

**Called Up
Eternity- Session #5
Small Group Notes**

Note: Due to the nature of the topic, we are providing more commentary as usual to help assist you as leaders in discussion. We also included a link at the bottom that provides a resource to see the four general views regarding the end times that may be helpful (a common perspective held is Dispensation Premillennialism).

Introduction:

Up to this point in your life, what have you had the hardest time waiting for? (Think: a spouse, degree, promotion, children, etc.) How did you handle, or how are you handling, the waiting process?

As believers, what can be confusing about waiting for the return of Jesus Christ? How does the word of God help us to have hope in the midst of waiting, even when things get difficult?

What did you grow up hearing about the second coming of Christ? How have you changed your perspective regarding the second coming of Christ as you have grown older?

Today we are discussing the second coming of Jesus. The word for this type of teaching is called eschatology (es-ca-taw-logy). There are people that devote a lot of their time to this subject to help inform people of the way God is working to prepare us for Jesus' return. We are going to see today how ultimately the focus of this chapter is not having to know all the exact details but for us to have hope and security in the face of uncertain times.

Discuss:

1. Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Just as Paul believed in Christ's bodily resurrection and based many truths on this certainty (1 Cor. 15:14). In 1 Thessalonians 4:14, he affirmed Jesus' return (in the future) as just as certain as His bodily resurrection (in the past). The same God who raised His Son from the dead will also raise those who have placed their trust in His Son. In other words, Jesus' resurrection guarantees the resurrection of those who have fallen asleep through Jesus, of Christians who have died. Therefore, if we believe Jesus actually rose from the dead and will return as promised, then we can be 100 percent sure that all who have placed their faith in Him will be resurrected too.

Here are some things we can say for sure:

- 1. It will be a definite future event (v.1) c.f. Matt. 26:54; Acts 3:19-21; 2 Thess. 1:7-10)**

2. We do not/ cannot know when this event will take place (Mark 13:32-35; Acts 1:7);
3. It will come unexpectedly (v.1-3)(c.f. 2 Pet. 3:2-4; Matt. 25:8-10)
4. Christ's return will be personal, visible, and bodily (v16-17) (c.f. Acts 1:11)
5. It will be triumphant and glorious (Matt. 24:30)
6. The return of Jesus Christ in relationship to 2 other future events: The millennium and the tribulation are hotly debated issues: "...about times and dates..." (c.f. Revelation 20:1-6)

While we do not know exactly how this will look at this time, we have to remember that Paul's overarching purpose is not to get into the exact specifics but for there to be hope that is shared and foundational in the lives of believers as they encounter the world. Therefore, when it comes to the second coming of Christ, our beliefs will impact our behaviors whether we realize it or not. There are some that try to know every detail and will even try to predict specific things about the coming of Christ. If we aren't careful, we will allow someone's prediction to drive the way that we live. There are also those that will become apathetic to the second coming of Christ. The implications can be that we live only for what we get to experience today and we do not live with the urgency and anticipation of his second coming. Both of these can be damaging in their own ways if not properly aligned to God's Word. We are called to live with a hope and looking and listening for the return of Christ, but we are also called to live where we are today to make the greatest gospel influence so others will join in anticipating Jesus' return.

In the passage Paul wants believers to be informed about the second coming. The issue was that by being uninformed, the people could be led to confusion, frustration, and then possibly misunderstandings. What are some examples today where ignorance of biblical doctrine creates confusion and grief? How could Paul's writing encourage them to keep seeking to understand about the second coming?

How does seeing someone that follows Jesus but has passed away as their body being "asleep" give you comfort? How does knowing that their soul is present with Jesus today give us encouragement as well?

How does believing Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection as fact impact the way that we understand the promises regarding his second coming? What does it mean to move from asking "when" to "how"?

2. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

Based on what Paul wrote here in 1 Thessalonians, he clearly had no idea about the date of Christ's return. He had no doubt, however, about the fact of His coming. Jesus Himself had used the analogy of the coming of a thief to refer to His coming on the Day of the Lord (Matt. 24:42-43; see Luke 12:39-40). Thieves come suddenly; so, will Christ. Thus, we are certain of the following facts: Jesus will indeed return to earth. This truth is

to be where we unite (and anticipate) as followers of Christ. The exact time and circumstances of His return are known only to God, so as we relate to each other, we allow there to be liberty and grace among us. Ultimately, this should lead in our relationships to display love and charity.

For believers, faith (toward God) and love (toward one another) are nothing new. These attitudes characterize the Christian life from the beginning. Soldiers were to put on their armor every day, and Jesus' followers are to renew their faith and love daily. Hope (confident expectation) is on the same level as faith and love. Here, the hope related to salvation refers not to our initial experience of conversion but to the glorious future we will enjoy with Christ (1 Thess. 4:17). The armor illustration reminds us that our Christian life includes spiritual warfare. How do we win? Not through specialized education or some special means available to a select few. We win as Christians by displaying the simple virtues Christ values in His people.

Why did Paul compare Jesus' return with "darkness" and the activities of a "thief"? How would you describe a Christian who is awake to the return of Christ versus asleep? What do the terms sober up, suit up, and settle up mean?

An ongoing challenge for 21st-century believers is to show we are living in anticipation of Jesus' return through love, faith, and hope. What is the relationship between armor (such as a breastplate and helmet) and faith, hope, and love? Why do you think Paul included these three ideas here? How do faith, love, and hope sum up what it means to "belong to the day" (v. 8)?

Paul ended his teaching on Jesus' return with the same note as he ended chapter 4—encourage one another. What are some practical ways we encourage each other to live for Christ as we wait for His return?

Final Application Questions:

How does the prospect of Jesus' unpredictable, rapid return inform how we carry out the mission of God? What does it mean for us to live like Jesus is coming back at any moment?

How should we talk about the end times? How should you respond when you encounter people making bold predictions about Christ's return that are unknown? Would you have any regrets if Jesus came back today in relationships?

How does the hope of Christ's coming encourage Christians to live soberly and seriously? What might that look like in practice this week?

Check out the following link for the four perspectives regarding end times:
https://reasonsforhopejesus.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Four-End-Times-Views_Reasons-for-Hope-Jesus.pdf