

Lesson 8

- The Old and the New Testament
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The Old and the New Testament

Lesson 8a

The Old and the New Testament

The bible exists in two parts: the Old Testament and the New Testament. These two testaments together form one bible. The question is how the testaments relate to one another. There has been a lot of confusion about this issue. In this lesson we will look at the relationship between the Old and the New Testament.

The meaning of the word testament

The name testament is derived from the second letter of Paul to the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 3). The word covenant that he uses there has the same meaning as testament. Paul distinguishes between an old covenant and a new covenant. With the old covenant he means the covenant that Gods made with the people of Israel at mount Sinai. This covenant was pointing towards the sacrifice that Jesus would bring. After Jesus' death the old covenant becomes a new covenant. Jesus' death links the two covenants.

The salvation that is announced in the Old Testament and that is brought about by Jesus in the New Testament, is for the people of both the old covenant and the new covenant. For this reason the Old Testament and the New Testament belong together and form one bible rather than two. The Word of God begins in Genesis 1 and ends in Revelation 22.

The Old and New Testament do not oppose one another

People are often looking for differences between the Old and the New Testament. There are differences. We will look at them later on in the lesson.

Some people even compare the Old Testament to the New Testament and then choose to prefer one of them. This way they miss out on a lot of the good news in the bible. Let us look at a few examples.

Is God in the New Testament different from God in the Old Testament?

When people compare the Old and the New Testament they sometimes come to prefer the New Testament. They might for example say that the God of the Old Testament is different from the God in the New Testament. They say the God of the Old Testament is a hard and cruel God, who is revengeful and does not know pity. According to them the God of the New Testament is a loving and tolerant God. Their conclusion is that the Old Testament is no longer suitable for our time.

It is true that the Old Testament speaks about God's anger. It does so in a very straightforward way, just like it very openly reveals the mistakes people make. The bible does not try to hide the reality of these things. God for example accuses the people of Israel of not listening to Him. The leaders are after their own gain:

Isaiah 1:23

'Your rulers are rebels, companions of thieves; they love all bribes and chase after gifts. They do not defend the cause of the fatherless; the widow's case does not come before them'

The bible then announces a punishment. God allows war to come over his people and punishes them by letting the enemy win.

Isaiah 9:11-12

'But the LORD has strengthened Rezin's foes against them and has spurred their enemies on. Arameans from the East and Philistines from the West have devoured Israel with open mouth'

The Old Testament is very clear about what happens when people do not want to listen to God: their disobedience is punished.

Let us now look at the New Testament. Is it really true that God's reaction to sin in the New Testament differs from his reaction in the Old Testament? Definitely not. People who pretend to be devout while in reality they treat their fellow

humans badly, are condemned just as harshly in the New Testament. Jesus says to the religious leaders of his day:

Matthew 23:14 *'Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the kingdom of heaven in man's faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to'*

In the book of Revelation we are told about people who have persecuted and killed believers. These murderers receive the punishment they deserve:

Revelation 16:5-6 *'You are just in these judgements, You who are and who were, the Holy One, Because you have so judged; For they have shed the blood of your saints and prophets, And you have given them blood to drink as they deserve'*

Both in the Old and in the New Testament there are situations where God decides to punish. The people deserve those punishments because they refuse to listen to God although they know better. The one God of the Old and the New Testament is a God who is angry about sin and punishes people for their sins. At the same time He is a God who wants to forgive sins. In the Old Testament:

Psalms 32:5 *'Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD" – and you forgave the guilt of my sin'*

And in the New Testament:

1 John 1:9 *'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness'*

In the Old Testament God does not only show himself as a God who punishes and in the New Testament He does not only show love. We get to know Him as a righteous God who

punishes sinful people who do not want to listen. We also get to know Him as a loving God who wants to forgive anyone who is sorry about his sin. The righteous and loving God is always the same God in both the Old Testament and the New Testament.

Does the New Testament only concern itself with heaven?

Just like some people prefer the New Testament, there are some people who prefer the Old Testament. They say the Old Testament is more down to earth. In the Old Testament you can find a critical view on society. It is full of protest against injustice and violence. Amos, for example says:

Amos 5:11 *'You trample on the poor and force him to give you grain. Therefore, though you have built stone mansions, you will not live in them'*

A protest like this could have been written today.

Besides, some people say the Old Testament is more relevant to the every day life than the New Testament. One example they mention is that the Old Testament is much more open about sexuality than the New Testament. It talks about love and marriage, but also about things like adultery and prostitution.

They see the New Testament as the more spiritual part of the bible. It wants people to focus their thoughts on heaven rather than to be involved in the day-to-day reality of this world. However, again there is no such division between the Old and the New Testament. The New Testament also speaks about social injustice:

James 5:4 *'Look! The wages you failed to pay the workmen who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty'*

The New Testament does not forget about ordinary life in this world. It does not want us to sit back and relax while we are

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waiting for the Lord Jesus to return. On the contrary, Paul says to some Christians with such an attitude:

2 Thessalonians 3:12 *'Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the bread they eat'*

Furthermore, it is not true that the New Testament pushes subjects such as sexuality out of the way. Paul speaks very openly about the sexual sins that have been committed:

1 Corinthians 5:1 *'It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that does not occur even among pagans: A man has his father's wife'*

The New Testament pays attention to aspects of our day-to-day reality, just like the Old Testament. Besides, in the Old Testament the prophets who tell us about the future for God's children from time to time lift us up from that reality:

Isaiah 11:6-8 *'The wolf will live with the lamb,
The leopard will lie down with the goat,
The calf and the lion and the yearling together;
And a little child will lead them.
The cow will feed the bear,
Their young will lie down together,
And the lion will eat straw like the ox.
The infant will play near the hole of the cobra,
And the young child put his hand into the viper's nest.
They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain'*

Here we see how the Old Testament does not forget about the future of the world while speaking about earthly things. And although the New Testament prepares us for life on the new earth, it does not forget about our present reality. Again, the two parts of the bible do not oppose one another but form one unity.

A rich and an even richer testament

We are not to separate the Old Testament from the New Testament. Both bring the same message: God wants to save man from sin and death.

We find God's plan of salvation in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. However, this plan also causes a difference between the Old and the New Testament. We see the difference when we look at the phases of God's plan for salvation. In short: the Old Testament is the phase of the promise and the New Testament is the phase of the fulfilment of the promise. In both phases Jesus' sacrifice is central. In the first phase – the time of the Old Testament – everything is a preparation for the sacrifice; in the second phase – the time of the New Testament – the sacrifice is a basis for everything else.

The difference between the promise and its fulfilment causes all sorts of other differences.

In the Old Testament God chooses one people for himself, the Israelites. God promises that from this people a saviour will be born who will take away the sin from the world. However, it will be a long time before this promise will be fulfilled. This does not mean that the promise is worthless to the people of Israel before the saviour has come. God richly blesses the lives of people who live in the phase of the promise. Through the institution of sacrifices He gives the Israelites a taste of the sacrifice that Jesus will bring. The sacrifices teach them about the purpose of the work of the saviour who is to come. They will receive forgiveness even though the sacrifice of Jesus' life has not yet been made.

We know from the New Testament that Jesus has offered his life. Forgiveness of sins is now freely available to anyone throughout the world without the Old Testament rituals of sacrifice. Everyone can get to know Jesus and through the bible come to an understanding of the meaning of his sacrifice for the life of a sinful man. The Holy Spirit helps in this process. Here we find another difference with the Old

Testament. In Old Testament times the Holy Spirit was only given to a few people. In the New Testament the Holy Spirit is given as a rich blessing to anyone who gives his life to Jesus.

There are clear distinctions between the Old and the New Testament. However, this is no reason to separate one from the other. Believers in our time are related to believers of all times:

Acts 3:25

'And you are heirs of the prophets and of the covenant God made with your fathers. He said to Abraham: "Through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed'

Everyone can share in the blessing of Abraham's descendant Jesus Christ. He paid with his life for the guilt of anyone who believes in Him. Wherever and whenever he lives.

Questions

1. List some of the things the Old Testament and the New Testament have in common.
2. Just before He dies, Jesus says: 'It is finished'.
 - a. What does He mean?
 - b. What differences are there because of this between the Old and the New Testament?

Lesson 8b

God continues with Jacob

After waiting for more than twenty years, Isaac and Rebekah have two sons: Esau and Jacob. God told Rebekah that the oldest would serve the youngest. God has a special plan with the life of Jacob, the youngest.

Jacob takes what God wanted to give him

Read: Genesis 25:27-34

25:30 *Edom*: Red one

25:31 *birthright*. In those days the oldest son would have the right to receive a larger part of the inheritance and he would become the head of the tribe after his father's death. In this case the oldest son would also receive the special blessings that God had given to Abraham.

Jacob probably knows from his mum what God has said about him and his brother. Nevertheless, he cannot wait until God gives him the rights of the oldest son. He takes them himself in a dishonest way. When Esau is too hungry and too tired to think, Jacob asks him to take a vow. He has to swear that he gives his birthrights to Jacob and he does it. For a bowl of soup he sells his birthrights.

Who receives the blessing?

Read: Genesis 27:1-40

27:36 *Jacob*: the name sounds like the Hebrew word 'to deceive'.

Isaac has become old and blind. He thinks he will not live for much longer. Before he dies, he wants to bless his oldest son. He wants to tell him in the name of God that he will live a prosperous life, that he will be rich and powerful and that his offspring will be important throughout the earth.

Isaac forgets one thing: he is not supposed to bless his oldest son but his youngest. Undoubtedly, he has heard from his wife what God told her. He knows Jacob has to receive the blessing. However, he prefers to give it to Esau, who is his favourite son.

Neither Isaac nor the other members of the family are acting in the right way. Esau deceives his father and his brother when he does not tell his father that he sold his birthright to Jacob. Besides, he does not tell Jacob that his father is planning to bless him. Rebekah and Jacob deceive the blind Isaac to make him give the blessing to Jacob. Rebekah makes a disguise for Jacob to make him appear like Esau. Jacob receives the blessing because of his lies. When his father asks him how he could be back so soon, he devoutly answers him that God has helped him to be so quick. When Isaac asks him if he really is Esau, he answers positively. Isaac, Esau, Rebekah and Jacob are all acting dishonestly about the blessing that God has for Jacob. Isaac and Esau ignore what God has said and Rebekah and Jacob act as if God is not able to fulfil his promise.

When Esau hears that his father has given the blessing to Jacob, he is furious. He wants to kill his brother immediately. The only thing that stops him is his father. He decides to wait until his father is dead.

A dream

Read: Genesis 28:10-22

28:13 *father*: forefather, in this case grandfather

Jacob flees for his brother. He goes to Haran, his mother's hometown. He hopes to be able to stay with his uncle Laban. During his journey, he sleeps outside in the fields. One of the first nights of his journey he has a dream. He sees a very long ladder from earth into heaven. Angels are going up and down the ladder to do the jobs God gives them. At the top of the

ladder there is God. Jacob realizes that even now that he is fleeing, he is not alone. Heaven is open. There is contact between heaven and earth, between God and man, between God and him.

God has a wonderful message for Jacob. He promises him the same things he once promised Abraham: the land of Canaan, a great nation and a blessing for the whole world. Moreover he adds another promise: He will protect Jacob wherever he goes and He will bring him back to Canaan.

Jacob did not earn these promises in any way. So far, he has virtually lived a life without God. He deceived his brother and his father to receive God's blessing. Nevertheless, God wants to continue with him as He guarantees him in this dream.

Jacob is greatly overwhelmed by his dream. He says: *'The LORD is in this place, and I was not aware of it ... This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven'*.

He takes the stone that he used for a pillow and makes it stand up so that he will be able to recognise the place where he has seen God when he returns. He pours oil on the stone to make it a special stone for God, a monument to remind him of what God told him in the dream. Jacob calls the place Bethel: the house of God.

Jacob promises that if God will keep him safe on his way and give him food to eat and clothes to wear and if He will bring him back to his father's house, then the LORD will be his God. The stone that Jacob anointed will be a house of God, that means, the place where the stone lies, will be God's place. He will bring sacrifices to God and worship Him in that place. Moreover, Jacob promises that of everything he will possess, he will give a tenth to God.

Jacob with Laban

When Jacob arrives in Haran, after a long journey, he receives a warm welcome from his uncle Laban. He can stay with him. Laban soon realises that Jacob might be able to work for him, looking after his flocks. He asks Jacob to work for him and

what he would like to get paid. Jacob has fallen in love with Laban's daughter Rachel and asks Laban if he can marry her after he has worked for seven years. Laban agrees.

After seven years, there is a wedding. After the celebrations Jacob takes the heavily veiled bride to his bedroom. The next day, in the morning light, he realises that he has not married Rachel, but her older sister Leah. Very agitated, he goes to Laban who tells him that in his country the younger sister cannot get married before the older sister. Laban agrees to give Rachel to Jacob after another seven years of service.

Jacob takes up the offer and marries Rachel the following week. Leah and Rachel have a difficult time. Leah is continually aware of the fact that Jacob loves Rachel more than her. She has a lot of children but has to do without the love of her husband.

Rachel is unhappy because she does not have any children. At first she gives her maidservant Bilhah to him to have a child via her, but she keeps asking God for a child. After many years God answers her prayer and gives her a son. All together, Jacob has twelve sons and a daughter from four different wives.

When Jacob has finished his years of service with Laban, he wants to return to Canaan. However, Laban persuades him to continue to work for him and offers him a salary. In the following years Jacob acquires an enormous flock of sheep. In a dishonest way, behind his uncle's back, he accumulates a lot of wealth. He forgets that it was God who was going to give him whatever he needed. Again, he tries to take what God already wanted to give him.

Return to Canaan

After Jacob has worked for Laban for twenty years, God tells him to return to Canaan. Jacob obeys God and goes on his way. The journey is very different from the one twenty years earlier, when he was alone and poor. Now he travels with a large company and a lot of wealth.

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However many things have changed. Jacob is just as frightened of his brother now as he was when he came. His trust in God is still small. When he hears that Esau is coming to meet him with four hundred men, he forgets about God's promise of protection. He is afraid that Esau still wants to kill him.

Jacob splits his family into two groups. If Esau then comes to kill one group, perhaps the other group will be able to escape. Besides, he tries to please his brother by sending gifts ahead: goats, sheep, camels, cows and donkeys.

The fight

Read: Genesis 32:22-32
32:28 *Israel*: he fights with God
32:30 *Peniel*: God's face

Jacob is so scared of an attack from Esau that he decides to bring his family and all his possessions across the stream called the 'Jabbok', right in the middle of the night. It is a dangerous undertaking. When he remains behind by himself, he is attacked. Not by Esau as he expected, but by a stranger. They wrestle for hours. The man cannot beat Jacob with ordinary power, but then he shows Jacob that he has more than ordinary, human power. With one stroke he wrenches Jacob's hip. Jacob is no longer able to fight, but he refuses to let this man go, although the man is clearly more powerful than him. He wants to receive his blessing.

The man asks him his name. Isaac once asked him the same question and at that time Jacob said his name was Esau. This time his answer is Jacob. The man then gives him a new name, Israel. His name will no longer remind him of his lies. He can make a clean start. The man does not want to tell Jacob his name, but he does give Jacob his blessing.

Jacob calls the place of the fight Peniel, God's face. He understands that he has not fought with an ordinary man, but

with God. God has appeared to him in the form of a human being. What did God want to teach him?

Jacob learns to ask God for a blessing

Even before Esau and Jacob were born God had said that He wanted to continue his plan with Jacob. Jacob was not satisfied with that promise. By deceiving his brother and his father, he makes sure he receives God's blessing. So far, his deceit has not brought him any good. He had to flee the country that he was promised in the blessing. He has been a refugee in a foreign country for twenty years.

God did not abandon him during that time. In Betel He promised him again a blessing in the dream. However, Jacob's trust in God was small. In Haran he again tried to make the promise come true, now by deceiving his uncle to acquire wealth.

Now that Jacob wants to enter the land of Canaan, God stops him. He wants to show him in a fight that he needs to ask Him for a promise. Jacob learns to understand that stolen blessings will not help him. He learns that he cannot force God to do certain things. He needs to wait till God gives him what He has promised.

Through the fight God also wants to teach Jacob that he does not need to be afraid of his brother. He should have feared God. He was guilty before God. If God had not wanted him to enter the country, he would never have entered. Jacob's hip is the proof of that. God could have killed him. However, now that things between him and God have been settled, Jacob is safe everywhere. God will protect him.

The meeting

Immediately after the fight, Jacob sees Esau approach him. He has an army of four hundred men with him. Jacob goes to meet Esau ahead of his family. Seven times, he throws himself at the feet of Esau, asking him for mercy. However, Esau runs to Jacob to embrace and kiss him. They cry in each other's arms. The encounter that Jacob had so feared has become a warm embrace instead of a battle of life and death.

Questions

1. 'Jacob often acts as if God has no power'. Can you explain this statement? When did Jacob act that way?
2. Jacob had twelve sons. They grew up to become the fathers of the twelve tribes of Israel. Their names are repeated throughout the bible. What are the names of these sons? Write down each name with the name of his mother. What is the name of Jacob's daughter? Look at Genesis 29:31-30:24 and 35:16-20. 30:14 *mandrakes*: people believed these plants would make them fertile.
3. What do you think of Jacob's fear when he is on his way to return to Canaan? Look at Genesis 28:13-15 and 31:3.
4. Explain in your own words what Jacob learned from the fight at the Jabbok stream?

Lesson 8c

Risen from the death

In this lesson we will consider the fifth article of the Apostolic Creed, which says that Jesus has 'risen from the death'.

On the third day

In the last lesson of the c-series we saw that Jesus' death did not mean that his life was a failure. God had given Jesus the commission to offer up his life as a ransom for mankind.

Three days after his death, on the day that we now celebrate as Easter, it was visible for everyone that Jesus had not failed. He came back to life. He rose from the grave.

To be raised and to rise

The bible uses two different expressions for what happened to Jesus three days after He died. One is: Jesus was raised from the death. This is a passive sentence, which means that someone else acted rather than Jesus. It means that God raised Jesus from the death. God brought Him back to life.

The other expression is: Jesus has risen from the death, which is an active sentence. This means that Jesus has brought himself back to life. He has been able to do so in his own power.

These two expressions might seem to contradict one another. However, that is not the case. God the Father and his Son always co-operate. Even in the resurrection they work together. The bible shows us two perspectives of the resurrection: that of God the Father and that of Jesus.

Raised or risen: the difference seems negligible. However, both words represent an important aspect of what happened at Easter when Jesus rose from the grave.

Raised: God has accepted the sacrifice

The expression 'Jesus was raised' shows us that the resurrection did not only concern Jesus but also God the Father. By raising Jesus from the death, He showed that He

had accepted Jesus' sacrifice. He showed that his Son's suffering and death had not been futile and without effect. God wanted to regard it as a complete payment of the debt of mankind.

This is fantastic news for us. It means that if we believe in Jesus, we do not need to fear God's punishment. God has crossed out our debts. Jesus' resurrection is the proof.

Risen: Jesus has conquered death

The expression 'Jesus has risen' directs our attention to the fact that Jesus, by his resurrection, has conquered death. Three days after his death, Jesus came back to life by his own power. No ordinary human being could ever do such a thing. Death is too strong for us. Nevertheless, Jesus was stronger than death. Death could not keep hold of Him. Again this is great news. It means an end has come to the power of death.

As far as we are concerned every human being dies after having lived for a longer or shorter time. Man is mortal. It seems to be a law of nature. Death is a punishment – a punishment for the fact that we turned our backs on God. However, now that Jesus has paid the penalty by his suffering and death, the punishment is no longer needed. The power of death has come to an end. This became evident when Jesus rose from the death. It proved that he had conquered death.

What does it mean for us?

Obviously, it is fantastic that Jesus has conquered death. But what do we gain from it in our daily lives? What does it mean to us today? Nothing seems to have changed since Jesus' resurrection. People die every day. Death still has the last word.

However, things have changed. The good news of the bible is that Jesus has not only conquered death for himself but also for everyone who believes in Him. God gives life to whoever believes in Jesus. This life has three elements:

- Absolution
- New life
- Eternal life

We will now discuss each of these three elements.

Whoever believes in Jesus receives absolution

Someone who deserves punishment can receive mercy from the judge. His punishment is then cancelled. He can go free despite his crime.

Something similar happens with people who believe in Jesus Christ. Like all other people they deserve death: the punishment for being unfaithful to God. However, God has decided that whoever believes in his Son does not receive the punishment. Whoever believes in Jesus receives mercy. God gives them absolution and lets them go free.

God is able to give mercy because his Son paid the debt that man had with Him. The Son of God underwent the punishment that man deserved. Every man who belongs to Him can therefore go free and receive life. There is no need for Him to undergo God's punishment.

How can someone receive absolution? The bible is very clear about this. God wants to give his mercy to us for free. We do not need to be good people to deserve it. The only thing we need to do is to believe in Jesus Christ. When we do that, God regards us as righteous people. The New Testament puts it very clearly when it says:

Romans 10:9

'If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord", and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved'

In other words, when we are bold enough to confess openly that Jesus is the new Lord of our lives and if we believe that God has raised Him from the dead, we will be saved.

Whoever believes in Jesus will receive a new life

Something changes when someone first believes in Jesus Christ. When someone believes in Jesus, He causes that person to change, to become a different person. Whoever believes in Jesus starts a new life. You could say that he is born again. His attitude towards God and towards other people changes completely. Jesus Christ becomes everything to him. He will develop a very close relationship with Jesus. Someone who believes in Jesus is connected to Him the way the branches of a grapevine are connected to their stem.

There is an enormous difference between a life without Jesus and a life with Jesus. The bible compares it to the difference between day and night. When someone first believes in Jesus he is transferred from darkness to light. He is freed from the power of Satan and is free to serve God. Jesus said:

John 12:46

'I have come into the world as a light, so that no-one who believes in me should stay in darkness'

The difference between believing in God and not believing in God is a matter of life and death. The bible says that whoever believes in Jesus has gone from death to life. Life without God is death; a life with God is the true life. It is life the way God intended it to be.

The bible shows in many different places that someone who believes in Jesus Christ starts a new life. The New Testament tells us of a man who used to drag Christians from their houses and killed them. Until the moment that Jesus Christ made himself known to him and the man believed. From that moment the life of this man, Paul, changed radically. He spent the rest of his life travelling all over the world to tell people about Jesus.

In Paul's case the change in his life was very obvious. In other cases it might not be as spectacular. Nevertheless, the change in their life is true and visible. People who used to put themselves first suddenly give God the first place in their lives. People who used to cling to their money all of a sudden give it

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away to people in need. People who used to be afraid to voice their opinions openly speak about their faith in Jesus Christ. Even if it means they will receive death penalty. The change does not originate in themselves. Jesus Christ causes them to become different people with a different attitude. He causes them to behave as Christians, as his followers.

A believer is not perfect

Jesus Christ changes his followers. He renews them. However, this change and renewal does not come all at once. The bible says that a Christian consists in a way of two separate persons: an old person and a new person. The old person, our bad nature, always wants to have the first place and do things that do not please God. The new person, whom Jesus has raised to a new life, wants to obey God. These two persons are continually in conflict with one another. The old person very often wins and then we do something that is not right. We are unfaithful to God.

The old man is continually in our way. We will never completely lose him. Only once we die, will we finally be freed from our sinful nature. Fortunately, we are not alone in our battle against our bad nature. The Holy Spirit is there to support us. Moreover, when we have done something wrong and we are sorry about it, we can be sure that God will forgive us because his Son died in our place.

Whoever believes in Jesus receives eternal life

Earlier in this lesson we asked the question what we gain from Jesus' resurrection today in the light of the fact that every day people die.

We saw that something has radically changed. Because of Jesus' resurrection we receive absolution. What is more, we can start a new life. It is therefore obvious that something has changed. However, one thing seems to remain unchanged: the power of death. Death has not disappeared after Jesus' resurrection. Every human being still has to die.

Nevertheless, this does not mean that nothing has changed. On the contrary, the bible shows very clearly that because of Jesus' death and resurrection the power of death has been broken. Death has changed. It once was a wall that people would crash into. Now Jesus has broken through the wall and made death into a gate, a gate to eternal life. Without Jesus death is the beginning of eternal punishment, of eternal death and an eternity of being separated from God. However, with Jesus death no longer needs to be a punishment. For anyone who believes in Jesus death is the gate to everlasting happiness in a life with God.

Death will disappear

For us it is impossible to see that the power of death has finished, but a time will come when it will be visible. Jesus, who now is with his Father in heaven, will one day leave heaven to come to earth. All people who have died will then, like Jesus, rise from their graves with a new, immortal body. Everyone who has believed in Jesus while He was alive, will then receive the wonderful gift of eternal life; a life where God is the centre. The people who belong to Jesus Christ will be able to live on the earth forever. The earth will become a paradise again and everyone will serve God. Satan and death will have disappeared for good. This is ultimately what Jesus Christ has achieved by his death and resurrection. We will come back to this later on in the course.

Questions

1. God has raised Jesus from the dead. Why is that good news?
2. Whoever believes in Jesus does not need to fear death. Why not?
3. People can be disappointed with Christians. They expect a certain behaviour from them.
 - a. How do you think a Christian should behave?
 - b. Why would you expect this behaviour from a Christian?
 - c. When a Christian does not behave in that way, does it always mean he is not a true Christian? Explain.