

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this series about sharing from our quiet times you may learn to become a disciple of Jesus Christ. Two teachers will share from what they have learned from their quiet times. Every day during the past week we had a quiet time from a passage in the New Testament. Once a week we come together to share what we have learned. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme. We will share the important truths and lessons from our quiet times and try to answer some difficult questions.

Today's topic is: A DISCIPLE SHARES WHAT HE LEARNS FROM
1 THESSALONIANS 5 and 2 THESSALONIANS 1 - 3.

(S) **SHARING FROM 1 THESSALONIANS 5 AND 2 THESSALONIANS 1-3**

This past week we have read, meditated and prayed from 1 Thessalonians 5 and 2 Thessalonians 1-3. Now we will use our quiet time notes to share truths and lessons from the assigned passages and discuss some questions.

Sharing quiet times from 1 Thessalonians chapter 5.

(T) We want to share from 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 about the suddenness of the second coming of Christ. Verse 1-2 say, "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."

First. The time of the second coming of Jesus Christ cannot be known or predicted by anybody.

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." And 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." Christians should not speculate about the date or time of the second coming. Christians who speculate about the time of the second coming of Jesus Christ are foolish, because they are disobeying Jesus Christ and are trying to do something which is impossible!

(S) Second. The second coming of Christ will be sudden and unexpected.

Jesus Christ will come as suddenly and unexpectedly as a thief comes at night. In Matthew 24:43-44, Jesus says, "You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him." Therefore, Christians should be ready and prepared for the second coming by living a holy life and by serving the Lord now. According to verse 4, when Christians live in the light of Jesus Christ, then the second coming will not surprise them like a thief in the night. When Christians are alert, live self-controlled lives, put on faith and love and hope as their protecting armour, then the second coming, although unexpected, will not surprise them.

(T) Third. The second coming of Christ will be so sudden that it will catch all non-Christians unprepared.

According to Matthew 24:37-39, the world in general will be eating and drinking, buying and selling, building and planting, marrying and giving into marriage, when Jesus Christ comes again. The non-Christians will not be ready when Jesus Christ returns. As a matter of fact, some non-Christians will even ridicule the idea of Christ's second coming (2 Pet 3:3-4).

In themselves, eating and drinking, buying and selling, building and planting, marrying and giving into marriage are not wrong things (1 Cor 1:31). What is wrong is when people spend all their time and energy on these things, while they neglect Jesus Christ. Jesus says, "What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?" (Mk 8:36) Christians should not make these things their life-goal. Christians should not follow the example and life-style of non-Christians.

(S) Fourth. At the second coming of Christ people will suddenly be separated and judged.

In Matthew 25:31-32 we read, "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 a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats." At the second coming of Jesus Christ, people will be separated!

In Matthew 13:24-43 we read that the weeds and the wheat will grow together until the harvest. At the time of the harvest, Jesus Christ will tell the harvesters, to first collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then to gather the wheat and bring it into his barn. "As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

In Revelation 14:14-16 we read about the same event. Jesus Christ together with his angels will gather all believers in Jesus Christ. The believers will be judged for how they lived on earth. They will never be condemned, but they will be graciously rewarded according to their good works while they lived on earth and they will receive the kingdom of God as their inheritance.

In Matthew 24:30-31 we read about the same event again. All the Christians on earth are called God's elect. The angels will gather them into God's kingdom, where they will shine like the sun. Thereafter the angels will gather all unbelievers and all evil people. They will be driven in front of the judgement throne in the sky. They will be condemned and punished according to their evil works while they lived on earth and will be thrown into the fires of hell, where they will suffer.

In Matthew 24:41-42 we read, "Two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other one left. Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left." Christians will be gathered to be with the Lord forever and non-Christians will be left behind. They will not participate in welcoming Jesus at his second coming. Later that same day the angels will drive them before the judgement throne and they will be assigned to everlasting perdition. This separation of Christians and non-Christians will be sudden and unexpected and their immediate judgement so fast that the order of events cannot be established. Once this final judgement day arrives, the door to the kingdom of God is shut (Mt 25:10) and every opportunity still to be saved is gone forever.

(T) Fifth. At the second coming of Christ the present heaven and earth will be destroyed by fire and the new heaven and new earth will appear.

In 2 Peter 3:10-12 we read, "The day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives, as you look forward to the day of God."

Conclusion. Because Christians do not know when Jesus Christ will return to the earth, they must be *watchful*. They must stay spiritually awake by praying regularly, by standing firm in the faith, by being courageous, by giving themselves fully to the work of the Lord and by doing everything in love (Col 4:2; 1 Cor 15:58; 16:13-14). The sudden and unexpected nature of the second coming of Christ motivates Christians to live holy and godly lives now on earth. The sudden and unexpected nature of the second coming of Christ motivates me to live a holy and godly life now on earth!

Sharing quiet times from 2 Thessalonians chapter 1.

(S) We want to share from 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10 about the judgement at the second coming of Christ. It says, "Jesus Christ will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord."

First. At the second coming of Christ all people who rejected Jesus Christ will be punished.

The reference here is *not* to people who have never heard the gospel. The reference is to people who have heard the gospel, but have rejected it. They do not know God as their personal Saviour. Instead, they hate him. They do not believe in Christ. Instead, they disobey him. Often it is the people who reject the gospel who also persecute the Christians. At the judgement God will repay the people who persecuted the Christians with afflictions (6). They will be punished with everlasting destruction (9).

This does not mean that they will be annihilated and go out of existence. On the contrary, they will exist forever away from the face of God, away from his glorious presence and away from his loving care. Because of this serious threat of punishment of unbelievers, I tell other people about Jesus Christ!

(T) Second. At the second coming of Christ all people who accepted Jesus Christ will be rewarded.

Verse 6 says that God will give relief or rest to all Christians who have been persecuted. Verse 10 says that at the second coming, Jesus Christ "comes to be glorified in his holy people (saints) and to be marvelled at among all those who have believed."

Christians are called *saints*, that is, people who are set apart by God for God. The word *saints* emphasises the fact that the salvation of Christians is God's work and not the work of people.

Christians are also called *believers*. The word *believers* emphasises the fact that people have the personal responsibility to actively receive Jesus Christ into their hearts and lives.

The Bible tells us that all the remains of sin in the lives of the Christians will be banished from them. They will reflect the glorious characteristics of God and they will walk in the light of his face. This will bring glory to Christ and he will

rejoice in this. The Christians will also look at Christ with glad astonishment and with grateful wonder and they will praise him. Because the reward of Christians is so great, I follow Christ with all my heart!

Sharing quiet times from 2 Thessalonians chapter 2.

(S) We want to share from 2 Thessalonians 2:2-12 about two events that will precede the second coming of Christ. In his first letter to the Thessalonians, Paul stressed the sudden and unexpected nature of the second coming of Jesus Christ. This led to misinterpretation and confusion among some of the Christians. They thought that the second coming of Jesus Christ would be immediate! There were people in Thessalonica who prophesied the immanent return of Christ and there were others who said that they had received a report or letter from Paul about the immediate return of Christ. This subject dominated their discussions and some even stopped to work. They just sat waiting for the immanent return of Christ.

Paul exhorted them not to be suddenly shaken and as a result to be continually alarmed (2). They should not allow anyone or anything to deceive them with regard to the second coming of Christ. Paul says that two important events must happen before Christ returns. In verse 3 he says, "That day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed." The word *rebellion* literally means *apostasy* or *falling away*. Thus, before the second coming of Christ, there will be a great falling away and the man of lawlessness will appear.

(T) First. There will be a great apostasy or falling away before the second coming of Christ.

In Matthew 24:10-13,21-29, Jesus Christ clearly predicted this great apostasy or falling away. He said that Christians would be persecuted and hated by all the nations, simply because they are Christians. This persecution would cause many people who call themselves *Christians*, but are not genuine Christians, to fall away. Genuine Christians do not have to be afraid that any persecution will cause them to fall away, because Matthew 24:24 clearly teaches that it is impossible to deceive the elect. And Matthew 10:28 teaches that Christians should not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul.

Christians will be exposed to many false prophets. Jesus warned that these false prophets will deceive many people. Many people who call themselves *Christians*, but are not genuine Christians, will be deceived by these false prophets. They will turn away from the Christian faith, betray and hate genuine Christians and join the persecutors. This does not mean that genuine Christians will fall away from grace and lose their salvation. In John 10:28, Christ promises, "I give them *eternal* life, and they shall *never* perish; *no one* can snatch them out of my hand." Although many members of the visible organised church in the world will forsake the true faith, *genuine born-again* Christians do not have to be afraid of false prophets.

Because I know that Christians will be persecuted, I am determined to persevere. Jesus says, "All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved" (Mt 10:22).

(S) Second. The man of lawlessness will be revealed before the second coming of Christ.

This is a description of the Antichrist. In the last days of the history of this world, just before the second coming of Christ, the final Antichrist will appear. Paul describes him in terms derived from the book of Daniel. He is characterised by the following:

One. Verse 3 says that the Antichrist will be lawless. He will disobey God's law, oppose God's law and promote disobedience to God's law. He will rebel against God's teachings in the Bible and do everything possible to discredit the Bible. So, people who promote disobedience to God's law and who discredit the Bible are on the side of Antichrist!

Two. Verse 4 says that the Antichrist will be engaged in all kinds of activities which defy God. He will oppose God, God's Word and God's people. He will set himself up in *God's temple*, which according to Ephesians 2:21 is the Christian Church and arrogantly usurp authority over the organised Christian Church in the world. He will demand that all people in the world adore and worship him alone as *god*. All true born-again Christians will refuse to worship him, and this will result in *the great tribulation* of which Jesus spoke in Matthew 24:15-29.

(T) Three. Verse 6-8 says that the Antichrist is presently concealed, but will in the future be revealed. The *mystery of lawlessness* is already at work, that is, God has already revealed to Christians that this power of lawlessness is at work in the world. In 1 John 4:3 we read that there are already many *antichrists* or men of lawless at work in the world today.

But the final personal Antichrist has not yet been revealed, because *something* and *somebody* is holding him back or restraining him (2:6-7). The Bible does not reveal what and who this is, but the best interpretation is that lawlessness is held back or restrained by the reign of law. In the present time in many places the law of God and the law of governments still function as a restraint on lawlessness. As long as the law and the enforcers of the law in the world

function, the Antichrist is held back. As long as justice reigns and the judges judge justly and fairly, then the Antichrist is held back. In Romans 13:4, Paul says that the authorities in the world are God's servant to do good to those who do right and to punish those who do wrong. He regarded government and its administrators as a restraint upon evil. However, when the basic structure of justice disappears, the stage is set for *the revelation of the man of lawlessness*. When fake trials and fake confessions become the order of the day, then the Antichrist will appear and do his terrible work.

(S) Four. Verse 9-11 say that the Antichrist will be the instrument of Satan and display all kinds of counterfeit miracles and signs. The Antichrist will only be able to mislead those people who have rejected the gospel, but he will not be able to deceive the genuine Christians. All people who genuinely believe in Jesus Christ will be saved. True Christians love the truth and do what is right in God's eyes!

However, all people who refuse to be saved will perish. God has been very patient with the people on this earth, but when they continually harden themselves against God and his words, God finally hardens them, so that they will believe in the lies of Antichrist. Because many people in the world refuse to love the truth and be saved, God sends a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie. Because they do not believe the truth and delight in wickedness, God hands them over to the power of Satan and Satan's lies. The Antichrist will be the instrument of Satan and do every sort of evil that will deceive the people who are perishing.

Neutrality is impossible. The mind, heart and behaviour of man cannot be separated. All people who refuse to love and believe the truth will delight in wickedness! And all people who do wickedness will perish. Their final judgement will be just and fair.

Sharing quiet times from 2 Thessalonians chapter 3.

(T) I want to share from 2 Thessalonians 3:10, which says, "If a man will not work, he shall not eat." God expects every able human being to work and earn his food and living. Laziness is no excuse. People, who just sit and do nothing, should not be supported!

ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK

First. Divide 1 Timothy 1-3 into seven passages. Every day have a quiet time from one passage. Record the meditations of all your quiet times in a notebook. Once a week meet with a friend or with a house fellowship or discipleship group and share from your quiet times.

Second. See the workbooks "Go and build Christ's Church" and Internet on www.dota.net

Third. Listen every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY on the radio to "Discipleship training on the air".