

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE DIE?

DATE: SUNDAY, 30TH OF AUGUST 2020 | SERIES: BIG QUESTIONS - PART 1

1 THESSALONIANS 4:13-14 & 16-17

13 Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. 14 For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him...

16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.

NOTE TO LEADERS:

- The aim of this series is to answer some big questions that people have with answers from the Bible.

START TALKING

- What stood out to you from Sunday's message?
- If you only had 24 hours left to live, what would you do? (Imagine money is limitless and travel is instant.)

START THINKING

- Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. What one thing about this day are you most looking forward to?! What is one thing you are most apprehensive about?
- On Sunday, Steve shared about 3 things that will happen after we die:
 - Our spirits will be with Christ immediately.
 - At the resurrection, we will receive our new spiritual bodies.
 - We will reign with Christ forever.
 Did any of these points get you thinking? What did you learn from them?

START SHARING

- Has grief affected your life? What role did faith play in your grieving process? How has having hope in Christ brought you comfort and courage?
- On Sunday, one of the points Steve made is that we should live with soberness. (Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming. 1 Peter 1:13.) Think about your last few weeks. What does your life say about what you believe about eternity? Is there anything you would want to change?
- Those who choose not to follow Christ in this life are making that choice for eternity too, but Jesus came to save and seek the lost (Luke 19:10). As a follower of Jesus, how are you going

to partner with Christ in reaching out to others? Who can you reach out to and how?

- Very NB question: is there anyone in this meeting who is unsure about their salvation and their faith in Christ? Life group leader - offer to lead them in a prayer of salvation (see below).

START PRAYING

- This week, please make a point of praying for those who are grieving (even those we don't know - there have been a lot of Covid-19 deaths).
- Salvation Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank You for loving me enough to die for my sin on the cross. I acknowledge that I am a sinner. I ask You to forgive my sin. I believe that you are the Son of God. Please give me new life and adopt me into Your family. In Jesus name. Amen.

START DOING

Who are you going to share the Gospel with this week?

SUMMARY

OF SUNDAY'S MESSAGE

Have you ever wondered about what happens when we die? Or what the truth is about angels and demons? Or why a good God allows suffering and pain in the world? If you have ever asked any of these big questions, you are not alone! In our new series, BIG QUESTIONS, we look at what the Bible teaches about these important subjects. This Sunday, Steve explored the question, "what happens when we die?"

There are three big texts in the Bible related to this subject:

- 1 Corinthians 15
- 2 Corinthians 5
- 1 Thessalonians 4

1. God made us as physical & spiritual beings.

We have a physical body, and an eternal spirit/soul (the Bible uses the words soul and spirit interchangeably). So another way of asking "what happens when we die", is what happens when our body stops living, i.e. our heart and brain function in this body ceases.

The Bible refers to our physical body as a tent: *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...* 2 Corinthians 5:1. This is a really beautiful picture which contrasts living in a tent with living in a house. A tent (our old body) is a temporary dwelling which we leave behind, and we get an eternal house (a new body) in heaven - a house speaks to a permanent 'bricks and mortar' type dwelling.

But the answer to the question, "what happens when we die", is very different, depending on whether you are a Christ-follower or not. In the next three points, we look at what the answer is for Christ-followers, and then we'll look at what happens to those who choose not to follow Christ.

2. Our spirits will be with Christ immediately.

We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. 2 Corinthians 5:8. Paul tells us that the part that emerges from our "tent" (i.e. our soul/spirit) goes to be with the Lord.

And we find further insight in Luke 23:43 when Jesus addresses the thief on the cross: Jesus answered him, *"Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."* Jesus' answer tells us that as soon as our soul leaves our body, we are immediately with Christ. For those of us who have lost loved ones who were followers of Christ, we find hope in knowing the person is in the presence of Jesus.

3. At the resurrection, we will receive our new bodies.

Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14. Paul wants us to understand that death is not the end of the story. When Christ returns, every Christ-follower (dead or alive) will be reunited with Him.

For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17. Can you imagine how spectacular and magnificent this day will be?!

The dead in Christ will rise first and be given new bodies (their souls will be raised up and joined with a new resurrected body. Those who are still alive will be caught up with them, and they will also get a resurrection body. Their physical bodies will be translated into new spiritual bodies. The new resurrection bodies that await us:

- Will be indestructible

- Will be eternal spiritual bodies
- Will have no pain, suffering, tears
- Will have no tiredness, sickness, disease or death (no degeneration)
- Will have memory of events and people on earth (a redeemed memory)
- We will recognise other believers
- Will be able to be in the presence of God!

4. We will reign with Christ forever.

And they will reign for ever and ever. Revelation 22:5. We will reign with Christ in the new earth and the new heaven that He will create. (Revelation 21:1-5). This is a completely new realm that will be created, where we will live in the purest eternal joy! The Bible doesn't go into too much detail about this new realm - most probably because we wouldn't understand it!

Now, back to those who reject Christ in this life...

Those who choose not to follow Christ are making that choice for eternity too - they are choosing distance from Christ for all eternity. In death, they will get what they chose in life - to be separated from Christ.

Their spirits will immediately be sent to 'Hades' where they will be in torment (Luke 16:23). Hades is a Greek word and is one of the names for hell used in the Bible. When Jesus returns, Hades will be thrown into a lake of burning fire... *Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death.* Revelation 20:14.

The Devil will also be thrown into this same place of punishment, a place where there is no escape, and the torment never ceases. For everyone who rejects Christ, there are two deaths - first to Hades when their souls leave their bodies, and secondly when Hades is thrown in the lake of fire at Jesus' second coming.

Many will say that this is unfair, but the truth is that God is not unfair. Every single human being deserves to be sent to Hades for our natural God-rejecting nature. The unfair part is that anyone gets to be with Christ if they choose to follow Him! We cannot do anything to earn our place in eternity with Him. The only way to get there is by the free gift of salvation through Christ - it's like a life raft of grace. If we choose to reject God's offer of eternal life through Jesus Christ and follow your own way, then we get that choice for eternity too.

So, in light of this, how should we live?

a. With hope:

But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells. 1 Peter 3:13. The hope we have as Christ-followers is that heaven is our home. Hope for what lies ahead.

b. With soberness:

Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming. 1 Peter 1:13. Imagine if you were the designated driver, and then decided to get drunk but you still got behind the wheel and had an accident in which lives were lost. What would be said of you? In the same way, the Bible says we should live with alertness and soberness, avoiding big and small sins!

c. With purpose:

For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost. Luke 19:10. Every one of us, without Christ, is lost. He comes into the world to show us the way. Having found that way, the truth and life, we should live on purpose thinking of those around us. Christ, in his absolute mercy, gives us time to repent until we leave our "tent" bodies.

Surely we want to do everything in this life to bring glory to God in this life and the next? If so, we should be praying for others, inviting them, maybe even passing on this message...