

THE FIRES OF HELL

Jesus spoke of hell almost as often as He spoke of heaven. He said hell was a place of everlasting torment (Luke 16:24; Matt 5:22; 25:46). Hell was prepared for the devil and his demon spirits, not for men and women. But God said that will be the end of those who reject Jesus Christ (John 3:36).

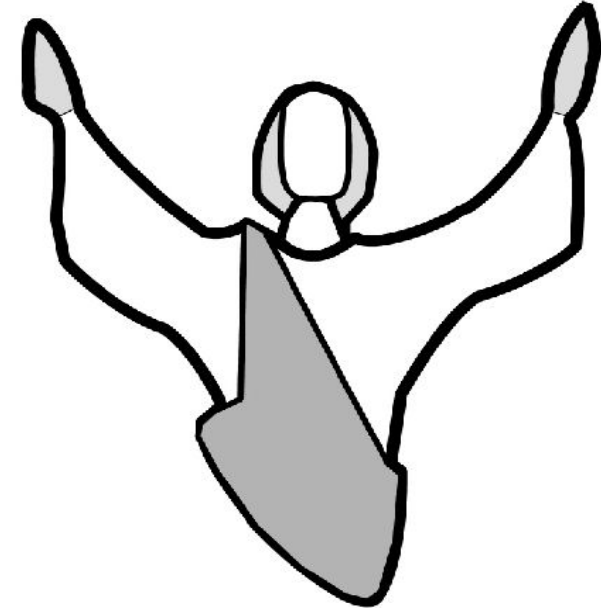
Jesus told a parable about the rich man and Lazarus, a beggar (Luke 16:19-31). God knows every life and every deed. The rich man lived for himself; his spirit went to hell. The beggar died and the angels carried his spirit to heaven – Jesus said “to Abraham’s side.” The beggar’s spirit was comforted and blessed.

The spirit of the rich man was in torment and begged for mercy, but it was too late. Jesus said, “A great chasm has been fixed” between heaven and hell, so that no spirit can cross over from one to the other (Luke 16:26).

The choice is yours – heaven or hell? You only have one life in which to make this important choice. Moses said to the people of Israel, “I call heaven and earth as witnesses...that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life...so that you may love the Lord your God, listen to His voice, and hold fast to Him. For the Lord is your life, and He will give you many years in the land...” (Deut 30:19-20).

TALK ABOUT 1. How do we know hell is a real place? 2. What did Jesus say about hell (Matt 22:13)? 3. What did God say about those who reject the Saviour (John 3:36)? 4. Who was hell prepared for? 5. Have you made the most important choice in life? 6. Have you asked God to forgive your sins and save you from certain judgment (Acts 16:31)?

Resurrection to Life



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To the Reader: All Christians look forward to life in heaven after they leave this earth. Jesus will come in the clouds and they will rise to meet Him. Read this study with your Bible open. Find the references and read them carefully. All Scripture verses are quoted from the New International Version of the Bible.

WE LIVE IN A DYING WORLD

We live in a dying world. Every living creature dies. Every man and woman will meet death some day. There is nothing more certain than death.

In the beginning God gave Adam and Eve life and a choice, to obey or not obey His command. They chose not to obey. They chose death. Death was God's punishment for not obeying His command. Their spirits died and their bodies would die. Now all men are sinners (Rom 3:23), and all die because Adam's sinful death-nature passed to all of us.

God created man with a free will. He gave Adam and Eve the freedom to choose. They chose separation from the Creator (death) against fellowship with Him and eternal life in His Kingdom.

Because of Adam's sin, men and women are born to die. The moment we see the light of day, our body begins to die. As new cells are born and grow, old cells die and the body discards them. We live in dying bodies in a dying world. Friends who are with us today are gone tomorrow. Every living thing goes through the same cycle of birth, growth, death and decay. Some die young, some live to be old, but all die.

The physical world is under attack also. Forces which can only be evil cause sickness and decay. Destruction goes on apace and often close to home. Even the most beautiful places on earth seem to be under attack by fire, flood or earthquake. This is not what God planned for His creation. He planned life! (John 10:10).

GOD ALONE HAS IMMORTAL LIFE

Your body is only one part of your being. It is like the house you live in. Your spirit-life is much more than flesh and blood. Your spirit-life will survive death and live on to face God. The Bible says, "the spirit returns to God who gave it" (Eccl 12:7). Death will attack and destroy this body, but it cannot touch the spirit that lives within.

We do not understand spirit-life that goes on forever. Immortal life belongs to God alone (1 Timothy 6:16), but God made man "in His image." God is the source of all life, both physical and spiritual (Romans 4:17), so death is the result of being cut off from God. Now every human being participates in the dying process (Romans 6:23). We are all sinners and our sin separates us from the immortal life of God (Isaiah 59:2).

the blood of Jesus. Some gave their lives for their faith. Some were privileged to be martyrs, but all were called to be overcomers. God promised them a crown, a symbol of authority to rule with Him (Rev 2:26; 3:21).

We are told how they overcame Satan and evil (Rev 12:11).

"They overcame him by:

The blood of the Lamb and

By the word of their testimony

They did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death."

They were like a man who built his life of service for Christ on the sure foundation of Jesus Christ (1 Cor 3:10-15). The man used the best of materials: gold, silver and costly stones. When that man's word was tested, it remained.

The man who builds on any other foundation and uses poor materials which Paul likened to wood, hay or straw, will have his life work destroyed when the time of testing comes. That man will escape judgment: "he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames."

I CONFER ON YOU A KINGDOM

Jesus said to His disciples, "I confer on you a Kingdom, just as My Father conferred one on Me, so that you may eat and drink at My table in My Kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Luke 22:29).

The disciples already lived in the kingdom of the spirit and had its blessings. From that time on, God trusted them to carry the message of His Kingdom to the world. They had the great privilege of using the gospel to open the doors of the Kingdom to all who would receive the King (John 20:23). What a privilege and a great responsibility!

We are commanded to do the same. After Jesus Christ rose from the dead, He told His followers, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you..." (Matt 28:19-20).

In Christ's Kingdom in heaven, the disciples would have greater responsibilities. They would reign with Him over the nations (2 Tim 2:12; Matt 19:28).

The intent of these promises is to show the glory and honour that will be given to the believer in heaven, a reward for the insults and disgrace they suffered on earth for Christ's sake. Rejoice! The future is bright with the promises of God!

TALK ABOUT 1. Will Christians receive a reward for serving their Lord (Rev 2:26)? 2. What did God tell us about heaven (Heb 12:22-24)? 3. If God is just He must judge sin and evil __ True __ False? 4. Jesus will present a perfect Kingdom to God __ True __ False (1 Cor 15:24-28)? 5. Are you a citizen of God's Kingdom?

When Paul thought of this final victory - of death being cast into the lake of fire - he could not hold back his praise: "Thanks be to God!" he exclaimed. "He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor 15:57).

Victory is never won by us. Victory is always given by God. He gives it as we live "in Christ". The Bible tells us how to do this.

Christians have Christ's resurrection life abiding in them now: - showing forth His power to make our spirits like His - moving through us to draw others to Himself.

EACH ONE MUST GIVE ACCOUNT

Paul felt burdened by a body of flesh, too easily given to sin (Rom 7:21-25). But he gave thanks to God for the work He was doing in Paul's life. Paul accepted the things that happened to him as part of God's refining work. He thought of his spirit. Every time he was tempted he said "No" to his natural man and "Yes" to God's Spirit (2 Cor 4:1,14). So that he could say, "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in my body, I live by faith in the Son of God..." (Gal 2:20).

The words "we shall be changed" refer to a process that begins when we trust Christ as our Saviour and Lord. The Holy Spirit begins to make that change. We "grow in grace and a knowledge of our Lord Jesus" and become more like Him (2 Cor 3:18; Phil 3:11).

Some believers change more in this life and some less. Some yield to the Holy Spirit's work in their lives, other rebel against or "quench" His work (Eph 3:30).

At the resurrection, each person will give an account "of deeds done while in this body" (Rom 14:12). Each person will face God and the books will be opened (Luke 19:11-24). The Master will give His servants rewards. For the servant that built his life work with "wood, hay and straw," there will be little or nothing to show (1 Cor 3:12). He himself will be saved, but "he will suffer loss" (1 Cor 3:15).

TALK ABOUT 1. Which came first, the physical world or the spiritual world (1 Cor 15:46)? 2. Will Christians give an account to God for the things they have done (Rom 14:12)? 3. Who gives us the victory over sin and death (1 Cor 15:57)? 4. Paul said, "I am crucified with Christ..." What did he mean (Gal 2:20)? 5. Will God allow Satan's temptations to be more than we can bear (1 Cor 10:13)? 6. In temptation, God will always make a way of e.....?

REWARDS FOR SERVICE

John heard a voice in heaven say, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord....they will rest from their labour, for their deeds will follow them" (Rev 14:13). Those who "died in the Lord" are faithful servants who were saved by

Without God's saving power, men and women are "dead in transgressions and sins" (Eph 2:1). Unless men hear the gospel of Jesus Christ and believe in Him, they will live in a dead-spirit state all their lives. While their body lives, their spirits will be dead toward God. God says all men are lost to His Kingdom. So He sent Jesus Christ to "seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10; John 3:17).

God makes the spirits of all who believe in Him 'alive.' Faith in God's promise brings His eternal life to our spirits (John 5:24). So God's word to all men and women is "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved" (Acts 16:31). God will give eternal life to your spirit and you will live with Him forever. This is what we mean by 'life after death' with God in heaven.

TALK ABOUT 1. Only God has i.....life (1 Tim 6:16)? 2. Every living thing is dying __ True __ False? 3. All men are cut off from the life of God because of their s..... (Isa 59:2)? 4. God said, "The wages of sin is d..... (Rom 6:23), but the gift of God is e.....life through Jesus Christ"? 5. Have you received God's gift of eternal life? 6. Some think there is no life after death! Do you fear death and.....?

SATAN AND HIS FOLLOWERS

Satan was once an angel in heaven, but he was proud and 'lifted up' in his heart. He wanted to be equal to God and sit on God's throne. Pride made Satan rebel against God. Pride is sin and God cannot look on sin. God cannot keep company with sinners, so Satan was thrown out of heaven. Many angels followed Satan into sin. They were thrown out of heaven with him. We do not know when this happened.

Some fallen angels follow Satan. The spirits who follow him are called evil spirits or demons. They are Satan's messengers and he keeps them busy. The Bible writers tell of evil spirits coming to earth to trouble men and women. They still do attack men and women, yet they always obey authority taken over them in the name of Jesus (1 Sam 16:14-16; Acts 19:12).

SATAN CAME TO TAKE UP RESIDENCE

Satan watched God create the heavens and the earth. He saw Adam and Eve worship the true God and he was jealous. Satan wanted the man and the woman to worship him. He is very crafty and he thought of a way to deceive the woman.

Satan did not crash onto the earth like a meteor from space. He slipped into God's creation quietly and unnoticed. He disguised himself as a serpent and he spoke soft words to Eve. He tempted her to disobey God's command and he offered her wisdom and independence, things we all strive to attain.

The woman listened to Satan's lies and she believed them. She took fruit from the Tree God had commanded them not to eat. Eve ate the forbidden fruit, then she gave some to Adam and he ate it. At once they knew shame!

That day Adam and Eve were changed. The evil spirit (Satan) took control of their minds. The mind or 'heart' is that part of us that controls everything we think and say and do. God said, "Out of the heart come the issues of life" (Proverbs 4:23). With Satan in control of man's heart, nothing good could come out of it (Rom 2:10-12). God declared man's heart "deceitful above all things and beyond cure" (Jeremiah 17:9).

Adam and Eve stood naked before God and each other. For the first time they felt shame. Shame comes from a guilty heart. Adam's sons and daughters and their children, and all mankind inherited his fallen nature. Our conscience feels guilt when we do wrong. God said, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23).

Because Adam and Eve disobeyed God, Satan was able to establish a foothold. From this foothold, he was able to build his kingdom on earth. His kingdom is a kingdom of darkness, misery and death. Jesus said, "He was a murderer from the beginning...there is no truth in him" (John 8:44).

When Adam sinned, he dragged all creation down into death with him (Rom 8:22). In some way that we do not understand, God allowed death and destruction to become the sure consequences of man's sin. Now they are a constant reminder of our mortality. Even so, God is Almighty. He is in control and He can turn any calamity to our good (Rom 8:28).

TALK ABOUT 1. Who is Satan? 2. Where did Satan come from? 3. Did God explain the origin of evil? 4. Did Adam know there was another world of evil spirits? 5. How did evil come into the garden in Eden? 6. What happened when Satan tempted Adam and Eve (Gen 3:6)? 7. What did God do to separate the evil from the good (Gen 3:22-24)? 8. Could Adam and Eve have repented of their sin? 9. What did God say about man's heart (Jer 17:9)?

GOD DID NOT EXPLAIN EVIL

God did not explain the origin of evil. God created a perfect world, but evil was out there beyond the physical universe. Evil is not physical but moral. It is not in trees or rocks or in the storm. These are not evil in themselves.

Sinful mankind spoiled God's perfect creation. Satan found a way to plant moral evil in the heart of man. From that day Satan, the source of all evil, has acted as 'prince.' Men and women are his subjects. Paul said Satan is "the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit at work in those who do not obey God" (Eph 2:2; 6:12).

Jesus called Satan "the prince of this world" (Jon 12:31). He and the evil

was a guarantee of our own. Sleep and resurrection speak of the body. There is no such thing as soul-sleep. "This day," Jesus told the criminal on the cross, "you will be with Me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). The thief's body would be thrown into the dump outside the city, but his spirit would go to heaven the moment he died.

So Paul compared the body we have now with the new one we will have in the resurrection:

- - a perishing body is raised a permanent one
- - a body with no honour "is raised in glory"
- - the natural (physical) body "is raised a spiritual body" (15:42-44).
- - the "dust of the earth" becomes the glory of heaven (Matt 13:43).

"So it is written, 'The first man Adam became a living being, the last Adam a life-giving spirit' " (1 Cor 15:39).

TALK ABOUT 1. What does the Bible tell us about heaven (Heb 12:22-24)? 2. Two groups of spirits will be raised at the resurrection ___ True ___ False (Dan 12:2)? 3. What will the difference be between the two? 4. Was the parable Jesus told about the rich man and the beggar a true picture of hell (Luke 16:19-31)? 5. What is a sure way to escape hell? What did Jesus say (John 5:24)? 6. Why do people fear death? 7. Should Christians fear death? Do you?

THE NATURAL (PHYSICAL) CAME FIRST

"The spiritual did not come first, but the natural and after that the spiritual" (1 Cor 15:46). Again we see God's order, sowing must come before harvest. God began with the natural (Adam). Then he moved on to the spiritual man (Christ). He will never go back to the natural. The resurrection of the body will be the final victory over death.

"The first man was of the dust...earthly man." In every way, we are like Adam. "We have borne the likeness of the earthly man" (1 Cor 15:49). "The second man (was) from heaven...so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven (Christ).

Christians are being made like Christ now. But, in the resurrection, their bodies will be the same as our Lord's "glorious body" (Phil 3:21). For "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God..."(1 Cor 15:50). The Kingdom is a spiritual Kingdom, not a Kingdom here on earth.

DEATH IS EATEN UP BY VICTORY

"Then the saying will come true: 'Death has been swallowed up in victory.' Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" (1 Cor 15:50-53).

come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn whose names are written in heaven. You have come to...the spirits of righteous men made perfect..." (Heb 12:22-23). This was a picture of heaven and the rejoicing there.

The apostle John had a glimpse of the new city (heaven) in a vision. He heard a voice say, "Now the dwelling of God is with men...He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things is passed away" (Rev 21:3-4).

Physical death invades our bodies now. But physical death was "swallowed up" in Christ's victory when He rose from the grave. When the purpose of the body - to clothe the spirit for a season - is over, the body 'sleeps in death' until the resurrection.

TALK ABOUT 1. Christians have a great hope. What is it? (1 Peter 1:3-5)? 2. We are told to come.....to God's throne in prayer (Heb 4:16)? 3. Why can we be so bold in approaching a holy God (Heb 4:16)? 4. If we have sinned, we are told to.....our sins to God and He will forgive us (1 John 1:9)? 5. Can anyone else forgive sins?

JESUS CHRIST, THE FIRSTFRUITS

Only a sovereign God, who created mankind, can raise dead bodies or put their dust together again. And He will do this at the General Resurrection on that last day. Then every spirit that ever lived will stand before God. Those who rise to everlasting life will receive their new resurrection body. Old, broken bodies will be made new in a transformation greater and more amazing than any ever known in the history of mankind. Those who rise to everlasting shame will stand 'naked' before a holy God (Dan 12:2; Gen 2:25; 2 Cor 5:3).

Jesus rose as the "first fruits of those who have fallen asleep" (1 Cor 15:20). Of all those who lived by faith, He was the first to rise from the grave with a resurrection body. God called him the "first fruits." The first of the harvest. His resurrection was the guarantee that all those who live by faith will rise and join Him "at the last day."

At the last trumpet, Christ will call to all redeemed spirits. Each will spring up, in the twinkling of an eye, in a new body. And He will receive glory and praise forever.

The bodies of believers sleep in death now, but they will be recreated into His perfect image (1 Thess 4:13-18). And those resurrected saints will cast their crowns before Him and say, "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power..." (Rev 4:11).

Praise God, we can celebrate our resurrection now, because His resurrection

spirits he commands haunt our world and control those who do not have faith. They trouble the unbeliever and seek to destroy what God has created.

Without God's power to help them, men and women cannot resist Satan and his tempting or understand the fury of his attacks.

God does not let the forces evil destroy the world (Col 1:15-20). But He allows Satan to use them as weapons against us. And, more particularly, Satan practices his deceit against the Christian Church. He uses failure, sickness and death as weapons of fear. He uses them to sow seeds of doubt in our hearts. When sickness or calamity comes our way, we doubt the goodness and care of God. We wonder if God is still on His throne or if Satan is getting the upper hand.

GOD MADE A WAY

Two ways

Satan might have claimed victory, except God planned something better! In the midst of the great tragedy of Adam's sin, God promised defeat for Satan. He promised One who would deliver us from sin, He said He would build a Kingdom where there would be no death or decay (Rev 21:4).

I use the word 'build' because the Bible uses it (Heb 11:10). God builds His Kingdom by adding one person to it at a time, like a bricklayer laying bricks. Jesus told Nicodemus, a leader in Israel, "No one can see the Kingdom of God unless he is born again" (John 3:3). Nicodemus thought only of physical birth, but Jesus pointed him to a rebirth, a spirit-life which God alone gives.

God adds each born-again spirit to His building. Peter told those who believed, "You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house (1 Peter 2:5). And Paul spoke of this 'house' as "God's Temple" (1 Cor 3:16).

God gives His people victory over Satan and temptation. But they must trust Him fully. Paul, writing to Christians said, "We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angles nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus..." (Rom 8:37-39). Victory is real and the result of God's Spirit at work in those who believe.

TALK ABOUT 1. How did evil come to the new creation? 2. What happened to cut man off from the life of God? 3. What promise did God give Adam and Eve (and us, Gen 3:15)? 4. Who came to save men and women from their sins (Gal 3:16; Luke 19:10)? 5. What is "the Kingdom of God?" Who is building it? 6. What did Jesus say to Nicodemus (John 3:3)? 7. Have you been born again by the Spirit of God? How do you know this?

DEATH IS NOT THE END

From the moment Adam and Eve sinned, the man and the woman were cut off from God. Adam's spirit and Eve's spirit 'died' because their spirit-life was cut off from the life of God. Their bodies would also die, for God had said to Adam, "dust you are and to dust you will return" (Gen 3:19).

But death is not the end! Jesus taught that the spirit of man lives on after death. His parable of the rich man and the beggar (Luke 16:19-31) points us to a great truth: God rewards the righteous and judgment falls on those who reject Him (John 3:36). God receives the spirits of the righteous (Eccl 12:7).

The thief on a cross next to Christ's cross asked for a blessing: "Jesus, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom," he begged (Luke 23:42).

Jesus replied to this thief who repented, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with Me in paradise." The word paradise comes from a Persian word meaning 'a sheltered garden.' Persian Kings entertained their friends in beautiful gardens.

Christians believe heaven will be like a sheltered garden. Christ will be our companion there. We will walk and talk with Him in paradise as Adam talked with God in the garden in Eden (Gen 3:8).

All who believe wait for Christ's coming. Jesus promised, "I will come back and take you to be with Me, that you may be where I am" (John 14:3).

Paul said, "I desire to depart (this life) and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in this body" (Phil 1:23-24).

GOD'S PROMISE TO THE WORLD

The day Adam sinned, God cursed Satan and said, "I will put enmity between your offspring (all who worship Satan) and hers (Eve's); He will crush your head, and you will strike His heel" (Gen 3:15). In the conflict between good and evil, the woman's offspring or 'seed' would be represented in one person, Jesus Christ (Gal 3:16). God promised to send His Son Jesus Christ, to crush Satan's head and destroy his power over men and women (1 Cor 15:54-55; Heb 2:14-15).

The promise also looked forward to a new world. Jesus called it "the Kingdom of God" (Mark 1:15). In God's Kingdom "there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away" (Rev 21:4). Paul wrote, "No eye has seen, No ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those that love Him" (1 Cor 2:9).

TALK ABOUT 1. What does the Bible say about heaven (1 Cor 2:9)? 2. What did Jesus say about hell (Luke 16:24)? 3. What did Jesus say to the man on the cross who repented of his sins (Luke 23:43)? 4. God calls all men and women to repent. Why (Acts 2:37-38)? 5. Is it enough to repent, or must we change the way we live? 6. Are you a citizen of God's Kingdom?

brightness. God made them and he knows each one. But man surpasses them all because he is spirit. In this he is like God. In nature, God has given each one a different body, but none of these have a spirit. Nothing in nature can respond to God. Man can know God, relate to Him and have fellowship because man has spirit.

Now we know only a little. When we get to heaven we will know, even as we are known by God (1 Cor 13:12).

TALK ABOUT 1. Did the Pharisees believe in a general resurrection? 2. Paul wrote to Christians at C.....about the resurrection of the body (1 Cor 15)? 3. How did Paul describe the 'body' that will be raised at the resurrection (1 Cor 15:42-49)? 4. Did Paul say the Second Coming of Jesus Christ would be silent (1 Thess 4:16-18)? 5. Will we know our loved ones in heaven?

A LIVING HOPE

Peter called the believer's faith in Christ and the resurrection of the body "a living hope" (1 Peter 1:3). When God says to us, "All your sins are forgiven," and He takes us as a son or daughter, it is very wonderful. He gives us an inheritance. Have you ever received an inheritance? You can! God will give you a glorious inheritance. And it is marked especially for you!

This is the great hope that the gospel of Jesus Christ gives to all who trust in Him. That is the "good news" that Jesus brought to all mankind (Mark 1:15; 1 John 2:2). Believers can enjoy that inheritance now while we live on this earth and later in heaven where we will be with our Lord forever.

Peter said, "Christ, in His great mercy, has given us new birth into a living hope...and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade – reserved in heaven for you..." (1 Peter 1:3-5).

The hope of living a holy life becomes very real and entirely possible. I am talking about an inward, personal holiness. One that comes from walking with God!

You say, "You do not mean being holy here and now, do you?" Yes, I do. Before the fall, Adam was righteous and holy. He walked and talked with God. This righteousness was part of God's 'image' put upon man and woman at creation.

A PICTURE OF HEAVEN

The writer of Scripture gave us a beautiful picture of heaven. He thought of the Old Covenant and the giving of the Law on Mt Sinai (Ex 20:18-19), when Moses and the people "trembled with fear" (Heb 12:20). Then he thought of the New Covenant of mercy and grace. He wrote to all believers, "You have

Jesus said, "If a man keeps these sayings of Mine, he (the man's spirit) shall never see death." The body of the person who believes God's promise will die, but that person's spirit will live with Christ forever. Death will have no claim over his or her spirit. The born-again spirit will pass through death or "cross over from death to life." This happens the moment the person believes. When the born-again person dies, his or her spirit will be made perfect in heaven (John 5:24; Heb 12:23), a spirit fully restored to the image of the immortal God.

TALK ABOUT 1. Lazarus died and was buried ___ True ___ False? 2. Was resurrection of the body a new idea to Martha? Why not? 3. What promise did Jesus give to all who believe in Him (John 5:24; 11:25). 4. At death, what happens to a believer's spirit? 5. What will happen to all spirits when Jesus Christ comes again (Dan 12:2)? 6. Has your spirit been born again (John 3:3)?

THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY

Christians at Corinth asked Paul about the resurrection of the body. They asked, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?"

Paul answered, "I tell you a mystery: - we will not all sleep (in death)

- but we will all be changed
- in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye
- for the trumpet will sound
- the dead (bodies) will be raised
- and we will be changed
- mortal to immortal" (1 Cor 15:51-53).

Early Christians were concerned about their loved ones who has "fallen asleep" (1 Thess 4:13). Some among them were saying that Jesus had already come again for His people. They feared they had been left behind.

Paul assured them that Jesus had not yet come to gather God's people. That no one would miss Christ's Second Coming. Paul described what this will be like (1 Thess 4:15-18). He used a seed to teach the believers a tremendous truth. Paul said, "When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be. What you sow does not come to life unless it dies" (1 Cor 15:36-37). The body that was ours, in Adam, will be forever changed.

When a seed is buried in the earth, a wonderful change comes over it. The seed's body dies and a new form (body) rises out of the earth. It is of the same kind, but different. A hard, yellow corn seed comes up a soft green shoot (body). "God gives it a body, as he has determined" (1 Cor 15:38).

- "men have one kind of flesh
- animals have another kind of flesh
- birds and fish have another."

"There are also heavenly bodies" - stars, sun, moon - which differ in their

WE CAN KNOW GOD

The eternal destiny of our spirits is in God's hands. Yet, He has given us the freedom and ability to choose eternal life or eternal death for our spirits.

God created men and women rational beings, who could reason and plan and create, persons like Himself (Gen 1:27). He did this so that He could walk and talk with them (Gen 3:8). Because God gave each of us a spirit, we can know God. We can have God as a personal friend. Men and women of faith can have a relationship with Him because they have His Spirit living in them (Eph 1:13-14). When we believe, His Spirit agrees with our spirit "that we are God's children" (Rom 8:16).

Because Jesus Christ died on the cross, God can forgive us and cleanse us from all sin. God said, "if we confess our sins, He (God) is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). God says to all men and women, "Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord. Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow..." (Isa 1:18). God

wants us to think about the eternal destiny of our spirits. Best of all, God wants to be your friend. He wants to have fellowship with you and me every day. And He wants us to be with Him in heaven.

We do not know if Adam and Even believed God's promise. Their names are not in the list of faithful men of old which begins with Noah (Heb 11:7). We are told that men of faith lived before Noah and Job may have been one of them. He said, "After my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see Him with my own eyes..." (Job 19:26-27).

But sin and evil got so great in the earth that "God was grieved that He had made man on the earth" (Gen 6:6). So God sent a great flood. Everything that had breath died in the flood. Only Noah and his family were saved.

God started a new civilization with righteous Noah as its head. After the flood, God made covenant with Noah and his family (Gen 9:8-9). God said, "Never again will I destroy all living creatures as I have done" (Gen 8:21).

TALK ABOUT 1. God gives every person an ever-living spirit ___ True ___ False (Eccl 12:7)? 2. Why is it wrong to worship the spirits of the dead (Deut 6:5)? 3. Can we know God in a personal way? 4. What great disaster did God send in the time of Noah? 5. Why did God send the flood? 6. The flood tells us that God hates.....? 7. Where will you spend eternity?

A PLACE FOR DEPARTED SPIRITS

Old Testament writers knew that God ruled over the realm of departed spirits. Satan has no control over man's spirit once it leaves his body, nor over the spirits of our ancestors. The spirits of the dead do not return to the

earth nor do they live on in the place where the person died. The spirits of the dead return to God who gave them (Eccl 12:7). That spirit world is hidden from our eyes. Old Testament writers used the Hebrew word "Sheol" (Greek "Hades"). They thought of it as a place where departed spirits had a dull, inactive existence (Eccl 9:10). Modern translations of the Bible often use "the grave" in place of Sheol (Numbers 16:30).

We know that God reigns over all, both the living and the dead. Jesus said, "I hold the keys of death and Hades (Hell)" (Rev 1:18). He also said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me..." (Matthew 28:18).

Satan may be busy, using sickness and death to put fear into our hearts, but he does not have the last word. God who created us and loves us controls our days and knows all about us (Psalms 139:16). Jesus asked, "Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life" (Matthew 6:27)?

Paul said he wanted to leave this world, for "to be with Christ is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in this body" (Phil 1:23).

We should be content, knowing that God will take care of our spirits. Jesus said our state would be "paradise" until the day of the resurrection.

TALK ABOUT 1. What is the greatest choice God gives to a person (Deut 30:19-20)? 2. Where do the spirits of people go when they die (Eccl 12:7)? 3. Why do some people worship the spirits of their ancestors? 4. Do evil spirits live in trees or rocks? 5. Why did Paul say "to be with Christ is better" (Phil 1:23)?

GOD HAS NO PLACE FOR DEAD BODIES

Some men go to a lot of trouble and pay large sums of money to prepare a place for their body after they die. The Pharaohs of Egypt instructed that their body be embalmed. This practice of embalming preserved the dead body. Some bodies remain to this day as mummies. The Pharaohs built elaborate tombs for their bodies. Their families gathered their possessions and buried them with the dead body, thinking these things would be needed in the dead person's 'after life.'

The Greeks cremated dead bodies. The Hebrews buried their dead the same day or the next day after the person died, because dead bodies decayed quickly in the hot climate of Palestine. Some Christians struggle with the question of what to do.

In Bible times men of wealth cut tombs in the rocky cliffs. The tomb was made secure by a heavy stone rolled across the mouth or entrance (Mark 16:3-4). Joseph and Nicodemus took Jesus' body and laid it in a new tomb.

God is only interested in living bodies. He made no command about disposing a dead body. He decreed that a dead body would turn to dust (Gen 3:19).

blood of Jesus will receive new resurrection bodies "at the last day" (John 11:24; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18).

Down through the centuries, Jews believed the dead 'slept.' They knew the spirit of a person lived on after his or her body died.

Jesus wept! He went to the tomb where Lazarus had been buried. It was a tomb cut from the rock. A heavy stone lay across the entrance to the tomb.

"Take away the stone," Jesus commanded. Men began to roll away the heavy stone that covered the entrance to the tomb.

"But, Lord," Martha objected, "by now the smell will be terrible, for he has been dead four days" (11:39 The Living Bible).

Then Jesus looked up to heaven and said, "Father, I thank You that You have heard Me...you always hear Me...I said this...that they may believe that You sent Me."

Then Jesus called with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" Spirit of Lazarus, come back! The spirit of Lazarus returned to his body; Lazarus rose up and came out, "his hands and feet wrapped...and a cloth around his face" (John 11:43-44).

"Take off the grave clothes," Jesus said to those who stood by, "and let him go."

Eager hands grabbed at the linen strips that bound the man's body and eager lips kissed his face.

A GENERAL RESURRECTION

When God created Adam "He breathed into his body the breath of life and the man became a living being" (Gen 2:7). Adam had a physical body, a conscious soul and a spirit, created 'in God's image,' which would live forever. No other creature in all God's marvellous creation has an immortal spirit that cannot be destroyed by death.

Zechariah the prophet said, "The Lord...forms the spirit of man" (Zech 12:1). In Jesus day Pharisees believed in a general resurrection. They tested Jesus with questions about the resurrection. He answered them, "At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels...." (Matthew 22:30).

Martha knew her dead brother's body would be reunited with his spirit at the General Resurrection. She said to Jesus: "I know he (my brother) will rise again in the resurrection at the last day..." (John 11:24).

Jesus replied, "I am the Resurrection and the Life. He who believes in Me will live..." (John 11:25). "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?" All those standing near would see life overcome death. Martha would 'see' much more than the physical event. She would know the power of God in a new way. She would enjoy 'resurrection life' through her relationship with the Prince of Life.

believe that God was in control of the events in Jesus' life or the calendar of His ministry. Thomas did not understand that Jesus, the Son of God, was who He said He was - God incarnate. No harm could come to Him or them until God's hour. God the Father was keeping them safe by His power (John 17:12).

There was no way to hurry back to Bethany. They had to walk for two days. They had plenty of time to think about the angry mobs in Judea?

Mary and Martha probably thought Jesus was not coming. Or, if He did come, it would come too late! They believed Jesus had to be there that very minute!

JESUS WENT TO BETHANY

"Jesus is coming!" The word spread quickly. Martha ran out of the house to meet Him, but Mary stayed behind with the mourners.

"Lord," Martha said to Jesus, "if you had been here my brother would not have died. But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask." Jesus, it is not too late for you! Her words must have warmed the Saviour's heart. Martha, what are you saying? Are you suggesting life out of death?

"Your brother will rise again," Jesus told Martha (John 11:23). "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in Me will never die. You believe this?"

But Martha was thinking about what might have been: "Lord, if You had been here," she said. Jesus did not hear her words; He directed her to the future, to life after death... "Your brother will rise..." He said.

"Yes, Lord," she answered, "I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God..." Martha's confession held the answer. Jesus was the Messiah...God Almighty! God had revealed this to Peter and now Martha (Matt 16:16).

TALK ABOUT 1. Why were the disciples and Thomas afraid (John 11:8,16)? 2. Why did Jesus not hurry to Jerusalem? 3. What did Jesus say to Martha (John 11:23)? 4. Martha confessed that Jesus was indeed the Son of G.....? 5. Jesus said, "I am the R.....and the L.....? What did He mean? 6. If we have Christ's life in us we have resurrection life now ___ True ___ False? 7. What did God reveal to Peter (Matt 16:16-17)?

MARTHA KNEW THE HEBREW SCRIPTURES

Resurrection to Life was not a new idea to Martha. Nor to anyone who knew the Hebrew Scriptures. God's word is plain for all to read. Indeed every man's spirit will be resurrected, "some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt" (Dan 12:2). Spirits who have been redeemed by the

Solomon knew this. He said: "Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it" (Eccl 12:7).

Jesus told the Pharisees, "He (God) is not the God of the dead but of the living" (Mark 12:24-27). God spoke to Moses about Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who had died long before. He implied that He was still caring for their spirits and, in the resurrection, their new bodies would rise from the dust (Dan 12:2).

THE RIVER OF LIFE

"There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells" (Psa 46:4). This is a picture of heaven, a place of life and joy and blessing. Rivers provide water essential to life. Many ancient cities had rivers flowing through them – Babylon had the river Euphrates, Damascus had the Abana and Pharpar (2 Kings 5:12), and Thebes in Egypt was built on the Nile River. But the city of Jerusalem had no river to give life to its citizens and surroundings. The people of Israel thought of a river as something very special.

God is the author and giver of life. The River of Life flows from the throne of God. It is a mighty river and men and women of all nations may come to it, drink deeply and have everlasting life. God calls to all, "Come! Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life" (Rev 22:17).

The River of Life never runs dry, and it is God's free gift to men and women. When they come to it and 'drink,' their thirst is satisfied. They are filled and refreshed. To drink from the River of life has the same meaning as receiving Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour. All men and women are sinners. Our sins make us thirst for something better. Our reckless lives call for healing. The River of life heals our lives.

On the last great day of the Feast, Jesus Christ stood up before the crowds and said, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. Whoever believes in Me....streams of water will flow from within him. By this He meant the Spirit..." (John 7:37-38). Those who drink the living water receive the Holy Spirit. They are born again into God's family and become citizens of God's city.

Jesus told the woman at the well, "Everyone who drinks the water of this well (Jacob's well) will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life" (John 4:13-14). This is a picture of the River of Life springing up in the believer's heart.

TALK ABOUT 1. What is the River of Life? 2. Where does it come from (Rev 22:1)? 3. Who may drink of its waters (Rev 22:7)? 4. Jesus said those who drink of the water of life will never be thirsty again (John 4:14)? Who was Jesus speaking to? What did He mean?

GOD'S SPIRIT BRINGS LIFE

The River is the same as the filling of the Holy Spirit. This River of Life and its blessings spring up in the heart of the believer and overflow to others. Its flow is not limited by drought or stopped by and human frailty. It keeps on springing up – a never-ending flow - making us rejoice and praise Him for His blessings.

The River of Life springs up inside the believer. It flows out and ripples along to find its way again into the sea of God's great love. It offers life in abundance to all it touches along the way. It offers eternal life. The Scriptures promise, "He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who lives in you" (Rom 8:11). The Spirit of God knows every person who is touched by the river, whether they accept its life-giving water or not.

The River flows on with joyous abandon, ever with life-giving purpose. It is a picture of God's great love seeking and saving the lost and dying (Luke 19:10).

Jesus told His disciples (and us) "Go into all the world and preach the good news (of life) to all creation. He who believes in Me...will be saved..." (Mark 16:15-16). And he or she will enjoy forever the River of Life and its abundance (John 10:10).

GOD HAS POWER OVER DEATH

The family in Bethany prepared the body of Lazarus for burial. Then they laid it in a rocky tomb (John 11:1-17). Jerusalem was less than two miles from Bethany and many Jews had come from the city to comfort the sisters Mary and Martha and to mourn with them. Lazarus was a well-known person in Jerusalem.

Jesus heard Lazarus was sick, but He did not go to him right away. He loved Lazarus and his sisters very much and He often stayed in their home at Bethany. At this time, Jesus had crossed the Jordan to avoid the hostile crowds in Jerusalem. He was in the place where John the Baptist had preached repentance (John 10:40).

TALK ABOUT 1. When Jesus died, He took away the fear of death for those who believe ___ True ___ False (Heb 2:14-15)? 2. Jesus' friend Lazarus lived in B.....? He had two sisters named M.....and M..... (John 11:1)? 3. When Lazarus became sick they sent for J.....? 4. Did Jesus come right away? Why not (John 11:4,14)? 5. Was Lazarus well known in Bethany?

"I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE"

The message was carried to Jesus from Mary and Martha: "Lord, the one you love is sick!" (John 11:1-2). Jesus got this message while He was on the

other side of the Jordan, but he did not hurry to go back to Bethany. He stayed where He was for two more days. He said to His disciples, "This sickness will not end in death...It is for God's glory, so that God's Son may be glorified through it" (John 11:4).

After two days, Jesus said to his disciples. "Let us go back to Judea." They were afraid and said: "But Rabbi, a short while ago the Jews tried to stone You, and yet You are going back there?"

The disciples could see danger ahead and the hostile crowds who wanted to kill their Master. They did not understand Christ words: "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? A man who walks by day will not stumble..." (John 11:9).

He took away their fears. At that moment, while it was still day, He was doing His Father's work. "The LIGHT is here now," He told them. While men have the light of day, they can do their work. The night will come later. Jesus was telling the frightened disciples not to fear. The Jews could not stone Him in the 'day-time' of His ministry.

JESUS KNEW LAZARUS WAS DEAD

Jesus had said to His disciples, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up." Jesus knew Lazarus had died.

Even as he spoke Mary and Martha were mourning their brother's death. Jesus was sad, too! The disciples thought, 'If Lazarus is asleep, that should help him get better?' Jesus gently corrected their mistake: He said, "Lazarus is dead, and for your sake I was glad I was not there, so that you may believe" (John 11:14). "The purpose of this illness is not death," Jesus said, "but for the glory of God. I, the Son of God, will receive glory from this..." (John 11:4 TLB).

All Christ's miracles were performed, "so that men might believe." His delay in going to Mary and Martha would help the disciples understand the spiritual truth of the resurrection. Their eyes could not see beyond the physical. They must believe that Jesus had the power to raise a dead body, to bring spirit and body together again.

We, too, must understand the spiritual reality of the resurrection.

TALK ABOUT 1. Who was Lazarus? 2. Why did Martha call Jesus? 3. Did Martha believe Jesus could heal her sick brother, even raise him from the dead? 4. Why did Jesus perform miracles (John 11:14,41)? 5. What comfort could these friends give to Mary and Martha?

THOMAS WAS SLOW TO BELIEVE

Some of the other disciples may have grasped the meaning of Jesus' words, but not Thomas. He replied, "Let us also go and die (be stoned) with Him (Christ)" (John 11:16). Thomas was willing to die with Jesus but he could not