

Bible study on Jesus Christ

DEATH AND RESURRECTION

To the reader: Keep your Bible beside you. Always read your Bible first, then read these notes. Check the references and read them also. Invite a friend to study with you. You will be blessed.

Read: Mark 14:43-50

JESUS WAS BETRAYED

Near the end of His life, Jesus left Jerusalem and went to a garden called Gethsemane. He went there often to pray. Soon Judas Iscariot, one of Jesus' disciples, came to the garden. Judas was leading temple guards, with officials and chief priests (John 18:3). They came "armed with swords and clubs" to arrest Jesus.

"The one I kiss is the man; arrest Him," Judas told the soldiers.

"Rabbi," he said and he kissed Jesus on the face.

"Who is it you want?" Jesus asked.

"Jesus of Nazareth," the chief priests replied.

"I am He," Jesus said.

When He said this they "drew back and fell to the ground."

Then Jesus told the soldiers, "If you are looking for Me, then let these men (the disciples) go" (John 18:8). Jesus was ever watching out for His disciples, that they would not be caught in a fight and hurt.

Peter, a disciple who loved Jesus, asked "Lord, should we strike with our swords" (Luke 22:49)? Then Peter drew his sword. He struck a man and cut off his ear. He was the servant of the High Priest.

Peter's heart was right, but he was hot-headed and hasty. Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given Me? The 'cup' means God's anger against sin. Then Jesus put out His hand and touched the bleeding ear and healed it.

TALK ABOUT

1. Who betrayed Jesus to His enemies?
2. Who struck out with his sword?
3. Was Jesus arrested for the wrong that He did?

THE DEATH OF JESUS CHRIST

We can look at Christ's death in many different ways. Most of the record of Scripture can be gathered under these headings:

1. His trial and sentence to death by crucifixion.
2. The Roman soldiers at the cross and how Christ's death affected them.
3. The people who stood around the cross.
4. The two criminals who hung on the crosses beside Jesus.
5. Jesus' seven last words from the cross.
6. The miracles that happened when Jesus died.
7. The Roman soldiers who guarded the tomb.
8. Christ's resurrection from the tomb.
9. What the cross of Christ says to us today.

CHRIST'S TRIAL BEFORE PILATE

Jesus was tried before King Herod and then before the Roman governor, Pilate.

Pilate called the chief priests and rulers and said to them, "You brought me this man as one... inciting the people to rebellion. I have examined Him in your presence and have found no basis for your charges against Him. Neither has Herod... He (Jesus) has done nothing to deserve death... I will punish Him and then release Him" (Luke 23:13-16).

Read: Mark 14:53-65

GOD SENT A MESSAGE TO PILATE

While the crowd was thinking about this, a servant handed Pilate a note from his wife. His wife wrote, "Have nothing to do with that righteous Man (Jesus); for last night I suffered greatly in a dream because of Him" (Matt 27:19 NASB).

The Romans were afraid of dreams and from that time, Pilate tried to let Jesus go free. "I will punish Him and then release Him," he told the rulers and chief priests (Luke 23:17).

But the crowd shouted, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!"

So Pilate handed Jesus over to the soldiers who led him away to be flogged with a whip. Flogging was brutal. It could kill a prisoner.

The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on Jesus' head. They clothed Him in a purple robe and... said, 'Hail, King of the Jews!'" (John 19:1-3).

When Jesus came out wearing a crown of thorns and a purple robe, Pilate said to the crowd, "Here is the man! I find no basis for a charge against Him." Jesus had done no wrong!

CRUCIFY HIM! CRUCIFY HIM!

As soon as the chief priests and people saw Jesus, they shouted "Crucify! Crucify Him!"

"We have a law," they said, "according to that law He must die, because He claimed to be the Son of God" (John 19:7).

Pilate may not have heard this claim before and he was afraid. He wanted to ask more, but Jesus would not answer him.

He said to Jesus, "Don't you realize I have power... to free you or to crucify you?"

Jesus answered Pilate, "You would have no power over Me, if it were not given to you from above" (John 19:11). God the Father was in control, though it might have seemed otherwise.

From then on, Pilate tried to set Jesus free, but the Jews kept shouting, "If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar." Caesar was the Roman Emperor at that time.

TALK ABOUT

1. What message did Pilate's wife send to him (Matt 27:19)?
2. Why did the Jewish rulers and chief priests want to kill Jesus?

PILATE WOULD RELEASE A PRISONER

When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but an uproar was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. "I am innocent of this man's blood," he said (Matt 27:24).

All the people answered back, "Let His blood be on us and our children" (Matt 27:25-26).

Now it was the governor's custom at the feast to release a prisoner chosen by the crowd. Barabbas, a murderer, was being held in prison, so Pilate asked them, "Which one do you want me to release to you: Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?" (Matt 27:15-18).

"Barabbas," they shouted.

Pilate asked, "What shall I do, then, with Jesus?"

"Crucify Him!" the crowd shouted.

Then Pilate released Barabbas to them and handed Jesus over to be crucified.

Read: Luke 23:26-31

THE CROWD THAT CAME TO WATCH

Luke tells of the crowd who followed Jesus up Golgotha's hill.

Many women were disciples of Jesus. They followed Him, too. "They mourned and wept for Him" (Luke 23:27).

Jesus turned to them and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me; weep for yourselves and for your children."

He spoke of the terrible suffering that would come on all who lived in Jerusalem. This happened in AD 70 when the Roman army destroyed the city and the Temple.

If the Roman soldiers would do these things to Messiah-Christ even as He spoke, what would happen to His followers after He was gone from them? It would be a time of great terror and Christ would not be there to help them suffer through it!

TALK ABOUT

1. What did Jesus mean by what He said to the women who followed Him (Luke 23:28-31)?
2. Did Pilate want to set Jesus free?
3. Who did he release?

THEY THOUGHT THEY COULD MOCK GOD

Jesus was too weak to carry the heavy cross. He staggered under its weight, so the soldiers grabbed a man, Simon of Cyrene, to carry it. He came from north Africa. Like thousands of others, he was a visitor in the city. Perhaps he had come to Jerusalem for Passover.

They came to a place called Golgotha, a Hebrew name meaning 'a skull.' Calvary is the Greek name for the same rocky hill. There they nailed Christ's hands and feet to the cross and lifted Him up to die.

Jesus was thirsty, but He would not drink the "wine mixed with gall" they offered him. Gall may have been a bitter drug made from poppy seeds. It is thought that women of the city offered this drink to criminals when they were crucified to ease their pain (Mark 15:22-32).

Many people who passed near the cross shook their heads and mocked Jesus saying, "Save yourself! Come down from the cross, if You are the Son of God" (Matt 27:40).

The chief priests and teachers of the law stood watching. They also mocked Jesus and said, "He saved others, but He cannot save Himself! If He is the King of Israel, let Him come down now from the cross and we will believe Him. He trusted in God. Let God rescue Him now if He wants to..."

TALK ABOUT

1. Who carried the cross for Jesus?
2. Do you think Simon knew whose cross he carried?
3. What did those who passed near the cross say (Matt 27:40)?

JESUS, KING OF THE JEWS!

Pilate had a sign made. The soldiers nailed it to the cross above Jesus' head. The sign read: "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews" (John 19:19).

The words were written in the three common languages of the day, so that all who passed by could read them. The languages were, Aramaic, spoken by the Jews from the time of their captivity in Babylon, Latin, spoken by the leaders and Scribes and Greek, spoken by many people.

Many Jews read this sign, because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city (John 19:19-22).

Those passing by shouted at Jesus, wagging their heads and saying, "You who are going to destroy the Temple and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross" (Matt 27:38-39 NASB).

In the same way, the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him. They said, "He saved others, but he cannot save Himself" (Matt 27:41-42).

Two robbers were crucified with Jesus, one on His right and one on His left. One of the criminals who hung beside Jesus also mocked Him saying, "Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!" (Luke 22:39). But the other criminal rebuked him saying, "Don't you fear God," he said..." We are punished justly... But this man has done nothing wrong."

This criminal spoke again, perhaps his last words: He said to Jesus, "Remember me when You come in Your Kingdom" (Luke 23:42). Jesus promised to honour this criminal's last request. He said to the dying man, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with Me in paradise" (Luke 23:43).

Read: Luke 23:32-46

FULL OF GRACE AND TRUTH

Jesus spoke from the cross seven times:

1. When He thought of His persecutors and the wrath of God that would come upon them, He prayed "Father forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34).
2. To the criminal hanging beside Him, Jesus said, "Today you will be with Me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43).
3. When He saw His mother standing near John, the disciple whom He loved, He said to His mother, "Dear woman, here is your son." And to the apostle John He said, "Here is your mother" (John 19:26-27).
4. When pain and suffering overcame Him, Jesus said, "I am thirsty" (John 19:28; Psalm 69:3).
5. When the great burden of the world's sin came upon Him, Jesus cried out, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me" (Mark 15:34).
6. When He cried, "It is finished," the earth shook and darkness covered the sun (John 19:30).
7. Then He said, "Father, into Your hands I commit My Spirit," and breathed His last breath (Luke 23:46).

THEY WATCHED HIM DIE

The soldiers sat down to watch Jesus die (Matt 27:36). They all wanted His robe. Jesus' robe was made without any seam in the cloth "woven in one piece from top to bottom" (John 19:23).

"Let's not tear it," they said, let's decide by lot who will get it."

So they cast lots for it. This fulfilled the Scripture (Ps 22:18).

The women stood weeping. They had come with Jesus from His native Galilee. They had waited through the long night of his trial. They came to care for His needs. They could do no more.

The centurion who stood guard at the cross said, "Surely He was the Son of God" (Matt 27:54).

TALK ABOUT

1. The soldiers wanted Jesus' robe. Why?
2. How did they decide who would get it (Matt 27:35)?
3. What was the difference between the two criminals crucified with Jesus?
4. What did Jesus say to the criminal who repented (Luke 23:43)?

JESUS' LAST WORDS TO HIS MOTHER

Jesus' mother stood near the cross together with His aunt Mary, wife of Cleopas, and Mary Magdalene (John 19:25).

When Jesus saw them, He said to His mother, "Dear woman, here is your son." And to the beloved disciple, John, He said, "Here is your mother" (John 19:26).

John turned to comfort Mary and he took her to his own home.

JESUS CRIED OUT "IT IS FINISHED!"

When Jesus Christ had cried out again in a loud voice, He gave up His Spirit (Matt 27:50). John records Jesus' last cry from the cross. Jesus cried out, "It is finished" (John 19:30).

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, had finished the great work of redeeming mankind. Nothing more needed to be done, in heaven or on earth (Gal 2:20).

- a) It was the time of the evening sacrifice. As the priests ministered in the Temple, the huge curtain that separated the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place tore from top to bottom and fell crumpled at their feet. The mystery of the Holy of Holies where no man had been permitted to enter was laid bare. The message was plain: Now all races of men could come to the mercy seat and find favour with God (John 17:21).
- b) In His death, Jesus Christ opened "a new and living way" back to the Father (Heb 10:20).

Now all those who have put their faith in Jesus Christ have the same access to God (Gal 3:26-28). They are told to come boldly to God's throne and find grace and mercy (Heb 10:19-20).

- c) It was the exact time when the Jews killed the Pascal Lamb for the Feast of Passover. Jesus was that 'Lamb of God' who took away the sins of the world (John 1:29).

TALK ABOUT

1. What did Jesus say to His mother as she watched Him die (John 19:26)?
2. What were Christ's last words spoken from the cross (John 19:30)?
3. Jesus died at the exact time when each Jewish family killed a Passover lamb. Why did they do this?
4. Who can come freely to God's throne and find mercy (Heb 10:19-20)?

THEY LAID HIS BODY IN A NEW TOMB

The Sabbath began at sundown, and Jesus' body had to be taken from the cross (Deut 21:23). Joseph of Arimathea, a disciple of Jesus went to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. Nicodemus went with him (John 19:39). Joseph was a rich man, a member of the council or Jewish court called the Sanhedrin. He had a new tomb ready for his own body, but he would put the body of Jesus there.

Pilate gave the body to Joseph. He wrapped it in strips of new linen cloth and placed it in the tomb cut out of rock. Then they rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb (Mark 15:43-46).

Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Jesus saw Joseph lay Jesus' body in the tomb and close it with a large stone.

Read: Matthew 27:45-54

THE MIRACLES OF THE CROSS

When Jesus was crucified, many great signs happened. Some of the signs were from the heavens, some from the earth, and some from under the earth. We call them "the miracles of the cross."

The six miracles of the cross are very interesting. They can be a study in themselves:

a) The darkness that came at midday (Luke 23:44-45).

"From the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over the land" (Matt 27:45). The sun did not go out of the sky, but it hid its face while Jesus hung on the cross.

"The darkness of Calvary smothered the sun at noon!"

For a brief period of three hours, Almighty God put his hand over the sun and no light came upon the earth.

b) Jesus cried out again in a loud voice

The veil of the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom. "At that moment (when Jesus cried out) the curtain of the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom" (Matt 27:51).

The veil of the Temple separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies, the innermost part of the Temple!

In the Holy of Holies was the Ark of the covenant and the mercy seat. No one could go in there, except Israel's High Priest. He could go in only once a year, but he had to take the blood of sacrifice.

In that most sacred place, God met with the High Priest. To everyone else the veil said 'Stop!' come no farther. The first veil was made for the Tabernacle by Moses (Ex 26:33). When the Temple was built a new veil was made.

When Jesus cried out, the great curtain tore apart and fell to the floor. The force was from heaven to earth. The message was plain. Man could now approach God, because of the sacrifice of Jesus, the Lamb of God. The Book of Hebrews makes this very clear (Hebrews 9:3,8; 10:19-20).

c) The miracle of the earthquake.

"The earth split and the rocks split" (Matt 27:51).

With a great supernatural force God shook the earth and split the rocks. The victory shout of Jesus shook the heavens and God broke up the earth.

d) The tombs broke open!

The tombs in the neighbourhood broke open and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life again (Matt 27:52).

These bodies received their spirits once more and lived on until they died again. They went into the holy city of Jerusalem and appeared to many people. What an amazing miracle! The rocky tombs around Calvary were split open by the earthquake. There was such rejoicing in heaven that these holy souls leapt out of the cold tombs that held them.

"After Jesus' resurrection" they went into the city to witness that their Saviour had risen! They were God's people in life and God used them even in death.

e) The miracle of the grave clothes (John 20:6-8).

When the women told the disciples that Jesus had risen, Peter and John ran to the tomb. When Peter looked in, he saw the grave clothes lying just as they had been wound around Jesus' body. Nothing had been disturbed! The changed 'body' of Jesus had come out of the grave clothes without disturbing them in any way.

This would not have happened if someone had come and taken His body! What a wonderful proof of His resurrection. And Peter and John needed no other proof.

f) The miracle of the saints who rose up out of their graves.

We have noted this miracle in the earthquake scene. Now we will look again.

The earthquake did not open all the tombs on the rocky hillside of Calvary. It was selective and opened only graves in which the bodies of "holy people" had been buried.

We are curious to know more. Who were they? Who saw them?

Did they know who they were? Why would they appear, if not to be recognized?

But the truth is so beautiful because so little is said. Just enough is told and no more.

TALK ABOUT

1. Who asked Pilate for Jesus' body (Mark 15:43-46)?
2. What did Joseph do with it?
3. Name some of the miracles that happened when Jesus died.
4. Jesus was born to die. Death did not end His work; death was his work.
5. Why did Peter believe?

Read: Matthew 27:62-66

THE ROMAN SOLDIERS WHO GUARDED THE TOMB

The chief priests were afraid. They feared that Jesus' disciples would go to the tomb and take His body away. Then the disciples would say Jesus rose from the dead. And many others would believe in Jesus.

So the chief priests and Pharisees went to Pilate and asked him for soldiers to guard the tomb where Jesus' body lay.

"Sir," they said to Pilate, "we remember that while He was still alive that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise again.' So give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, His disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people that He has been raised from the dead. This last deception will be worse than the first" (Matt 27:63).

Pilate answered, "Take a guard. Go, make the tomb as secure as you know how."

So the chief priests took a guard of the best Roman soldiers.

They put a seal of wax on the stone that covered the tomb and posted a guard in front of it.

When the earthquake shook the earth and the rocks split open, the guard fell to the ground. After the darkness passed, the soldiers got to their feet. Then they went into the city to report to the chief priests all that had happened (Matt 28:11).

These Roman soldiers went in fear and trembling. It meant death for them to let a prisoner escape, or to fail in their duty.

TALK ABOUT

1. What did the chief priests fear would happen to Jesus' body (Matt 27:63)?
2. What happened to the soldiers who guarded the tomb?

THEY DID NOT KNOW WHAT TO DO

When they heard the guards' story, the chief priests and elders did not know what to do! Then they thought of a plan. They gave the soldiers a large sum of money and told them, "You are to say, 'His disciples came during the night and stole Him away while we were asleep'."

They told the guards, "If this report goes to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble."

The soldiers took the money and did as they were told. So this story passed from mouth to mouth among the Jews and many people believed that it was true.

The chief priests and elders also believed this lie (Matt 28:15).

But it was too late! Jesus was alive! He had risen from the dead and soon showed Himself to His disciples.

Read: Mark 16:1-8

THE WOMEN WENT TO THE TOMB

Early on the Sabbath morning three women prepared spices. They mixed them with care thinking to anoint Jesus' dead body (Mark 16:1). This was a common practice at that time.

Just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb. They knew that the stone covering it was very heavy and they wondered who would roll away the stone for them. They asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?"

When they looked toward the tomb, they saw the stone had been rolled away.

Matthew tells us, "An angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it." The women looked and saw the angel. "His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow" (Matt 28:2-3).

The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; He has risen, just as He said. Come and see the place where He lay. Then go quickly and tell His disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see Him'" (Matt 28:5-7). "Remember how He told you... 'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again'" (Luke 24:7).

TALK ABOUT

1. Why did the women go to the tomb?
2. Who rolled the stone away?
3. What did the angel say about Jesus (Matt 28:6-7)?

THEY RAN TO TELL THE DISCIPLES

The women were afraid but full of joy as they ran from the tomb.

When they got back to the city, they told the eleven disciples and the others who were with them. The disciples did not believe the women's story. "Their words seemed to them like nonsense." Peter and John ran out of the house and came to the tomb. John got to the tomb first. He looked in and saw the strips of linen lying there, but he did not go in (John 20:5). Peter came puffing up behind John and went into the tomb. "He saw the strips of linen lying there, as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus' head. The cloth was folded by itself, separate from the linen." Then Peter went into the tomb.

Peter and John did not understand what had happened, but they believed Jesus had risen from the dead! (John 20:7-8).

Mary Magdalene stood outside the tomb. She was crying. Then she saw a man. She thought he was the gardener! "Woman," He said to her, "why are you crying? Who are you looking for?" (John 20:15). "If you have carried Him away, tell me where you have put him and I will get him," she said.

Jesus spoke her name, "Mary." She turned to Him and cried out, "Rabboni!" Master and Lord!

The woman fell at His feet and worshipped Him, holding Him. "Do not hold on to Me," Jesus said to her, "for I have not yet returned to the Father..." (John 20:17).

Mary Magdalene went and told the disciples, I have seen the Lord and this is what He said to me: "Go to My brothers and tell them, 'I am returning to My Father and your Father, to My God and your God.'"

Read: John 20:19-31
IN AN UPPER ROOM

That evening, the disciples were gathered in an upper room. "The doors were locked for fear of the Jews" (John 20:19). These disciples would not have attacked armed Roman guards and tried to steal Jesus' body out of the tomb. They shook with fear and crouched behind locked doors.

Then Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." After Jesus said this, He showed them His hands and side.

The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord (John 20:20).

Again Jesus said to them, "As the Father hath sent Me, I am sending you." He breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven" (John 20:22-23).

TALK ABOUT

1. What did Jesus tell the twelve to go into all the world and do (Matt 28:19-20)?

Read: 1 Corinthians 15:12-24
RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

Some in Corinth said there would be no resurrection. Paul said, "If there is no resurrection...even Christ has not been raised" (15:13). "But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep" (15:20).

If there is no resurrection:

- a) Christ is left in a martyr's grave.
- b) Our preaching is vain (empty) (15:14).
- c) You are still in your sins.
- d) It makes our "hope of glory" a false promise and us false witnesses (15:15).
- e) Those who have 'fallen asleep' in Christ are also lost (15:17).

Read: 1 Corinthians 15:25-34
DEATH AND THE CHRISTIAN

In His death on the cross, Christ defeated "All His enemies" including death (15:25). Death came when Adam sinned. All die because "the wages of sin is death" (15:21; Rom 6:23). Death is the last great enemy. Jesus won the victory over death (Hebrews 2;15). Death will be "cast into the lake of fire" (Rev 20:14).

Death will not have power over Christians. Their bodies will rise to meet Christ in the air (1 Thess 4:17). They will live in new resurrection bodies that will never die. "All will be made alive." Paul spoke about all believers (15:22). Believers are 'In Christ' so all will rise to new life at the resurrection (15:23).

EACH WILL RISE IN HIS OWN TURN

Christ has gone to Heaven first. He is the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep (15:20). All those who are in Christ will also rise. Then the redeemed of all ages will surround the throne and cry out, "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb" (Rev 7:10).

By faith, believers are joined with Christ forever. Just as He rose from the grave, so those alive in Him will rise. "Each in his own turn" is a military term. They will rise like a company of soldiers marching in proper order. "Then the end will come..." (1 Cor 15:24).

God gave the Son "all authority in Heaven and on earth" (Matt 28:18). When Christ has conquered all His enemies - sin, death and Satan - He will hand over His power and authority to God the Father 1 Corinthians (15:24-28).

TALK ABOUT

1. How did God's grace work in Paul's life (15:10)?
2. If we have hope in this life only and have nothing beyond, is that true hope (15:19)?
3. Tell three things about death?
4. What hope do you have for life after death?

"If there is no resurrection, what will those do who are baptized for the dead" (15:29)? We do not know what this means. It is possible that some believers were being baptized for believers who had died before they received baptism.

Then why do we risk death every hour if there is no resurrection (15:30)? Why would Paul suffer to bring them the gospel if life ended in the grave? His suffering would be of no value (2 Cor 11:23-29).

Paul said, "I die every day" (15:31). This is what Jesus meant when he said, "take up your cross and follow Me." Death to self worked in Paul's life. He chose to deny himself to share the gospel with them (Mark 8:34).

Paul took words from a Greek play: "Bad company corrupts good character." He means be careful of those who say 'there is no resurrection' or you will be turned away from the truth (15:12,33).

Read: 1 Corinthians 15:35-44

WHAT KIND OF BODIES?

Christians in Corinth asked, "How are the dead raised?" What kind of body will they have (15:35)?

The apostles saw Jesus alive after He rose from the grave:

- a) His body was not limited by time and space (Luke 24:36).
- b) They could recognize His new spiritual body. They knew it was Jesus! (Luke 24:31).
- c) They saw Him go back to Heaven (Acts 1:9).

Paul used a seed to teach about this new body. He said, 'When you plant a seed in the ground, you do not get a seed but a new plant. The seed dies, but a new life springs up from the seed' (15:36-38). A wonderful change takes place in the seed's 'body.'

We are all like seeds. Our bodies will die and be buried. In the resurrection, God will raise our bodies in glorious new life. Our new bodies will be spiritual bodies. Paul compared the body we have now with the new one we will have in the resurrection:

- a) A perishing body will be raised an ever-living one.
- b) A body with no honour (now) will be "raised in glory."
- c) The natural physical body "is raised a spiritual body."

TALK ABOUT

1. When will all Christ's enemies be destroyed?
2. What did Paul mean when he spoke about "death to self"?
3. Some say Christ will ride out to make war against the nations, but what would be His purpose if the nations have been judged already (2 Peter 3:10-13)?

Read: 1 Corinthians 15:45-49

THE FIRST MAN ADAM

"The first man Adam became a living being, the last Adam (Jesus) a life-giving spirit" (1 Cor 15:45-49).

Here we have God's order, sowing must come before harvest. God began with the natural man (Adam). Then He moved to the spiritual man, Jesus Christ. We had an old life and body 'in Adam.' Now we have a new life 'in Christ' and we will soon have a new body also. Our earthly body 'in Adam' will be forever changed into a body like Christ's glorious body (Phil 3:21).

"The spiritual did not come first, but the natural and after that the spiritual" (1 Cor 15:46). This is a great truth. Under the Old Covenant everything was physical and temporal. Under the New Covenant everything becomes spiritual and eternal.

In every way, we are like the first man Adam. We have all his weaknesses and sins. But just as "we have borne the likeness of the earthly man" so we will bear the likeness of Jesus (15:49; 2 Cor 3:18).

Jesus Christ, the second man, was from Heaven. "So shall we bear the likeness of the man from Heaven." Christians are being made like Jesus Christ now. In the resurrection their bodies will like His "glorious body."

Will you be ready when the time comes for Jesus to take you to Heaven? Time will yield to eternity and you will live in God's Kingdom forever. To pass into the Father's presence with the likeness of the Son 'stamped' on our spirits will be the greatest victory ever!

Read: 1 Corinthians 15:50-58

THE VICTORY OF THE RESURRECTION

This is Paul's final argument about the resurrection of the body. At Christ's Second Coming, "We will not all sleep (in death), but we will all be changed. In a flash, in the twinkling of an eye" (15:51-52). Before Christ came to live in us, we were "lost in darkness." God's light in our spirit had gone out. We were like candles without a flame. Then Christ lit us again. His Spirit touched us and we came alive. His Spirit is like a fire. A fire is caught not taught. You cannot gather twigs and teach them to catch fire. A source of fire must light them.

Death would be cast into the lake of fire (Rev 20:14). Paul could not hold back his praise to God: "Thanks be to God!" he shouted. "He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (15:57).

Christ won the victory over death and Christians will win this victory too! God gives us this victory because of the blood of Jesus Christ. That is why Paul could say, "stand firm in the Lord Jesus Christ" (15:58). This was Paul's last word to his Christian brothers. It is set out in three parts:

- a) Stand firm in your beliefs (faith).
- b) Let nothing move you off the foundation (Christ).
- c) Give yourselves fully to the Lord's work.

TALK ABOUT

1. Why did Paul work so hard?
2. Was it Paul or the grace of God working through Paul?
3. How can we do most good to those around us?
4. Does death have any 'sting' for believers (15:55)?

WHY DID JESUS HAVE TO DIE?

Did Jesus have to die on a Roman cross or could He have died some other way? Was the cross-death important, or was it only His shed blood that was important to our salvation?

When Christ died on the cross, His death fulfilled all that was written about Him by the prophets. Old Testament prophets had long recognized that the coming Messiah would be 'lifted up' to be a spectacle to the world (John 3:14).

1. In the days of Moses, a man who rebelled against Almighty God was under God's curse. He was taken out of the camp and stoned or hanged on a tree (Num 15:30-31; Deut 21:22; Gal 3:14).

In bearing the sins of the whole world, Jesus was cursed by God the Father. That is why He cried out from the cross, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Matt 27:46).

Jesus bore the curse that God pronounced on men who did not keep His law. "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law." (Gal 3:10; Deut 27:26).

2. Christ's birth was very private, away from the eyes of the world, but His death was very public, so that all could see Him die. Criminals who were crucified were made a public spectacle. But Jesus was not a criminal. He had to die so that everyone who believes He is the son of God will have eternal life (John 3:15-16).

Paul said that the apostles who followed Christ were led along as spectacles before the world and before angels. They suffered for the sake of the gospel. They were like men "condemned to die" at the end of the commander's victory parade (1 Cor 4:9-10).

3. Death on a Roman cross was reserved for criminals. The cross death was a public disgrace and the bodies of victims were thought of as no better than dung. So the Romans crucified criminals "outside the city" where they threw the bodies of dead animals and dumped the refuse of the city.

TALK ABOUT

1. Why did Jesus have to die?
2. What great work did He finish?

3. Who gave Him this work to do?
4. Have you believed?

Read: Luke 24:36-55

DISCIPLES BEHIND LOCKED DOORS

In Jerusalem, the eleven disciples and many others were gathered in an upper room. The doors were locked. When they heard the voice of Cleopas outside the door, they let the two men in.

While Cleopas and his friend were telling their story, Jesus came and stood among them (24:36). The gathered men and women shook with fear.

Jesus said to them, "Peace be with you! Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at My hands and My feet. It is I, Myself! Touch Me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have" (24:38-39). And Jesus showed them His hands and feet.

He said to them, "This is what I told you... Everything must be fulfilled that is written about Me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms." Then He opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures (24:44-45).

He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in His name to all nations...You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what My Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high" (24:46-49; Matt 28:19).

Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to live in them and make them bold to witness for Him (John 14:16; Acts 2:4; Jer 31:33).

Forty days after Jesus rose from the dead, He took His disciples to Bethany. He lifted up His hands and blessed them. Then He was taken up into Heaven (24:50-51; Acts 1:9-11).

The Christians obeyed their Lord and waited in Jerusalem.

On the day of Pentecost, which was 50 days after the Sabbath of Passover week, the Holy Spirit came upon them and filled them, both men and women (Acts 2:1-4).

TALK ABOUT

1. Why were the disciples and Christ's followers meeting behind locked doors?
2. Who came into their midst (24:36)?
3. What did Jesus say about the Scriptures (24:46-47)?
4. When did the Holy Spirit come upon the disciples (Acts 2:4)?
5. Is telling people about Jesus enough or should we do more than that?

Read: Luke 24:13-35

ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

That same day, two of Jesus' friends were walking to Emmaus, a small town about a day's walk from the city. A stranger came and walked along with them. He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along" (24:17)?

Cleopas looked at the stranger and asked, "Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem, and do not know the things that have happened there?"

"What things?" the stranger asked.

They answered, "About Jesus of Nazareth. He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed Him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified Him..."

The stranger replied, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not Christ have to suffer these things and then enter His glory? And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, He explained to them what was said in the Scriptures about Himself (Luke 24:25-31).

Near the town of Emmaus, the stranger waved His hand and turned to leave them. It was nearly evening, so they pressed Him to stay with them (24:29). So the stranger went in to eat with them. He sat at their table and shared their food. Then He took the bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them (24:30). When He broke the bread, their eyes were

opened. At once they knew Him. It was their Lord! They had met the risen Christ! Then He disappeared from their sight.

The two men looked at each other and asked, "Were not our hearts burning within us while He talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"

Then they returned to Jerusalem to tell the others.

CHRIST'S LAST WORDS TO HIS DISCIPLES

Before He was crucified, Jesus led His disciples out of the city to the Mount of Olives. As they sat on the hillside they asked Him, "Lord, are You at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel" (Acts 1:6).

Israel was ruled by a Roman military government. The Jews and the disciples hoped Jesus would free them from Rome and restore their nation.

Jesus answered: "It is not for you to know the times, but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be My witnesses..." (Acts 1:8).

He turned their eyes away from earthly possessions and power to a spiritual kingdom. For forty days after He rose from the tomb, He had talked with them about God's Kingdom. They were part of God's Kingdom and they would preach that Kingdom to the whole world, beginning "in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

But this handful of disciples would need more than their natural ability to preach the gospel of God's Kingdom "in all the world." They would need the power and boldness of God's Holy Spirit living within them.

JESUS WAS TAKEN UP INTO HEAVEN

After Jesus said these things, He was taken up to Heaven before their very eyes, and a cloud hid Him from view (Acts 1:9).

The disciples were surprised. They never expected this to happen. They stood there with their mouths open, looking straight up at the bright cloud that had received their Master.

"Suddenly, two men dressed in white stood beside them" (Acts 1:10).

"Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into Heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen Him go into Heaven."

Jesus cared enough to send two angels to tell His disciples, and the world, that He would come again. He would come "in the same way" as they had seen Him go into Heaven (Mark 14:62).

This is Christ's promise to all believers. If we love Jesus, we will surely see Him when He comes again in His glory! (1 Thes 4:13-18).

Luke is the only evangelist who tells of Jesus' ascension to Heaven. But it was believed by all. Mary clung to her risen Lord and Peter said He was "exalted to the right hand of God" (Acts 2:31). It was a fact of history.

TALK ABOUT

1. Did Jesus ever promise to restore the nation of Israel?
2. What blessing did Jesus say the disciples would receive (Luke 24:49)?
3. What did He tell them they would do (Acts 1:8)?

WHAT THE CROSS SAYS TO US TODAY

The death of Jesus Christ divides world history. It divides our Bible into the Old and New Testaments. The Old Testament tells of God working among men before Christ came and died on the cross.

The New Testament tells of Christ coming to earth, living among men and giving His life to redeem men and women.

To some the death of Jesus Christ is nothing more than a strange old story. But to those who see the love of God, giving His only Son to die for us, it is the greatest event that ever happened!

The death of Jesus Christ changed all history, forever!

To men everywhere, Christ's death says, "I love you." It also says, "Because of your sin, I had to die for you. There was no other way for you to be saved from eternal damnation" (Acts 16:31).

Those who receive Jesus Christ's death for them and live for Him are changed into His image! (2 Cor 3:18). When their bodies die and they leave this earth, they will live with Him forever in Heaven!

TALK ABOUT

1. How does the death of Jesus Christ divide world history?
2. What does the death of Christ mean to you?
3. Are you telling others about Jesus Christ and what He did for them?

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