

# HANDOUT FOR “THE RETURN OF CHRIST”

## BIBLE STUDY 1 Thessalonians 4:13 – 5:11

This was the church that had begun under the preaching of Paul in a mission of only three weeks (Acts 17:1-2). In that time they had been well taught, before Jewish opposition drove the evangelists out. Now however, that Paul is writing to the Thessalonians some months later, he is aware of a question that is puzzling the young Christians. If one of their members died before the second coming of Christ had taken place, would that person be at a disadvantage, in contrast to those who were still alive?

This is the starting point of the passage. Read it now, and use these questions to help you:

**1** How are we to understand the second coming in relation to the faithful departed (verses 13-18)? Would those who were “still alive” (verse 15) have precedence over them? How could the Thessalonians “encourage” (verse 18) the recently bereaved?

**2** Scan the same verses again and establish the position of the church on earth, at the time of the Coming. Observe that Paul, naturally, classes himself among such.

**3** Look more closely at verses 15-17, and consider the Coming in relation to the Lord himself. Paul’s teaching is only “in accordance to the Lord’s own word”. Compare these verses with, say, John 14:1-3.

**4** Consider 5:1-3 and the teaching about the Coming in relation to time. Compare Matthew 24:42-44.

**5** Look at the same verses now, in relation to the unbelieving world. Compare these verses with 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 and Matthew 24:37-38.

**6** Lastly, consider the Return in relation to the Christian’s present activities (5:4-11)

## REFLECTION

**A** Study 1 Thessalonians 4:13–5:11. Why was this passage written?

From these words, how may we understand the coming of Christ, in relation to Christians who have died, the Day itself, its timing and our right preparation for it?

**B** Compare John 14:3 with 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18. How does Paul’s teaching relate to Christ’s?

**C** What should be your attitude to readers of the Bible who, while believing in the main fact of Christ’s coming, may not agree with you on every point of interpretation?

**D** What do your non-Christian friends think about the future of the world? How does their view differ from yours?

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<b>BIBLE CHECK</b>	<b>Prophetically:</b>	Daniel 7:13-14; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18
	<b>Personally:</b>	Matthew 28:20; Acts 1:11
	<b>Visibly:</b>	Matthew 24:30; Revelation 1:7
	<b>Suddenly:</b>	Matthew 24:27,36-51; 1 Thessalonians 5:2-3
	<b>Triumphantly:</b>	Luke 21:27-28; Philippians 2:9-11
	<b>Conclusively:</b>	1 Corinthians 15:24; 1 Thessalonians 4:17

## KEY TRUTH

All Christians look forward to the personal return of Christ at the end of the age, as predicted by the Bible.

## POSTSCRIPT

History is full of examples of false predictions relating to the time of Christ’s return.

The Christian is best prepared for this event by being involved in active, obedient service.