live a "Christian life"* come from?

See 1 Thessalonians 4:2, 8, 9, and Paul's Letter to the Galatians 1:11-18 below

Gal 1:11-18 Now I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel preached by me is not of human origin. ¹²For I did not receive it from a human being, nor was I taught it, but *it came through a revelation of Jesus Christ*. ¹³For you heard of my former way of life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it, ¹⁴and progressed in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my race, since I was even more a zealot for my ancestral traditions. ¹⁵**But when [God], who from my mother's womb had set me apart and called me through his grace, was pleased ¹⁶to reveal his Son to me, so that I might proclaim him to the Gentiles,** I did not immediately consult flesh and blood, ¹⁷nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; rather, I went into Arabia and then returned to Damascus. ¹⁸**Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to confer with Cephas (Peter) and remained with him for fifteen days.**

2. Compare 4:3-6 in your bible with the NIV translation below. How are the translations different?

1 Thes 4:3-6 (NIV) It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; ⁴that each of you should learn **to control your own body in a way that is holy and honorable,** ⁵**not in passionate lust like the pagans, who do not know God;** ⁶and that in this matter no one should wrong or take advantage of a brother or sister. The Lord will punish all those who commit such sins, as we told you and warned you before.

3. Looking at the two versions together, *what is the main concern of these verses?*

A footnote from the Ignatius Catholic Bible Study reminds us that "various forms of sexual immorality were widely accepted in pagan environments such as Thessalonica."

4. Read the prayer of Tobit and his bride, Sarah from Tobit 8:5-7 below.

Tobit 8:5-7 "Blessed are you, O God of our ancestors; blessed be your name forever and ever! Let the heavens and all your creation bless you forever. ⁶You made Adam, and you made his wife Eve to be his helper and support; and from these two the human race has come. You said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone; let us make him a helper like himself.' ⁷Now, not with lust, but with fidelity I take this kinswoman as my wife. Send down your mercy on me and on her, and grant that we may grow old together. Bless us with children."

a. What does the prayer from Tobit say about marriage?

b. How is marriage a blessing?

5. Read 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12. Christianity was something *new* for the people of Thessalonica. What is Paul asking his followers to do in these verses?

6. Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and footnotes.

a. Who are the people who have “*fallen asleep*?”

b. Can “*fallen asleep*” have more than one meaning?

c. Which of the verses here suggest that Paul believed that the Second Coming of Jesus would occur within *his* lifetime?

7. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:1-10 and footnotes. Read also Jesus’ teaching from Matthew 24 and John’s vision in Revelation 16 below.

Matt. 24:30-31, 36 “Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. And then all the peoples of the earth will mourn when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. ³¹And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other..... ³⁶“But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

Revelation 16:15 “Look, I come like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake and remains clothed, so as not to go naked and be shamefully exposed.”

a. When will these things happen?

b. What is meant by verses 1 Thess 5:2-3?

c. What are we to do to get ready for the *Day of the Lord*?

d. What are Christians destined for, according to 5:9-10?

8. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:11-21 and footnotes. This part of the letter includes a series of instructions. In your own words, what does each of the following verses call us to do?

a. 1 Thes. 5:11

b. 1 Thes. 5:12-13

c. 1 Thes. 5:14-15

d. 1 Thes. 5:16-18

e. 1 Thes. 5:19-20

f. 1 Thes. 5:21-22

9. Read 1 Thes. 5:23-28 Paul ends this letter with a prayer and a blessing. What request does he make in 5:27?