

“God So Loved The World” Bible Study

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16 (NIV)

Study #17: The State of the Dead

One of the questions that is uppermost in the minds of many is, what is the state of the dead? This is especially true if we have lost a loved one. Death is the “grim reaper” and as such, every one of us have to face it. According to the Bible all humanity is born slaves to the fear of death (see Hebrews 2:15). One main reason for this is because we do not know what our destiny is or what happens to us once we die.

Does the Bible have anything to say about this subject? The answer is a most definite yes. This is what these Bible studies are all about: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish [i.e., die], but have everlasting life.” This eternal or everlasting life is God’s supreme gift to mankind. Many pagan religions and especially Greek mythology, teach that the soul of man is immortal. Unfortunately, this idea of an immortal soul was borrowed from the Greeks by the early Church Fathers and made to be a part of Christian teaching. However, it may surprise you to know that the Bible does not teach this.

What then does the Bible teach about the soul and the state of man in death? Furthermore, if man does not have an immortal soul, where does one go after death? These are important questions that this lesson will answer.

1. What did Adam become when God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life?

Genesis 2:7 _____

Note: The primary meaning of the word soul is “the life principle.” That is why the same word “soul” is used in the original language of Scripture to define the life of animals. A good example is Genesis 1:20 where the word soul is translated in the King James version to mean the word “life.”

2. What warning did God give our first parents if they disobeyed His command not to eat the fruit of the forbidden tree?

Genesis 2:17 _____

Note: The word “die” means to say good-bye to life. The life or soul that God created in Adam was not naturally immortal but conditionally immortal. As long as our first parents obeyed God they were given the privilege to live forever. But the moment they sinned their life would become mortal. That is what happened at the Fall and is what we inherited from them at birth.

3. Where did the idea of an immortal life or soul first come from?

Genesis 3:1-4 _____

Note: The idea that sin does not deprive us of life came from Satan. That was his first lie which he has perpetuated since the Fall.

4. What is: (i) the wages of sin; and (ii) the gift of God through His Son?

Romans 6:23 (i) _____

(ii) _____

Note: Please notice that the wages of sin is the opposite of the gift of God. The former is good-bye to life while the latter is eternal life.

5. Who only has natural immortality?

1 Timothy 6:12-16 _____

Note: Only God has natural immortality. And this He bestows as a gift only on those who accept Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour.

6. What two things did Christ accomplish on the cross?

2 Timothy 1:10 (i) _____

(ii) _____

7. How does one receive the gift of eternal life?

1 John 5:11, 12 _____

Note: When we by faith receive Jesus Christ as our personal Saviour the gift of eternal life becomes ours. Apart from Christ the only life we have is the mortal life we inherited from Adam.

8. What will be the consequences of rejecting the gift of eternal life God offers us in His Son?

Matthew 25:41 _____

Note: The word “everlasting fire” can mean that the fire itself is everlasting or that the effect it has is everlasting. The Bible teaches the latter.

9. What example has God recorded in Scripture of the everlasting or eternal fire that will finally destroy the wicked?

Jude 7 _____

Note: Today Sodom and Gomorrah lie in ruin and ashes. The destruction of these two cities by fire have been recorded in Scripture as a warning to mankind that all who rebel against the God of

heaven will experience the same fate. Please read Genesis, chapter 19, for a description of why Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by fire.

10. What was Sodom and Gomorrah turned into as an example of the punishment of the wicked?

2 Peter 2:6 _____

11. What happens to the soul that sins?

Ezekiel 18:4, 20 _____

Note: Here is a clear statement in Scripture that when a soul sins it will die. By the word soul the Bible means the whole of the person who sins will die. This is the wages of sin.

12. What happens to a person's knowledge and feelings when he or she dies?

Ecclesiastes 9:5, 6 _____

Note: In death all our thoughts and feelings come to an end. The Bible is clear that we cannot communicate with the dead. This too is a deception of the devil.

13. When one departs from the truth of the gospel and you bring that person back to the Lord, what have you saved that soul from?

James 5:19, 20 _____

Note: Once again, the word *soul* (KJV) means the total person. When Adam sinned, the total person forfeited life and the only way to have eternal life is through faith in Christ.

14. When will the believers experience immortality?

1 Corinthians 15:51-53 _____

Note: It is only at the second coming of Christ that believers will experience immortality as a tangible reality. This is the blessed hope of all believers.

15. How did Christ describe the death of Lazarus to His disciples?

John 11:11-14 _____

Note: Lazarus was a believer who had died of illness. Jesus described his death as a sleep because Christians do not experience the eternal death.

16. What hope did Jesus give Martha, the sister of Lazarus, regarding the resurrection?

John 11:20-25 _____

Note: The hope of a Christian is not experienced at death but at the resurrection. This will take place at the second coming of Christ.

17. What guarantee does the Bible give that believers will be resurrected at the second coming of Christ?

1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 _____

Note: Because Jesus has conquered the grave we believers have the guarantee that He can and will raise us from the dead.

18. If we deny the resurrection of Christ, what will happen to those who are asleep in Christ?

1 Corinthians 15:17, 18 _____

19. Whose resurrection does the resurrection of Christ guarantee?

1 Corinthians 15:23 _____

Note: There were some believers in Corinth who did not believe in the resurrection (see 1 Corinthians 15:12). Paul, however, makes it very clear in verses 13-19 that if we deny the resurrection of the believers, we have to deny the resurrection of Christ. According to this passage, the hope of the Christians is not going to heaven at death but at the resurrection, which will take place at the second coming of Jesus Christ.

21. Jesus promised His disciples that He would one day take them to heaven. When did He say this would happen?

John 14:3 _____

Note: Jesus promised to take His followers to heaven at His second coming and not at death. The Bible is clear that believers are asleep in Christ until the resurrection.

22. What power cannot touch the believers who will experience the first resurrection?

Revelation 20:6 _____

Note: The Bible speaks of two resurrections, just as it does of the two deaths. The first death is referred to as a sleep because it will be followed by a resurrection. The first resurrection will consist of those believers who are asleep in Christ and will at that time experience everlasting life. The unbelievers will rise in a later resurrection and will then experience eternal damnation (see John 5:28, 29). The wages of sin is the second death, good-bye to life forever. This is the eternal punishment.

23. Who will experience the second death?

Revelation 20:14, 15 _____

Note: Those who have rejected the gift of salvation in Christ have refused to have their names recorded in the book of life. Consequently, they will have to join Satan and his angels in the lake of fire that will completely destroy the wicked. May this never be true of you.