**Introduction**

**Chapter 4 concludes with a breathtaking vision: Jesus Christ, in all His glory, coming down from heaven; those who have died in Christ rising from their graves; those Christians still alive being instantly transformed before being “caught up” to meet the Lord in the air, and going to Heaven with Him! This event is called the “Rapture of the Church”. Paul had shared this vision to comfort the saints in Thessalonica who had experienced death in their family, by natural causes or because of accident or persecution. Then, as now, there were many questions about this event, the most common of which was, “When is it going to happen?” Paul addresses this question in Chapter 5. Paul’s answer echoes the words of Jesus to His disciples.**

**There have been many people since then who thought that they knew better than Paul (or Jesus!). They studied the Bible carefully, looking for hints or clues that would permit them to set a date or time for Jesus’ return. One of these led to an event known as “The Great Disappointment”.**

**William Miller, a lay Baptist preacher, set the date of the return of Jesus Christ as being October 22, 1844. Hundreds of Christians (called Millerites or Second Adventists) believed him. As the day approached, some gave up all their worldly possessions. Wearing white “ascension robes”, they waited expectantly. Sadly, they were disappointed – October 22, 1844, came and went; nothing happened. Miller was ridiculed, as were many of his followers. After the Great Disappointment, most returned to their everyday lives and hoped that people would forget. Some Millerites went on, eventually establishing the Seventh-Day Adventist Church.**

**Chapter 5 concludes with some short but powerful “Christian commandments”, worthy of meditation, memorization, and imitation.**

1. **Read I Thessalonians 5:1-8. Also, read the following passages: Luke 12:37-40; Acts 1:6-8. How does Paul describe the “times and seasons” of the return of Jesus Christ (the day of the Lord)? (v.1-2) Answer: He compares it to the coming of a in the .**
2. **What will the unbelieving people be saying and doing? (v.3; see also Matthew 24:36-44; Luke 17:26-30; II Peter 3:1-10) Answer:**
3. **What will happen to those who are not ready when Jesus returns? What example does Paul give? (v.3; see also Matthew 24:45-51; Luke 21:34-35) Answer:**
4. **Why should Christians NOT be taken by surprise when Jesus returns? (v. 4-5) Answer: We are not in . (See also John 1:6-9; I John 1:5-7; I John 2:8-10)**
5. **What ONE thing did Paul warn the Thessalonian saints NOT be doing, and what TWO things did he tell them to do instead? (v. 6) Answer: They were NOT to like others, but to and be . (See Mark 13:32-37; Luke 21:36)**
6. **What are the TWO things that people do “in the night”? Is Paul talking about *actual* or *spiritual* darkness? (v. 7; see also John 3:17-21; Luke 22:52-53; Acts 26:13-18; Ephesians 5:11-13; Colossians 1:12-14) Answer:**
7. **In sharp contrast to what was going on in the darkness (night), what should “us” Christians be doing in the light (day)? (v. 8; see also Ephesians 6:13-18)**
8. **What “appointment” awaits those who walk in darkness? How is it different from those who walk in the light? Who makes the difference? How did He do it? (v. 9-10)**
9. **As a result of these teachings, what TWO things should those who belong to Jesus do with each other? (v. 11; see also Malachi 3:16-17)**
10. **Read verses 12-13. This short passage instructs the Thessalonians (and us) on the right attitude towards those who are leaders in the congregation. This obviously includes pastors but can also apply to all ministry leaders. What THREE responsibilities do they have? (v. 12) Answer: They among us, and are us in the Lord, and they (to caution or gently reprove) us. See Ephesians 4: 11-16; II Timothy 3:16-17.**
11. **What should be our attitude towards those church leaders, and WHY? (v.12-13) Answer:**
12. **Finally, and most importantly, how should ALL Christians relate to each other? (v. 13; see also Isaiah Proverbs 16:7; 26:3-4; Isaiah 57:19-21; John 14:27; Romans 12:18) Answer:**
13. **Read verses 14-22. This passage is made up of a list of commandments about how followers of Jesus Christ should relate to the Lord and each other. Paul starts by focusing on those who have special needs in the church. Who are they? (v. 14)**
14. **What Christian virtue (and fruit of the Spirit – Galatians 5:16-26) should we practice with EVERYONE? (v.14)**
15. **What should a dedicated disciple of Jesus Christ NEVER (ever) do – even to those outside the church? (v.15)**
16. **What should Christians ALWAYS (ever) do with EVERYONE? (v.14) Answer: We should always follow that which is .**
17. **Verses 16-18 paint a beautiful picture of mature Christian conduct. What THREE actions are manifested when we fully commit ourselves to the Christian way of life? Why is it important to make these wise choices? Answer:**
18. **Read verse 19. What does it mean to “quench” (extinguish) the Holy Spirit? Can you think of ways that Christians quench the Spirit? (See also I Samuel 2:12-17, 22-24, 3:1; 14:1-6; Matthew 13:22; Ephesians 4:29-32; I Timothy 4:12-16)**
19. **Read verses 20-21. What should our attitude be towards the preaching of the Word of God? (v.20)**
20. **What should Christians DO before accepting what has been preached as “the Gospel truth”? (v. 16) Answer: Christians should (test, examine, or discern) all preaching/teachings before accepting them as true. See Acts 17:10-12; Acts 20:28-32; II Peter 2:1-2; I John 4:1-3; Revelation 2:1-3.**
21. **How can evil appear in our lives, homes, churches, and culture? What is the God-pleasing response to the “appearance of evil”? (v. 22; see also Ephesians 5:1-12)**
22. **Read verses 23-28. This is the last passage of Paul’s wonderful letter to the saints in Thessalonica. What is Paul’s final prayer for these Christians? Who stands ready to “guarantee” the answer to this prayer? (v. 23-24)**
23. **What does Paul want the Thessalonians to do for him and his missionary friends? (v. 25)**
24. **How should believers greet each other? (v.26)**
25. **What does Paul “charge” the leader(s) of the church in Thessalonica to do with this letter? (v.27; see also Nehemiah 8:1-8; Acts 15:22-31; Colossians 4:16)**

**Conclusion**

**Paul’s letter to the church in Thessalonica ends with a simple benediction (v. 28): “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.” GRACE – defined as “God’s Riches At Christ’s Expense” - is the ultimate manifestation of God’s love towards all mankind, especially those who have believed the Gospel. We are saved by grace; we are kept by grace; and, one day we will enter our heavenly home by grace. Since God has been so gracious to us, we too should be gracious to each other, regardless of spiritual condition, socioeconomic status, race or ethnicity or station in life. All of Paul’s instructions to the church are designed to conceive, develop, and mature the gracious Person of Jesus Christ in the everyday lives of ALL His disciples.**

**This is not an easy process; Paul (and the other apostles) commands Christians to live holy lives. This puts us in direct conflict with our sinful culture AND our own sinful nature, with all of its selfish, ungodly desires. Working in our favor is the Holy Spirit of God, who gives us the necessary power to overcome inner and outer sinfulness – IF we truly want to.**

**The hope of every mature Christian is fixed upon Heaven, where we will enjoy the company of our God, our Savior and each other for all of eternity. Even now, as the reality of old age, sickness and death confront us, we can take comfort in the greater reality of the promise of our RESURRECTED Savior: where He abides forever, we shall forever abide with Him.**