

*Sanctuary in
Jesus*

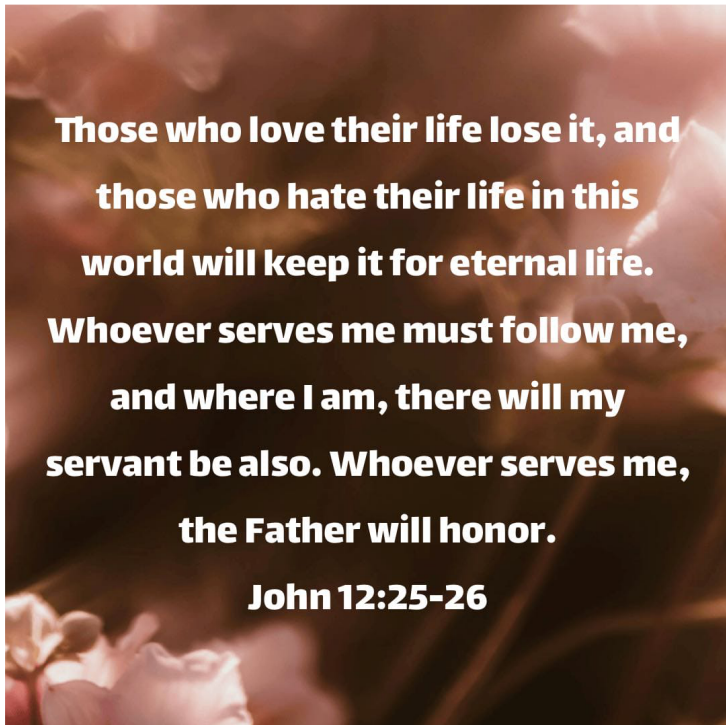
Week 4 - Part 1
Eternity

What could be next?

For centuries, atheists and sceptics have doubted the existence of God and any kind of life after death – which has been of little help to them when they face death.

Interestingly, however, the world of secular science has been rethinking its scepticism. With the advent of resuscitation equipment and other medical advances, clinicians have documented so many “near-death experiences” (NDEs) with strikingly similar features all over the world, that people have begun to understand the testimonies as actual evidence of some kind of experience taking place after a clinical death.

For Bible-believers, it is less surprising when evidence in the world correlates to what God has been saying all along.



The Inevitable

Oh, how we loathe death and all that comes with it!

Of course we do.

From the shock of a car crash to a terminal illness that drags on and on; from an accidental overdose to the horror of suicide; from violence and murder to the quietness of growing old and the way our bodies inevitably fail; from having to face “the end,” as every person ultimately does, to the overwhelming grief of losing those we love, there is nothing pretty about death, nor can we escape the overwhelming emotions it brings.

Perhaps worse than all the above is that it is almost impossible to truly imagine what comes after death. Even Christians have differing opinions regarding exactly what happens at the moment of our passing. Does a dying person “go to sleep” and then immediately “wake up” in a new reality? Or is there an intermediate dream state of some kind? Does the whole thing involve moving through a tunnel toward light (as many have reported), or do we float up and out of this world?

Who among us knows?!

Whatever theory you subscribe to, here is what followers of Jesus do know:

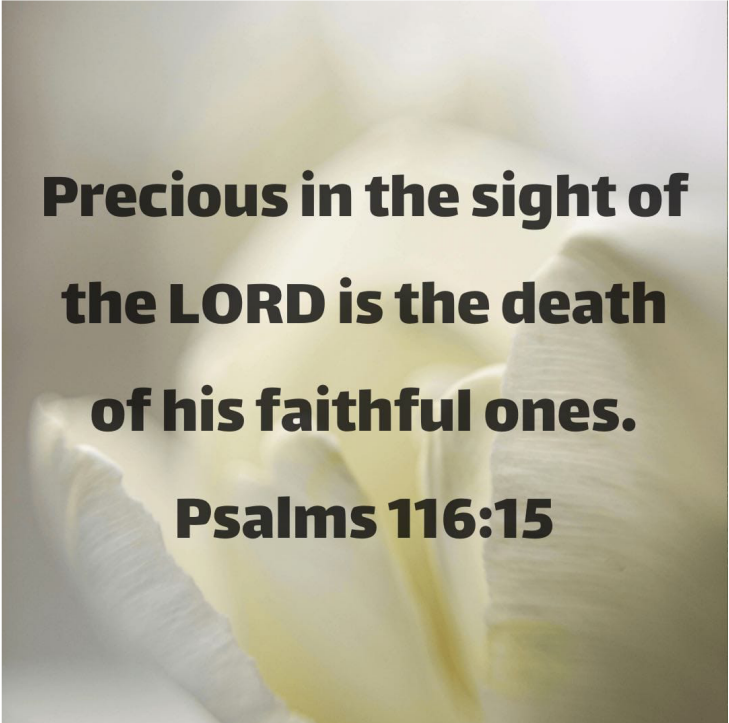
Our deaths lead to eternal life with Him.

Oh! And apparently the Father will honour us. (More about this mind-blowing fact later!)

Your turn

1. Reflect on episode 6 or the clip we watched. How do you think Jesus must have felt as His dreaded death drew near.

2. Consider what you feel when you think about death.



**Precious in the sight of
the LORD is the death
of his faithful ones.
Psalms 116:15**

Life Eclipses Death

How can something so feared, resisted, and downright dreaded – even by those of us who believe in the name of Jesus Christ for salvation – be precious?

How can the “death of His saints” be precious to God?!

- Because that is when our forever will begin
(John 11:25, Colossians 3:1-4).
- That is when our suffering will cease
(Isaiah 65:17, Revelation 21:1-5).
- That is when our faith will become sight
(1 Corinthians 13:12, Revelation 1:7).
- In other words, earthly death ushers in heavenly life.

Read that again: Earthly death ushers in heavenly life.

Life with the One we were made for,

The One with whom we were intended to live in perfect contentment, love, and communion with.

The one in whose presence – by their very nature – gives us fully comprehensible meaning, true purpose rather than survival actions, and complete peace.

Of course, these are lofty ideas. But while we struggle to get our minds around such things, while we strain to see the unseen, while we work hard to accept God's Word by faith, Jesus is already there – which means none of the extraordinary elements of “forever” are new or strange to Him After all...

Jesus was with God in the beginning.

Which means:

- He has always and will always exist.
- He is not restricted by time or space *or death*...
- Everything, in fact, belongs to and finds purpose in Him.
- And when we choose to follow Him, we get to be where He is.

Your turn:

In your group take turns to read aloud the Bible verses here:

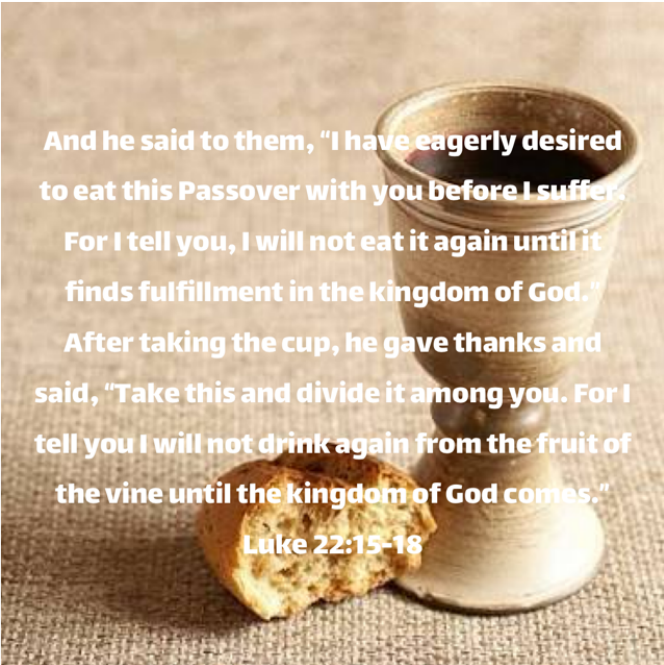
- **Because that is when our forever will begin.**
(John 11:25, Colossians 3:1-4)
- **That is when our suffering will cease.**
(Isaiah 65:17, Revelation 21:1-5)

- **That is when our faith will become sight.
(1 Corinthians 13:12, Revelation 1:7)**

How do these descriptions of what is in store for us after we die, impact your fear of death?

Following Jesus on earth is sometimes hard. How does the idea of following Him all the way to heaven make those sacrifices and surrender worth it?

In what ways is being where Jesus is (and seeing Him face-to-face) becoming more precious to you?



And he said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer."

For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God."

After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, "Take this and divide it among you. For I tell you I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes."

Luke 22:15-18

The Kingdom

Jesus told His disciples He was going away, but they just could not process it.

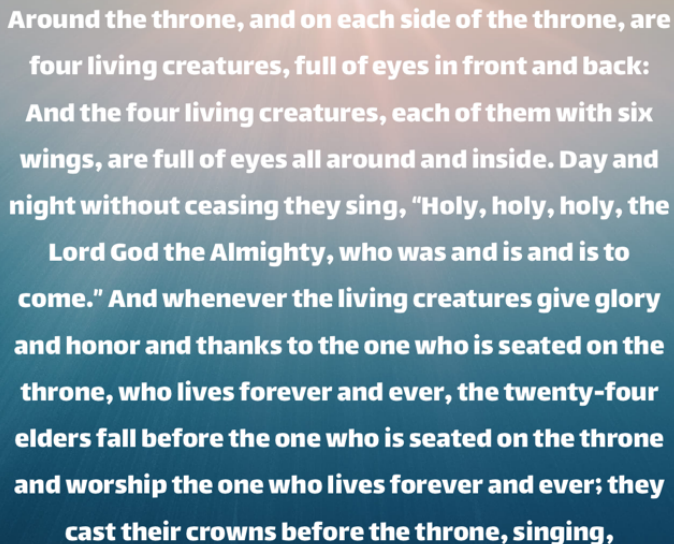
Where is He going?

When?

Why??

They were understandably horrified by the notion of no longer walking or talking with Him. They feared not hearing His voice as He preached or prayed. They couldn't imagine a world in which He wasn't there in the flesh to answer their questions, to meet their daily needs, to comfort them in confusion, and to show them the way.

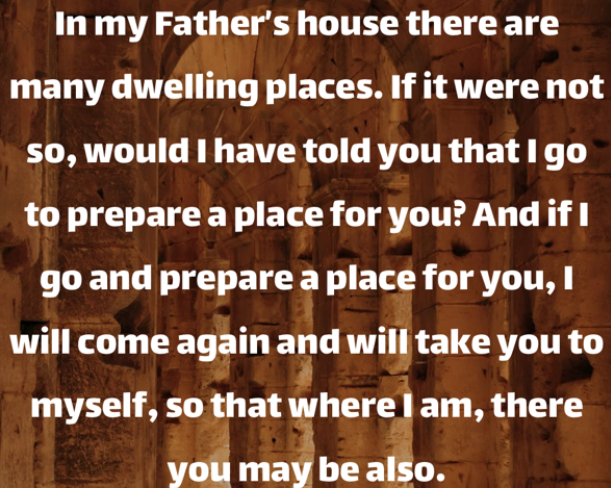
Questions swirled in their heads as they considered the ramifications. But unlike them at the Last Supper, we have a post-resurrection benefit of knowing the answers (the disciples eventually got the answers too but at the Last Supper they did not know what would happen.) When reading the Last Supper account, we know that after His death and resurrection, Jesus was going back to the heavenly realm to sit on His rightful throne next to the Father, where He is being worshipped for eternity:



Around the throne, and on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and back: And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and inside. Day and night without ceasing they sing, "Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God the Almighty, who was and is and is to come." And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to the one who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall before the one who is seated on the throne and worship the one who lives forever and ever; they cast their crowns before the throne, singing,

Revelation 4:6, 8-10

Where He is fulfilling His promise to prepare a place for us too:

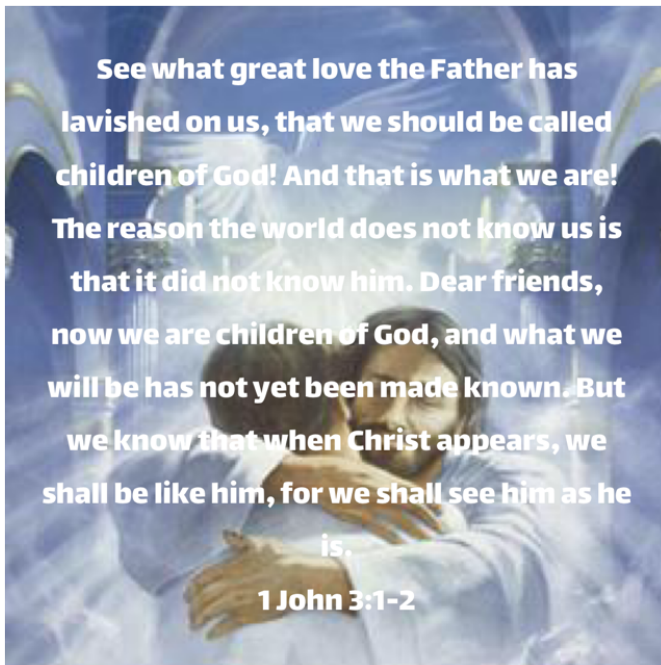


In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also.

John 14:2-3

Indeed, anyone who chooses to hate his life in this broken, sin-soaked world gets to keep it in the glorious one to come, for all time, right where Jesus is...

...and where – when our blessed death day comes and Jesus calls us home – we will be like Him:



As it was for the early disciples, some information really is too hard for us to process.

And yet, the Bible is clear that we who've been saved by Jesus will be there with Him and like Him.

And that includes receiving value and honour from our heavenly Father. As Jesus said: "If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honour him" (John 12:26).



Your turn:

Although we begin our faith journey with the benefit of knowing more than the original twelve disciples did at the beginning of theirs, the questions they raised are still vital for all of us to tackle at some point, to truly sit with and consider what it actually meant...

Discuss your answers to the following questions with your group. If the answer seems quick and obvious, try to dig deeper, ask the same question of your answer, then sit with it again. Try to imagine you don't know the events that happened next.

- **Where was Jesus going?**
- **When was He going?**
- **Why was He going?**