



Spiritual Hope – Week 4

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Overview

In the fourth message of the series entitled, *Fearless*, we will answer questions about the End Times in 1 Thessalonians 4 & 5.

Discussion Questions

Jesus said 2,000 years ago in **Matthew 24:6-8**: “**And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows.**”

Jesus continues in **verses 12-14**: “**And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.**”

Jesus says here that before the end will come, the Gospel will have to be preached in all the world. Everyone may not be saved, but every people group will be exposed to the Gospel. As of six years ago, over 30 million people in 450 separate groups have never been reached with the Gospel. Within the last two years, 121 of those groups have been reached. Although we do not know when Jesus will return, we know it is a possibility that the end is near, and we should be ready for His return at any time.

- What can we do to prepare for Jesus' return?

Three Questions Paul Answers About End Times

1. What happens to believers at the Rapture?

1 Thessalonians 4:14 says, “**For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.**” When Jesus returns, those who have accepted Christ, both living and those who have passed away, will receive new, glorified bodies that will never decay or die. When believers die, their spirit is immediately in the presence of God (according to Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:8). However, they are not yet reconnected with their resurrected body.

- In your own words, how would you explain this truth to someone who asks what happens when Jesus returns?

2. How does the promise of the return of Christ affect us today?

Christ's resurrection forms the basis and guarantee of our hope because it is the great historical event that demonstrated that death is truly conquered. In other words, believers who have died are presently in heaven. In **Luke 23:34** Jesus says to the thief on the cross, “**...’Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.’**” This hope is contrasted with those who have no hope, who believe that there is no life after death, and have no hope of ever seeing loved ones again.

- Why does this promise give you hope?

3. What's important to know about the coming of Christ at the Rapture?

1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 says, **“For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.”**

- How can you comfort others with this promise from God?

Two Theological Views of the Rapture and Second Coming of Christ

Pre-Tribulation Rapture	Post-Tribulation Rapture
This particular view espouses that the Rapture happens, and Jesus meets the believers in the sky and takes them to Heaven for seven years. It is during this seven-year period the earth experiences the Tribulation and the wrath of God. All the while the Church – the Bride of Christ – becomes the center of Heaven’s attention along with Christ. This is called the ‘Marriage Supper Of the Lamb’ as seen in Revelation 19. At the end of these seven years, Jesus and believers return in what the Scriptures call the ‘Return of Christ’ or ‘Second Coming of Christ’ to set up His Millennial Kingdom.	This view states that the church will go through the Tribulation – the seven years spoken about in the books of Daniel and Revelation. This view also states that at the end of the Tribulation, the church is raptured and meets Jesus in the sky. Then they immediately return to the earth with Christ to join Him in His 1000 year reign – known as the Millennial Kingdom. The church goes through the Tribulation – but experiences victory in the end.

The key distinction between these two views is whether Christians experience the wrath of God during the Great Tribulation. But Paul says in **1 Thessalonians 5:9**: **“For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,”** There’s a difference between man’s judgment and God’s wrath.

- What are your thoughts about these two theological views?

Prayer

God, thank You for making a way for us to be with You for all eternity. Thank you for giving us hope about the end times and the promise of Jesus’ return. We ask for Your guidance as we comfort others with Your truth. Amen.

Pray for the specific needs of the group.