

LESSON ELEVEN

PAUL'S LETTER TO THE THESSALONIANS - PART TWO

Scriptural Reference: I Thessalonians Chapters 4 & 5.

A. **PAUL'S EXHORTATION: (I Thessalonians 4:1-12).**

The first part of chapter four is an exhortation to holiness. Paul exhorted them to:

1. Abstain from fornication;
2. Not defraud his brother;
3. Mind their affairs;
4. Work with his hands;
5. Be honest with all men.

There may be a problem in understanding verse four. The word "vessel" undoubtedly refers to one's body. In that case, it means that a person is to control his body in purity. Some students believe it refers to a man's wife. To throw some light on this Scripture, let us quote from The Living Bible: *"God wants you to be holy and pure and keep clear of any sexual sins so that each of you will marry in holiness and honour" (I Thessalonians 4:4).*

B. **HOPE WITHOUT SORROW: (I Thessalonians 4:13-18).**

The Thessalonian church was troubled about the Christians who had died. In this epistle, Paul gives a very explicit explanation about the coming of the Lord, which is the hope of the Church. Each chapter closes with a statement about the Lord's return and its meaning to the child of God. These statements link the return of Jesus to:

1. Salvation,
2. Service,
3. Sanctification,
4. Comfort,
5. Separation.

In this well-known portion of Scripture, Paul states facts about the Lord's return for His church:

1. It is a comforting hope for the bereaved. They will be reunited with their loved ones.
2. Those who have died in the Lord will be caught up first, and then the living saints will be raptured with them to meet the Lord in the air.
3. Accompanying the return of the Lord for His church, there will be a shout, the voice of the archangel, and the trumpet of God.

The student should understand the following:

1. The word "prevent," verse 15, should read "precede."
2. The expression "sleep in Jesus" refers to a conscious rest in the Lord. It is the body, which is sleeping. The spirit and soul of man is with the Lord. See II Corinthians 5:6-8.
3. The verb "to meet" as used in verse 17 is the same as the verb "to meet" used in Acts 28:15. Brethren came from Rome to meet Paul at Appiiforum to return or to accompany them back

to Rome. This is the meaning here: "The Lord will come to meet the church in the air to accompany the church back to heaven."

C. NOT APPOINTED TO WRATH:

Scriptural Reference:

"For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Thessalonians 5:9).

After the rapture of the church, the Day of the Lord will take place, which will include the Great Tribulation and Armageddon. This is a time of judgment for the unbelievers. However, this time of God's wrath is not for the church; therefore the church is exhorted to be sober, put on the breastplate of love and for a helmet, the hope of salvation. In other words, the church does not look for the Day of the Lord, a time of God's wrath, but rather for the rapture when Jesus will catch the church home to Himself.

D. MINISTRY TO BE ESTEEMED:

Scriptural Reference:

"And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their works sake. And be at peace among yourselves" (I Thessalonians 5:12-13).

It is essential that God's people esteem and love the ministry who admonishes them and through teaching helps them to be ready for the Lord's return.

E. PAUL'S FINAL EXHORTATION: (I Thessalonians 5:14-22).

In Paul's final exhortation, several things are mentioned. The student should list them and study each individually. The "feeble minded," verse 14, is the faint hearted. Special note should be taken to the sins against the Holy Spirit - namely quenching and despising. They were exhorted to discern between the true and the false and to avoid even the appearance of wrongdoing.

F. ENTIRE SANCTIFICATION:

Scriptural Reference:

"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Thessalonians 5:23).

Salvation is for the whole man. It is impossible to be sanctified body, soul and spirit and to be found blameless when Jesus returns. "To be blameless" is to walk in all the light that one has and to live above condemnation.

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SELF HELP TEST

- A. List all the things mentioned in Paul's final exhortation as given in the last chapter of I Thessalonians.

- B. Explain what it means to be "blameless."

- C. What did Paul mean by "possessing one's body in sanctification and honor"?

- D. Write in your own words "... *shall not prevent them which are asleep.*"

- E. What will accompany the return of our Lord for His Church?

- F. What does the phrase "not appointed us to wrath" teach us?

- G. Quote the Scripture that teaches that God's people should esteem and love the ministry.