

QUIET TIME

Theme: The death of Christ and Christians

- Try to make a specific time every day to meet Jesus Christ through reading and meditating his Word.
- Pray, talk with Jesus Christ and make a few short notes about this Bible passage in your notebook.
- Record what you discover, what speaks to your mind and heart, what you find difficult or what you understand.

- Day 1 Psalm 22:15-19
Prophecy about the death of Jesus (cf. John 19:18,23,28,34)
- Day 2 Mark 15:1-38
Jesus Christ is crucified
- Day 3^{BS} John 10:11-18
Jesus is not a victim
- Day 4 Romans 5:6-11
Why Jesus gave his life
- Day 5 1 Peter 4:12-19
Also Christians must suffer and die
- Day 6 Ecclesiastes 12:1-7
What happens to man when he dies
- Day 7 2 Corinthians 5:1-9
The deposit guaranteeing what is to come
- Day 8 Philippians 1:20-24
Where the believer goes after death
- Day 9 Luke 16:19-31
Where the unbeliever goes after death
- Day 10 Ecclesiastes 9:5-10
Dead people cannot make contact with living people
- Think about Luke 23:34.
Instead of standing on your rights you could pray for the people who abuse your rights (cf. Luke 6:28)!
 - Pray every day for someone or something specific and wait in expectation for what God is going to do (Psalm 5:3).

STUDY

Theme: Life after death

Read study 17 carefully before the next meeting. If you have questions, write them down and mail them to one of your group leaders. We will seek an answer together.

BIBLE STUDY

Theme: The Good Shepherd lays down his life for his sheep

If you like, you may already prepare the Bible Study for the coming meeting by reading through the Bible passage. Make use of the 5-step Bible Study method. The Bible passage is: **John 10:1-18**.

MEMORISATION

1. Motivation

Jesus memorised Bible verses (Luke 4:4-13). Are you doing that?

2. Memorisation

Memorise this verse in the Bible version of your choice.

THE DEATH OF CHRIST

1 Peter 3:18a

For Christ died for sins once for all,
the righteous for the unrighteous,
to bring you to God.

1 Peter 3:18a (NIV)

3. Review and back-review

Review the last 5 memorised verses once every day and back-review all other memorised verses once every three weeks.

4. Memorisation of Bible books body

The first 7 letters of Paul:

Romans, 1&2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians.

17. Life after death

'Death' is a mystery. Besides Jesus Christ no one has ever returned to tell what death is and what happens after death. None of the people raised from the dead in the Bible said anything about life after death. This is God's prerogative. Only he reveals what is death and what happens after death.

What happens with you between your death and the second coming of Christ? Where are you going when you die? What will you be doing there?

This study is about what the Bible teaches about life after death.

PHYSICAL DEATH

A. How do modern people view death?

Modern people have an opinion about everything, even about 'death'. Some people regard physical death as something 'natural': 'the end of their existence'. But generally people who do not know Jesus Christ continually live in fear of death (Hebrews 2:14-15)!

B. Is death something natural or a punishment?

The Bible does not describe physical death as something 'natural'. God did not create the first people in his image with the purpose to let them die!

The Bible teaches that death is the result of sin – of disobedience to God (Genesis 2:15-17; Romans 6:23a). God is righteous and must therefore punish disobedience. Physical death is a punishment of God for disobedience to God (Genesis 3:17-19). The Bible describes death as an expression of God's holy indignation (wrath) (Psalm 90:7-11). Death is a sentence from God (Romans 1:32), a curse from God (Galatians 3:13).

But God is not only righteous and holy, he is also love and wants people from all walks of life to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:4). If God were only righteous and not love, he could have destroyed Adam immediately after his transgression (Genesis 2:17). But because God is also love he withheld the execution of his punishment. By God's special grace Jesus Christ conquered sin and death (2 Timothy 1:10)! That is why death only has an everlasting effect on people who reject God's salvation in Jesus Christ.

C. A human being is one soul, consisting of a body and a spirit

At the creation God formed (the body of) man from the dust (elements) of the earth and breathed into his nose the breath of life. And man became literally 'a living soul' (Genesis 2:7). The spirit of man in man makes him to be a living soul, a living being. Thus man does not 'have' a soul, but 'is' a living soul. His soul or being has two sides:

a visible material body and an invisible immaterial spirit. The soul or being of man consists of a body and a spirit. Man is not a duality, but a unity! God created his body from the elements of the earth, but breathed his spirit into him and this made him an image-bearer of God.

Later it is impossible to make a sharp differentiation between the words: 'soul' (100x in NT) and 'spirit' (370x in NT).

Both 'soul' (Acts 20:10) and 'spirit' (2 Thessalonians 2:8) mean 'breath'.

Both words express physical 'life': "Those who were trying to take the child's 'soul' (life) are dead" (Matthew 2:20) and "Her spirit (life) returned" (Luke 8:55).

Both words can express emotions: the 'soul' (heart) can be troubled (John 12:27) and the 'spirit' can be distressed (Acts 17:16).

Both words have a spiritual function: Mary says: "My soul glorifies the Lord" (Luke 1:46) and "My spirit rejoices in God my Saviour" (Luke 1:47).

The immaterial being of man is called 'soul' (Revelation 6:9) or 'spirit' (Hebrews 12:23).

The 'soul' (life) refers to the whole person (Mark 10:45) and a (gentle) 'spirit' to the attitude (1 Corinthians 4:21).

The word: 'soul' in general refers to the emotional functions: being overwhelmed with sorrow (Matthew 26:38) and showing love (Mark 12:30), while the word: 'spirit' refers to the mental functions: perceiving (Mark 2:8), making a decision (Acts 19:21), knowing (1 Corinthians 2:11) and praying (1 Corinthians 14:14).

In the Bible your body as well as your spirit (soul) are very important! The human body is much more valuable than material things like food and clothing (Matthew 6:25) and the soul (life) is much more worth than gaining the whole world with its possessions and ambitions (Matthew 16:25-26). The body of a Christian is a temple of the Holy Spirit and a Christian is called to glorify God with his body (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)!

When a person dies his 'spirit' is separated from his body (Ecclesiastes 12:7; Luke 8:55, 23:46; Matthew 27:50). The 'spirits' (Hebrews 12:23) or 'souls' (Revelation 6:9) of people who have died are then no longer in their bodies, but in God's presence in heaven.

Thus, according to the Bible, before death and after death the principle of life in man is represented by the word: 'spirit' or 'soul'.

The Bible does not acknowledge the Neo-Platonic philosophy which divides a human being into two parts (body and soul) and also not the philosophy of Philo which divides a human being into three parts (body, soul

and spirit). 1 Thessalonians 5:23 may not be misused to prove the philosophy of Philo.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:23 the words: 'you' (plural), 'your spirit' and 'the soul and the body' are parallel expressions.

The literal translation from the Greek original reads:

- (1) "May the God of peace himself/ sanctify/ *you* (plural) wholly (to the end);
- (2) and complete in every part (may be)/ *your* (plural) *spirit*;
- (3) and *the soul* (singular) and *the body* (singular)/ blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ/ may be kept."

The correct translation should read:

- (1) "May the God of peace himself sanctify you (Christians) wholly (through and through);
- (2) and (may) your spirit (the spirit of Christians) in every part (be) complete (intact, undamaged, sound);
- (3) and may the soul and the body (of each Christian) be kept blameless at the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ."

The expression 'spirit' stands for the immaterial being of man and the expression 'soul and body' stands for the whole personality of man. Man is not a trinity (Philo) or a duality (Neo-Platonian), but a unity (Bible)!

D. What is death?

The word 'death' has three different meanings in the Bible: a spiritual, physical and eternal meaning. Spiritual death is when the human spirit is separated from God by sin (Ephesians 2:1). Physical death is when the human body is separated from the human spirit (Ecclesiastes 12:7). And eternal death is when the whole of man (body and spirit) is forever separated from the glorious presence and loving care of God (Revelation 21:8; cf. Matthew 25:46; 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9). Eternal death means that a person with his body and soul is suffering in hell (Revelation 20:14-15; cf. Matthew 10:28).

(Read 'Suffering because of death' in study 3).

E. Why do Christians still have to die?

For unbelievers and non-Christians death in all its three forms remains a punishment for their sins (Romans 6:23a). But for believers in Jesus Christ death is no longer a punishment! Spiritual death is no more a reality for a believer, because God made him alive with Christ (Ephesians 2:4-5)! Also eternal death is no longer applicable for the believer, because through his faith in Jesus Christ he has already received eternal life and will not be condemned (John 5:24) or punished (John 11:26; Matthew 25:46)! But physical death remains a reality also for believers.

On the one hand, Christians still suffer physical death, because "flesh and blood (the perishable and sinful human nature) cannot inherit the kingdom of God in its final phase (the imperishable and sinless reality of God's reign)" (1 Corinthians 15:50). Christians still die physically, because they still possess a sinful human nature that descended from Adam. Christians must first be completely transformed (i.e. be resurrected from the dead) before they can inherit the kingdom of God in its final form on the new earth (1 Corinthians 15:51-53). Nevertheless, physical death is no longer a punishment for the personal sins of the believer, because Jesus Christ has already taken all his sins away onto his own body on the cross (1 Peter 2:24).

On the other hand, God uses physical death to sanctify the Christian completely! "Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints" (Psalm 116:15). Jesus Christ entered his glory through suffering and death (cf. Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12). Likewise the Christian is "judged according to men in regard to the body" (i.e. he must still die physically) so that he may "live according to God in regard to the spirit" (i.e. he may be motivated to live in sanctification here on earth) (1 Peter 4:6). The Christian's suffering on earth, of which physical death is the climax, must be viewed as God's method to sanctify his children. God uses sickness, handicaps, failures, problems, in short: suffering and death in the lives of his children for their good. He uses these to change their independence into dependence on God, to change their pride into humility, to curb their unhealthy desires and to cause their spiritual growth.

Suffering and death completes the process of sanctification of the Christian's spirit. Through his suffering and death the Christian on earth becomes "a righteous person made perfect in heaven" (Hebrews 12:23). The suffering and death on earth causes him to belong to those "who come out of the great tribulation; who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb," so that he may enter the kingdom of God in its final phase (Revelation 21:27) and may serve God day and night in his presence (Revelation 7:14-15).

Physical death is *not the end* for Christians, but actually *the beginning* of a complete perfect life in the presence of God! For Christians physical death is the gate to heaven (2 Corinthians 5:1; Philippians 1:21,23; Revelation 20:4)! Jesus Christ will conquer physical death by raising the dead bodies at his second coming (1 Corinthians 15:26). Faith in this victory of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:27a) gives the Christian courage to do what 1 Corinthians 15:58 says: "Therefore, my brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain."

LIFE BETWEEN DEATH AND RESURRECTION

F. Where does the spirit go after death?

The Bible does not say much about the condition of the spirit (or soul) of the non-Christian after physical death, but it does say enough about the condition of the spirit (or soul) of the Christian after physical death). In a parable Jesus tells how the spirit of a rich man immediately went to hell where he suffered agonizing pain, while the spirit of the poor Lazarus was *immediately* carried by angels into heaven, where also Abraham was (Luke 16:22-23). While nothing is said about the dead body of the poor man, the rich man probably received an honourable funeral.

The Bible teaches that when you as a Christian die physically, your spirit (or soul) is separated from your body and is immediately taken into the presence of Jesus Christ, which is also called 'paradise' (Ecclesiastes 12:7; Luke 23:43). You are (or: your spirit is) then no longer on earth among people, but in heaven with Jesus Christ (Philippians 1:23). Your final destiny is also called 'the heavenly Jerusalem'.

The following persons are in the heavenly Jerusalem (Hebrews 12:22-24): God the Judge, Jesus the Mediator, an uncountable number of angels in festive assembly, and *the spirits* of righteous men made perfect (i.e. Old and New Testament believers that have already died physically and have reached their perfect destiny). Also the Christians who still live on earth are registered in heaven and belong to this heavenly Jerusalem (i.e. the Church in heaven). That is why our citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20). (*Read* Galatians 4:21-31; Hebrews 11:9-10,13-16; 13:14). Physical death will never separate Christians from God or from his love for Christians (Romans 8:35-39)!

G. The condition of your spirit in heaven

In his first letter to the Corinthians Paul taught about the resurrection of the body at Christ's second coming. He says, "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable... The (last) trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable (i.e. the already dead bodies) must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal (i.e. the still living mortal bodies) with immortality" (1 Corinthians 15:50-53).

In his second letter to the Corinthians Paul says, "For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling, because

when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life" (2 Corinthians 5:1-4). This last sentence shows that Paul is speaking about the resurrection and not about the intermediate state.

Some Christians think that Paul is saying that the person who dies receives a kind of spiritual body in heaven during the intermediate period between death and resurrection.

1. In the intermediate period your spirit is unclothed (without a body)

However, Paul is not speaking about a kind of spiritual body during the intermediate period in heaven. Paul has an earnest desire to still be alive on earth at the time of Christ's second coming so that, without undergoing physical death (the unclothed) and the intermediate state (being found naked), he may experience the instantaneous transformation mentioned in 1 Corinthians 15:50-53, which is effected by putting on the transformed body (the heavenly dwelling) over his mortal body (the earthly tent-dwelling).

The Old Testament history mentions that Enoch (Hebrews 11:5; cf. Genesis 5:24) and Elijah (2 Kings 2:11) had similar experiences.

The Bible depicts your present earthly body as a temporary 'earthly tent' in which your spirit dwells. When you die as a Christian, your spirit (or soul) departs from your earthly body. Paul compares dying with 'dismantling or striking this tent-dwelling': (2 Corinthians 5:1) and with 'taking off' (old clothing) (2 Corinthians 5:4). Peter compares dying with 'laying aside this earthly tent' (2 Peter 1:13-14). When you die your earthly body returns to the dust or the elements of the ground (Genesis 3:19) and your spirit comes home to Jesus Christ (i.e. is translated into the presence of Jesus Christ in heaven) (Ecclesiastes 12:7; Philippians 1:23; cf. Revelation 6:9-11; Revelation 20:4 - the souls of the martyrs during the intermediate period).

In this intermediate period between death and resurrection, the spirit of the person who died is 'unclothed', 'naked', that is, it has no body at all. Knowledge of this fact already now causes Christians to groan and long for the resurrection of the body. Compare the groaning of the whole present creation together with Christians (Romans 8:19-23)!

2. At the resurrection of the dead your earthly body (as perishable dust) will be clothed over with the resurrected body

Paul does not merely speak of 'putting off' (like a garment) the earthly body and 'putting on' the resurrected body. He speaks of 'putting on' the resurrected body *over*

the earthly body, like putting on an additional or outer garment (Greek: *ep+enduomai*)! ‘The corruptible’ (bodies of Christians who have previously died) must put on the incorruptible (i.e. their dead bodies must be resurrected from the dead). ‘The mortal’ (bodies of Christians still living at the second coming) must put on immortality (i.e. their mortal bodies must be transformed to immortality) (1 Corinthians 15:52-53).

The resurrected body is called ‘a building from God’, ‘a house not built by human hands’, ‘a habitation that is inhabited’! The original earthly body will be clothed over with the resurrected body!

Thus, the dust (elements) of the earthly body that lies corrupted in the grave is not forgotten by God and is not lost for God! At the resurrection the former earthly body of the Christian will be covered, absorbed and transfigured to become like the glorious body of the resurrected Christ (Philippians 3:21)! Then “what is mortal will be swallowed up by life” (verse 4). It will be an imperishable, glorious, strong and spiritual body (1 Corinthians 15:42-44,52)!

The Bible reveals that the souls or spirits of the dead can be seen. They can take on *a visible form*, just like the angels can take on a visible form (Matthew 22:30). Historically Moses and Elijah had such visible forms during the transfiguration of Christ on the mount (Matthew 17:3). Abraham and Lazarus in heaven could be seen and recognised (Luke 16:23). And finally, in a vision John could *see* the souls of Christians that had laid down their lives for Christ (Revelation 6:9).

3. What does your spirit do in heaven?

During the period between your physical death and your physical resurrection your physical body (dust) will lie in the grave, while your spirit (soul) will be in heaven.

Your spirit will be conscious and active in heaven. Your spirit will rest from all its earthly troubles (difficulties, sorrows, sickness, suffering, pain, anxieties, sins) and all its earthly toil (work, ministry) (Hebrews 4:9-11; Revelation 14:13).

Because Revelation 21:1 to 22:6 is both the ideal condition of the Church before the second coming as well as the real condition of the Church after the second coming, the following may also be said of your spirit (soul) before the second coming:

You will be filled with joy and enjoy forever the presence of God (Psalm 16:11).

There will no longer be imperfection, shortcomings and failures. You will know and understand things completely (1 Corinthians 13:9-12).

You will sing new songs for God, praise and worship him (Revelation 4:9-11; 5:11-14) with reverence and awe (Hebrews 12:28).

You will adore God (Revelation 7:9-15).

Jesus will shepherd you and lead you to springs of living water (Revelation 7:16-17).

You will praise the righteousness of God’s rule, deeds and ways (his rule, salvation and judgements) (Revelation 15:2-3).

You will never suffer again (cf. Revelation 21:4).

You will see Jesus Christ and his glory (John 17:24; Revelation 22:4), that is, see (and experience) his love (mercy and grace), holiness, righteousness, goodness and wisdom, etc.

You will serve God day and night with your spirit (Revelation 22:3) and with a good conscience (cf. 2 Timothy 1:3).

You will serve God in important work and in many different ways, just as the angels do (cf. Matthew 22:30).

Finally, you will be involved in the final judgement of the godless nations (Revelation 2:26; 3:21; cf. 1 Corinthians 6:3).

H. Contact with the spirits

1. Contact with the spirits of the dead is impossible

Concerning believers the Bible says, “When the dust returns to the ground (the elements) it came from, the spirit returns to God who gave it” (Ecclesiastes 12:7; Luke 16:22). And concerning unbelievers the Bible relates, “The rich man also died and was buried. In hell where he was in torment, ...” (Luke 16:23). While the body lies in the grave and is turning to dust (Genesis 3:19) the spirit (or soul), is either in heaven with God or in hell that is prepared for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41).

The Bible teaches very clearly that the spirits of dead people have no knowledge of what happens on earth. After their death, Abraham does not know his descendants still living on earth and Jacob does not acknowledge them (Isaiah 63:16). The spirits of dead people have no wisdom to advise living people, can make no decision with respect to living people and they can do no good or harm to living people! The spirits of dead people will never again have a part in anything that happens on earth (Ecclesiastes 9:5,6,10)! Living people are not able to make contact with the spirits of departed people!

2. Contact with evil spirits (demons) is possible, but forbidden

In spite of the fact that God forbade turning to mediums and spiritists (Leviticus 19:31), king Saul paid a visit to such a medium (spiritist). He was made to believe that the medium saw the prophet Samuel, but in reality she only saw ‘a spirit’ coming up out of the earth that looked like an old man wearing a robe (verse 13-14). Saul was also made to believe that the prophet Samuel spoke to him, but in reality even Saul admitted that God no longer spoke to him by prophets (verse 15). What the medium

saw was 'a spirit', which she interpreted as the spirit of Samuel. And what Saul heard was the voice of the medium imitating Samuel.

People, who believe that they can make contact with the spirits of dead people and that these spirits are able to have influence on them as living people, are being deluded by evil spirits (demons). The Bible warns that evil spirits are experts in deceiving and imitating (2 Corinthians 11:14-15). Jesus Christ warns that the devil is a liar and the father of ALL lies and all liars in the world, no matter whether they are religious lies or political lies (John 8:44). The devil is the father of evil spirits (Revelation 12:9). These evil spirits pretend to be the spirits of dead people.

God forbids every contact with evil spirits. He forbids contact with mediums and spiritists who try to contact the spirits of dead people or pretend to predict the future. God forbids contact with every form of occultism and witchcraft (Deuteronomy 18:9-14; Leviticus 19:31; 20:6,27; Isaiah 8:19-20).

I. Will Christians recognise one another in heaven?

The Bible teaches that 'the friends' you made on earth with your material gifts will welcome you in the eternal heavenly home (Luke 16:9).

In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus there is recognition between the rich man, Lazarus and Abraham (Read Luke 16:19-31).

The joy in heaven is depicted by a feast or banquet in heaven (Matteüs 8:11) and therefore Christians may expect to see one another in heaven and enjoy one another's fellowship.

Would Christians then not miss their beloved family members and friends who remained unbelievers on earth? The Bible teaches that every form of relationship that was not 'in Christ' on earth, will also lose its significance in heaven (Matthew 12:46-50). You may therefore expect that when you come into heaven you will not have any memory about former family members or friends that remained unbelievers.