

BEING RAPTURED AT CHRIST'S COMING

PLEASE do not read these comments until you have prayed and read the Bible for this lesson to learn what the Holy Spirit wants you to teach your students. Then let Him guide you in using these notes. When you follow this procedure you will be a better teacher of your students.

Lesson Aim: Exhort Christians to walk so as to please God and to abound in it more and more.

Suggestion: Have the students read the Scriptures and answer the questions in the student lesson. Insert questions that fit your lesson aim for class discussion. Use the ones below where appropriate.

Introduction: In chapter four Paul gives some practical exhortations to believers so they might know how to walk to please God. First, due to the immorality in their culture, he exhorts them to abstain from all sexual sins and live holy lives (4:1-8). Second, some believers left their jobs, thinking Christ's coming for the Rapture was soon. This put a burden on the other believers to feed them, so he exhorted them to return to work to take care of their own needs (4:9-10). Third, there was confusion as to what happens to believers that die before the Rapture. Paul gives the fullest account of this event to comfort them (4:13-18). Paul wrote the last two chapters so they would know how they "ought to walk and to please God (1 Thes 4:1).

What should be the goal of our Christian lives so that we please God? 4:1-2

We are to abound more and more in a pure Christian walk. We are to live so that we look and act less and less like the world and more and more like Jesus Christ. The Bible calls this process sanctification. Sanctification begins with the heart (or mind). We are told to "keep our heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life" (Prov 4:23). Jesus said, "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure in his heart brings forth that which is evil" (Lk 6:45). We should have as our goal that Christ is formed in us. That was Paul's goal for all of his converts (Gal 4:19).

How does a person fall prey to sexual immorality and how can it be avoided? 4:3-8

Paul warned his converts to abstain from fornication (v.3). Fornication includes all sexual sins which begin in the mind or heart and is practiced in the flesh. A person is guilty of fornication when he dwells on any immoral sex act. As a man thinks, so is he. We possess our bodies in sanctification and honor when we take control of our minds (v, 4). We are not to let our immoral culture set our moral standards (v. 5). Impure living culminates in the vengeance of God (v. 6; cf. Rom 12:19). Impure living is inconsistent with the holy calling of God (v. 7; 1 Pet 1:15). Impure living demonstrates a despiteful attitude toward God (v. 8). But we need not sin. God has given us the Holy Spirit to dwell in us and He will enable us to live a holy life when we obey Him (v. 8; 1 Cor 6:19-20).

How does the truth about the Rapture give comfort to believers? 4:13-18

Some believers were grieving for Christians that had died because they thought they would not be caught up in the Rapture. They thought the Rapture was only for those that were alive at Christ's return. Paul wrote to correct their error about the Rapture so they would not sorrow for the dead as the world does; they have no hope (v. 13). Those who "sleep in Jesus" are alive with Jesus in Heaven. They are given spiritual bodies when their physical bodies are laid to rest in the earth (2 Cor 5:1-4). The bodies of church-believers will "sleep" in the bosom of the earth until Christ comes with these believers in their spirit-bodies of for the resurrection of their physical bodies (v. 14). First, Christ will "awaken" the bodies of the believers that died (v. 15). To do this, He "shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God (see notes for 3:13 about the "last trump") and the dead in Christ shall rise first" (v. 16). Each church-believer will be given a body like Christ's resurrection body and they shall be raised to join Christ in the air. He will not come to the earth at this time. Then those that are alive will have their bodies changed in the twinkling of an eye (1 Cor 15:51-52). Their bodies will not be resurrected since they have not died, but they will have the same kind of bodies as those that were resurrected (1 Cor 15:53-54). Then they shall rise to meet the Lord in the air and be with Him forever (v.17). This truth was given to comfort all church-believers. Church-believers are the Bride of Christ and are given bodies like His. He will marry His Bride in Heaven during the Tribulation. Then all OT believers and believers from the Tribulation will be raised at Christ's Second Coming to be in His Millennial Kingdom.