

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this Bible study series you may learn to become a disciple of Jesus Christ. Two teachers will do Bible study together about one important aspect of being a disciple of Jesus Christ. We will use a very easy Bible study method called the five steps method. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme. Today's Bible study is: A DISCIPLE KNOWS THE PROPHECY ABOUT THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST INTO THE WORLD.

(S) **STEP 1. READ**

Let us read 1 Thessalonians 4:13 – 5:11. Let us take turns to read one verse each.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11. "Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. (T) 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. (S) According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. (T) 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. (S) 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. (T) Therefore encourage each other with these words. (S) Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, (T) for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. (S) While people are saying, 'Peace and safety', destruction will come on them suddenly, as labour pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. ... (T) So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled. ... (S) For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. (T) He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. (S) Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing."

(T) **STEP 2. DISCOVER**

Let us discover and discuss some important truths in this Bible passage. "Which truth in this passage is important for you?" or "Which truth in this passage touches your mind or heart?" Think and write your answer in your notebook. After a few minutes take turns to share your discoveries with one another.

(S) An important truth for me is in 1 Thessalonians 5:1-2. Nobody knows when Jesus Christ will return. But his second coming will be like a thief in the night. It will be sudden and unexpected!

(T) An important truth for me is in 1 Thessalonians 4:18. At the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, my mortal body will be resurrected or changed to immortality and from then on I will be with the Lord forever!

(S) **STEP 3. QUESTION**

Let us try to understand all the truths in this passage and ask our questions about the things we still do not understand. "Which question about anything in this passage would you like to ask?" Think and write your question in your notebook. Then discuss the questions and try to find answers.

1<sup>st</sup> Question. Which events will take place at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ?

(T) I have discovered that there are five important events on the Last Day. First. The sudden and unexpected Second Coming. Jesus Christ in all his majesty and power together with uncountable angels will appear on the clouds (1 Thes 5:2; Mat 24:30). The spirits of the departed Christians will come with him (1 Thes 4:14). Second. The resurrection of all people. Jesus Christ will give a loud command (John 5:28; 1 Thes 4:16), the trumpet will sound (Mat 24:31; 1 Thes 4:16), all the dead will be resurrected (John 5:28-29; 1 Cor 15:52; 1 Thes 4:16) and the still living people will be transformed (1 Cor 15:51). Third. The great welcome. Angels will gather all the resurrected and transformed Christians (Mat 3:12a; 13:30) and snatch them up together to meet Jesus Christ in the air (Mat 24:40a,41a; 1 Thes 4:17), while the unbelievers and the wicked people will be left behind (Mat 24:40b,41b). The Christians will welcome Jesus Christ and marvel at his majesty and glory (2 Thes 1:7-10). Four. The Final Judgement of all people. Later on that same Last Day, angels will gather all the unbelievers and wicked people and bring them before Jesus Christ. The Final Judgement will take place (Mat 3:12b; 13:40-42; 25:31-46). Five. The renewal of the universe. While people will be judged before Christ's throne, the old earth will also be judged and destroyed with fire and the whole universe will be renewed (2 Pet 3:3-13). After the Final Judgement, Jesus Christ will descend to the new earth together with all the Christians as his Bride or as the New Jerusalem (Rev 21:1-2,9-10). Then the kingdom of God in its final perfect form will be a permanent reality.

2<sup>nd</sup> Question. Will the resurrection of non-Christians take place at the same time as that of Christians?

(S) There are Christians who believe that the resurrection of believers will take place at least a thousand years before the resurrection of unbelievers. But nowhere in the Bible does it say so! Rather, the Bible states very clearly that the resurrection of both Christians and non-Christians will take place at the same time. In John 5:28-29 Jesus says, “Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when *all* who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out - those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.” Jesus clearly says that all people who have ever died will be resurrected at the same time and at the final judgement. In John 6:39-40 Jesus clearly says that all believers will be raised up “at the last day”! He does not say that believers will be raised up a thousand years *before* that last day! Also the apostle Paul says in Acts 24:15, “I have the same hope as these men, that there will be a resurrection of *both* the righteous and the wicked.” Paul is clearly speaking of *one* resurrection of Christians and non-Christians, not two resurrections! The prophet Daniel in the Old Testament in Daniel 12:1-2 and the apostle John in the New Testament in Revelation 20:11-15 prophesy that the resurrection of the righteous and the wicked will take place at the same time as the final judgement. If a person’s name was not found written in the Book of Life, he will be thrown into the lake of burning sulphur. If his name was found written in the Book of Life, he will inherit the new earth. There is absolutely no period of time between the resurrection of believers and the resurrection of unbelievers! 1 Corinthians 15 and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 do not speak of the resurrection of non-Christians at all, because they want to describe in more detail *the resurrection of believers only*.

3<sup>rd</sup> Question. What does the Bible teach about the resurrection of Christians who have already died?

(T) The souls of all Christians, who have died before the Second Coming, will return with Christ to the earth. In 1 Thessalonians 4:14 the apostle Paul says, “We believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.” In Colossians 3:4 he says, “When Christ ... appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.” The command of Jesus and the trumpet call of the archangel will be the signal for the dead bodies to be raised imperishable (1 Thes 4:16; 1 Cor 15:52) and to be re-united with their souls (1 Thes 4:14). “The dead in Christ will rise first”, that is, before all Christians are snatched up to heaven (1 Thes 4:16).

4<sup>th</sup> Question. What does the Bible teach about the Christians who are still alive at the Second Coming of Christ?

(S) In 1 Thessalonians 4:15 we read, Christians “who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep.” At the Second Coming there will be complete impartiality: the surviving Christians will have no advantage above Christians who had already died. In 1 Corinthians 15:51-53 we read, “We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed - in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will all be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable and the mortal with immortality.” At the Second Coming, the souls and bodies of Christians that are still alive will be *transformed* in a flash. Their bodies will be clothed with immortality!

5<sup>th</sup> Question. Where do Christians go immediately after the resurrection?

(T) Immediately after the resurrection, all Christians will *together* ascend to welcome Jesus Christ in the air. In 1 Thessalonians 4:17-18 we read that the Christians will *be caught up together* in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and to be with the Lord forever. The angels will suddenly and swiftly snatch the elect up in the clouds to meet Jesus Christ in the air. The elect are all the Christians from every nation in the world. The expression “to meet” the Lord in the air was a standard expression that was used when the rulers, soldiers and citizens of a city would go out of the city to welcome a very important dignitary, *before they all returned together to the city*. In Acts 28:15, the Christians in Rome went out of the city “to meet” Paul before they all returned to Rome. In the same way, all Christians will rise up to the clouds to meet Christ in the air *before they will all descend again to the renewed earth*. In the first letter to the Thessalonians, the emphasis is not on *where* Christians will stay after their resurrection, but on *the fact that* Christians will never be separated from Christ! That is the reason for encouraging all Christians in 1 Thessalonians 5:10-11! Christians will be with Jesus Christ forever. They will be snatched up to meet Jesus Christ at his Second Coming. They will welcome him and marvel at his majesty and glory. They will be at his right hand during the Final Judgement. They will be with him when he renews the heavens and the earth. And they will be with him when he descends with them as his Bride onto the renewed earth. No one and nothing will ever separate them from Jesus Christ!

6<sup>th</sup> Question. Is it possible to predict the time of Christ’s Second Coming?

(S) In Matthew 24:36 Jesus himself says, “No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.” In his limited human nature Jesus also does not know the time of his Second Coming. In Acts 1:7 he taught his disciples, “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority.” Therefore, Christians should not speculate about the time of the Second Coming. Christians, who speculate about the time of the Second Coming, disobey Jesus Christ!

7<sup>th</sup> Question. Will people be prepared for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ?

(T) First. The Second Coming will be sudden and unexpected for all non-Christians. They will be caught unprepared. In 1 Thessalonians 5:1-2 we read, “Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come *like a thief in the night*.” Destruction will

suddenly come on the wicked people who have continually advocated “peace and safety”. They will not escape! Second. The Second Coming will also be sudden and unexpected for Christians. But Christians should be prepared! In Matthew 24:43-44, Jesus says, “Understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come *at an hour when you do not expect him.*”

(S) 8<sup>th</sup> Question. Why will the Christians be gathered before the non-Christians on the Last Day?

Jesus says, “Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left” (Mat 24:39-41; Luk 17:30,33-34). People will still be busy with their daily occupation, when the Second Coming will overtake them. They will be working in the field or at home. Then suddenly and unexpectedly, one person will be “taken”, that is, gathered by the angels to welcome Christ and to be with Christ forever (cf. Mat 1:20,24; John 14:3). This sudden and unexpected gathering of Christians is called “being caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air”. The other is “left” behind. Unbelievers and wicked people are left behind, because they may not take part in welcoming Christ. Later on that same Last Day, the unbelievers and wicked people will be brought before the judgement throne of Christ and assigned to everlasting perdition. According to Matthew 13:41-43 and 25:31-46, the angels will weed out of God’s kingdom everything that causes sin and all people who do evil and after their judgement throw them into hell, which is called a fiery furnace.

9<sup>th</sup> Question. Will there be a second chance for people to be saved after the Second Coming?

(T) The suddenness of the Second Coming, the swiftness of the resurrection of the dead and the transformation of the living and the snatching up of Christians to meet Jesus Christ in the air, means that there will be no opportunity for non-Christians to convert to Christ. After Christians have welcomed Christ in the air, the Final Judgement of all people will take place. In Matthew 25:31-46 Jesus says, “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the king will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world’. ... Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels’. Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.” The Second Coming of Jesus Christ is absolutely decisive. At the Second Coming and after the Second Coming there will be no more opportunity to repent, convert or be saved. Jesus Christ will come, not to convert people, but to judge people. That is why the Bible says, “*Now is the time of God’s favour, now is the day of salvation!*” (2 Corinthians 6:2). Those who have not yet believed in Jesus Christ should pray and receive him into their heart and life *now!*

10<sup>th</sup> Question. How should Christians prepare for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ?

(S) The Second Coming of Jesus Christ should make all Christians *alert, faithful and holy*. The non-Christians are living as if the world will continue forever. They eat and drink, buy and sell, build and plant, marry and give in marriage. 1 Thessalonians 5:6-7 says that they are “asleep” with regard to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. They do not concern themselves with the end of the world and therefore they are not watchful and alert. And they do not live self-controlled lives, but get drunk at night. That is why the Bible says, “Let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be *alert and self-controlled.*” In Matthew 24:42 Christ warns that Christians should be alert, that is, watchful and ready for what is going to happen. The parable of the ten Virgins emphasizes the need to be alert (Matthew 25:1-13). In Matthew 24:45-51 Christ warns that Christians should not be indifferent and worldly. On the other hand they should also not panic and stop working. Instead they should be *diligent and faithful* as they do the tasks that Jesus Christ has assigned for them to do. The parable of the talents emphasises the need to be faithful (Matthew 25:14-30). Finally, in 2 Peter 3:9-11,14 the apostle Peter warns that Christians should *live holy and godly lives*, because the world will definitely be destroyed by fire at his Second Coming. Christians should not give any time to live in sin. They should not be occupied with wicked things. They should rather be ready at all times to meet their Creator and Saviour!

(S) **STEP 4 and STEP 5. APPLY and PRAY**

Don’t forget to make applications and don’t forget to pray.

(S) **ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK**

First. Make sure that what you believe about the end of the world and the Second Coming of Christ is not fanciful speculation.

Second. Read through the whole Gospel of John. Join a house fellowship that does Bible study. See the workbooks “Go and make disciples” and Internet on www. Etc

Third. Listen on short wave radio every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY to “Discipleship training on the air”.