

# ***International Bible Lessons Commentary***

## ***1 Thessalonians 4:13–5:11***

***International Bible Lessons***

**Sunday, April 21, 2013**

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The **[International Bible Lesson](#)** (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, April 21, 2013**, is from **1 Thessalonians 4:13–5:11**. **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lessons Commentary* (formerly, *Bible Lesson Forum*) below. **Study Hints for Thinking Further** discuss the five questions below to help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion; these hints are available on the **[International Bible Lessons Commentary](#)** website. For additional **International Bible Lesson Commentaries**, see the complete and comprehensive **[International Bible Lessons Commentary Index](#)**. The weekly **[International Bible Lesson](#)** is posted each Saturday before the lesson is scheduled to be taught at <http://InternationalBibleLessons.org> and in *The Oklahoman* newspaper.

### ***International Bible Lesson Commentary***

#### **1 Thessalonians 4:13–18**

**(1 Thessalonians 4:13)** But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about those who have died, so that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope.

Paul did not teach that we should not grieve when a loved one dies: we can grieve with hope. We feel their loss, but we know that whenever believers die in the Lord our loss is their gain. Some grieve because they have no hope of ever seeing their loved ones again. As followers of Jesus Christ, when we die we will see Jesus and all who have gone before us who love Him too. If a follower of Jesus dies before we do, we know that in the Lord we will see them again someday: we have this hope as we grieve.

**(1 Thessalonians 4:14)** For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have died.

We have hope for the future based on excellent eyewitness testimony and the teachings of the Hebrew prophets. We believe that Jesus, our Lord and Savior, died and rose again. Jesus promised to return according to His Father's perfect timing. When Jesus does return, He will bring back to Earth all who have died believing in Him.

**(1 Thessalonians 4:15)** For this we declare to you by the word of the

**Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will by no means precede those who have died.**

The Apostle Paul had the word or promise of the Lord on this fact. He used “we declare,” because all of the apostles of the Lord Jesus agreed on this fact. Those who have died physically have gone spiritually to be with the Lord and with whoever else has died with faith in the Lord Jesus. We may be alive when the Lord returns, but we will not precede or see the Lord before those whose bodies are buried in the ground—they will have seen the Lord already in their spiritual bodies and will return with the Lord before their resurrected human bodies are raised from their graves.

**(1 Thessalonians 4:16) For the Lord himself, with a cry of command, with the archangel’s call and with the sound of God’s trumpet, will descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first.**

The Lord Jesus will return according to God’s perfect timing, and Jesus will remain in charge or in command over all events related to His coming. We will recognize His return, because we will hear the archangel’s call and God’s trumpet at Jesus’ command. Jesus himself will return, and the bodies of those who died believing in Jesus Christ will rise first.

**(1 Thessalonians 4:17) Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up in the clouds together with them to meet the Lord in the air; and so we will be with the Lord forever.**

If we are alive on the earth when the Lord Jesus comes, we will see the deceased rising from their graves, but our eyes will be focused on Jesus Christ as our Lord and Redeemer, Who comes to fulfill His promises. We will not be left behind when the dead in Christ rise from their graves. We will be caught up also (not having died) and all believers in Jesus will be with Him and their loved ones forever.

**(1 Thessalonians 4:18) Therefore encourage one another with these words.**

When a loved one dies or is sick or near death, and if we are sick or near death ourselves should the Lord not come in our lifetime, we and other Christians may grieve our losses and illnesses, even as we pray with hope for Jesus’ healing others or us in this life. But when we or others grieve, we are to encourage one another with these Scriptures, these words of the Apostle Paul.

### **1 Thessalonians 5:1–5:11**

**(1 Thessalonians 5:1) Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers and sisters, you do not need to have anything written to you.**

Paul did not write about the exact day or hour of the Lord's coming. With time zones and international datelines, Jesus would not have explained all of the complications that would be in place 2000 years later if he had tried to explain the Father's calendar of events and their timing. The exact times and seasons above and below the equator are different, and Jesus listeners did not know about the equator with the fact that someday we would have time zones. It would not have made much sense for Him to say something like on the ninth hour Jerusalem time.

**(1 Thessalonians 5:2) For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.**

The Lord will come unexpectedly. Certain conditions that Jesus described before His return must be fulfilled; for example, the gospel must be preached to all nations. We can look for many of these conditions to be fulfilled, but when Jesus comes we will not be forewarned as so as to get prepared at the last moment to meet Him. We need to live each moment of each day prepared for His second coming.

**(1 Thessalonians 5:3) When they say, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them, as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and there will be no escape!**

The world system or the kingdoms of this world may be signing peace agreements and perhaps even using economic pressure and intimidation to ensure or think they have achieved world peace and security—which is always being sought apart from trusting God. However, God will bring sudden destruction on those who trust in themselves or other people instead of trusting in Jesus and receiving His peace.

**(1 Thessalonians 5:4) But you, beloved, are not in darkness, for that day to surprise you like a thief;**

The kingdoms of this world or the people of this world live in darkness. Having turned from the truth or having refused to accept the truth of God and the Scriptures, they live in error, falsehood, and lies, deceived and deceiving others. Believers in Jesus and the Word of God live prepared, so they are not surprised when Jesus returns, but look forward to His returning with rejoicing.

**(1 Thessalonians 5:5) for you are all children of light and children of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness.**

All those who trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior are adopted into God's family as His sons and daughters. Jesus is the light, the light of this world. Jesus is the truth, the truth of God that came into this world. As children of God, we walk in the light and truth of God that God provides—not in error, falsehood, or lies.

**(1 Thessalonians 5:6) So then let us not fall asleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober;**

To “fall asleep” means to become morally and spiritually lazy; as children of God, to stop living according to Jesus’ teachings and examples, to fall into the traps of the devil and began practicing sin, to live without faith and trust in Jesus in our everyday lives. We need to keep studying God’s Word to know, believe, and live according to God’s Word and not destroy our powers of reasoning by turning back to sinful practices.

**(1 Thessalonians 5:7) for those who sleep sleep at night, and those who are drunk get drunk at night.**

The “night” is a symbol for a place of moral darkness, a place where the clear teachings of biblical morality are ignored, repudiated, even mocked by some. Some believers might purposely wander into one of these dark places and lose their moral and spiritual sensitivity and God’s guidance. Some go into dark places to do the dark things of the night.

**(1 Thessalonians 5:8) But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation.**

Paul wants Christians to see themselves (and actually live) as living in the light that Jesus Christ came to give. To be sober is to live according to the Word of God, to follow your sound reasoning, and to rely on the leading and influence of the Holy Spirit. We need to use our faith in and love for Jesus Christ to help us protect our hearts, our minds, and our will, so we do not choose to follow the devil’s temptations. We keep hoping for the complete salvation that Jesus came to give, and this hope of salvation helps us remain sober and think about Jesus Christ rather than ponder the perceived pleasures of sin.

**(1 Thessalonians 5:9) For God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,**

We have the hope of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, because God has determined that by grace those who place their faith in Jesus Christ will inherit salvation—salvation from the habitual practice of sin, salvation from the judgment and punishment of God that our sins deserve, and the salvation of joyful living with Jesus Christ, God the Father, and all those who love God forever.

**(1 Thessalonians 5:10) who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him.**

In this verse, Paul uses the word “sleep” to mean physical death rather than

losing our moral and spiritual commitments to follow Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Those who love Jesus, whose bodies are physically dead, spiritually live with Jesus in heaven. Those of us who are physically and spiritually alive in Jesus Christ will live in Him and with Him in heaven someday, because Jesus died as a sacrifice for our sins and made our forgiveness possible.

**(1 Thessalonians 5:11) Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.**

Paul wants the followers of Jesus Christ to encourage one another when they grieve over their loss of a loved one. He wants believers to build up one another when they are tempted to do wrong, fall into temptation, or take the forbidden path. Believers build up each other by using the words of Jesus and pointing people back to Jesus as Lord and Savior. Believers can build one another up as they study the Bible together, pray for one another, and share the truths of God's Word with one another.

### **Five Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further**

1. What are some indications in Paul's letter that it is okay for Christians to grieve the death of a loved one who also believed in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior?
2. What aspect of the Christian hope did Paul emphasize in this letter?
3. How will Jesus return to our world?
4. How have some been deceived about Jesus' return?
5. What is one sign that Paul mentions in this letter that Jesus' return may be near?

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