

GETTING READY FOR 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: Get ready for Christ's return by contributing to the spiritual life of your local church.

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 five Paul concludes his practical instructions and exhortations to the Thessalonian church. In view of Christ's soon coming, Paul exhorts them to live soberly and watchfully (5:1-11). Paul then summarizes specific areas of Christian responsibility in which these Thessalonian Christians are to be growing. First of all, every Christian is responsible for personal holiness, but after that he should encourage his brethren to live holy lives. Paul's desire for the Thessalonian congregation was that they be a vibrant, healthy church, building each other up in Jesus Christ. "Therefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also you do" (1 Thess 5:11; cf. 3:12-13).

What is the first thing that Christians should do to get ready for the Rapture? 5:1-11

True Christians should watch for the signs of the Day of the Lord, because there are no signs for the Rapture. Since the Rapture will come before that Day, the signs for the Day of the Lord will forewarn alert believers to get ready for the coming of the Lord to take them to Heaven. The Day of the Lord begins with the Tribulation, but unbelievers will not see the danger coming on them as a thief in the night (5:1-3). Believers are told to watch with spiritual alertness and be sober with spiritual awareness (5:4-6). They will do this by putting on the breastplate of faith and love to protect their hearts from losing fellowship with the Lord and the helmet of hope (assurance) of salvation to protect their minds from satanic lies (5:8). Christ loves the Church, His Bride, and He will not let her experience His wrath in the Tribulation, but Satan will tell her that she will suffer in the Tribulation to purify her (5:9-10). They should comfort and build up each other with these words to be ready for the Rapture.

How should Christians treat others in their church so they are ready for the Rapture? 5:12-15

First, they need to appreciate their pastors who labor among them in preaching and teaching God's Word to them, who are over them to direct them into the paths of righteousness and who admonish them when a problem arises by confronting the persons involved and resolving the problem with words of wisdom. They must esteem their pastors very highly with love because they are in the Lord's work (5:12-13). Second, they need to respect one another and live in peace (5:13). A proper attitude toward church leadership will produce a unified congregation. Third, they need to help those with special needs. Those who walk disorderly need to be sternly admonished (cf. 4:11-12). Those who are discouraged (fainthearted, not "feeble-minded") need to be encouraged (cf. 4:13-18; 5:9-11). Those who are morally weak need help to overcome their temptations (cf. 4:2-8). They need to be good to both believers and unbelievers (5:14-15).

What attitude should Christians have so they will be ready for the Rapture? 5:16-22

They are to "rejoice evermore" (5:16). It is a way of life (cf. Phil 4:4). It is the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22). They are to "pray without ceasing" by maintaining a readiness to pray to God for everything (5:17). They are to give thanks for everything (5:18). It is done when a Christian really believes Romans 8:28. They are to stop quenching the Spirit by putting out His fire in their hearts through disobedience (5:19). They are to stop despising prophecies by having contempt for those who tell God's future plans (5:20). They are to test all doctrines by God's Word and tightly hold onto those that prove to be genuine (5:21). They are to abstain from every form of evil, whether it is an evil teacher or his evil doctrine (5:22).

What should be the goal of Christians so they are ready for the Rapture? 5:23-24

The goal that Paul had for the believers at Thessalonica was to be sanctified in their spirit, soul and body. He wanted them to be truthful and blameless at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. He knew that God was faithful and would finally accomplish this work when they would meet Jesus Christ in the Rapture. Then they would be like His Son when they would see Him as He is (1 Jn 3:2-3).