



SESSION 9: WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE DIE?



Aim

To explore what the Bible teaches about eternity.



Starter

Option 1: Icebreaker Questions

If you were on a desert island, what one thing would you bring with you?
What does paradise mean to you?

Option 2: Taboo

Divide the group into two teams A and B. Each team takes it in turns to play. Choose a person who will be given the Taboo card. The rest of the team have one minute to guess what word is on the card. The person describing the word is not allowed to use any of the words, or part of the words, on the card. They are taboo.

Team A **PARADISE** (words to help – heaven, bliss, ecstasy, delight, joy)

Team B **ETERNITY** (words to help – forever, never-ending, always, infinity, heaven)

Team A **DEATH** (words to help – demise, decease, birth, fatality, end)

Team B **HOPE** (words to help – expectation, optimistic, belief, anticipation, confidence)



Video

Watch the video **What Happens When We Die** (Running time 4:35)



Questions

Encourage pupils to write any questions on sticky notes as they occur to them.

Answer questions of understanding about the video straight away unless these will be answered later in the session. If there is not time for a question, confirm you will answer it another time. Consider using the 'car park' so pupils know you will not forget.



Exploring the Bible

The Bible discusses two destinations for the afterlife.

Discuss

What depictions of heaven and hell have you seen or heard?

Heaven – a place of clouds with baby angels playing harps; Hell – images of hell as a

party and a place of freedom where we can do as we like, or a negative place where there is pain and suffering.

In this passage from Mark's biography Jesus talks about hell in very strong words. We will explore afterwards what Jesus means and whether you agree with what is written.

Read Mark 9:43-48

Discuss

Jesus makes some very drastic suggestions to avoid hell. **Do you think he means them literally? If not, why does he use such strong language?**

Jesus is not suggesting we literally cut off limbs to avoid hell – we are perfectly capable of sinning with no limbs so this would be ineffective! Instead, he is suggesting we should take drastic action to avoid hell because it is not somewhere we would wish to go.

How does the place Jesus describes match up with what you have heard or seen about hell?

In the next chapter of Mark's biography Jesus predicts he will be murdered by the rulers of the law. He says he will be mocked, spat at, beaten, and killed, yet this does not seem at all surprising to him. In fact, he describes the outcome of his death as paying a ransom. *'For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.'* Mark 10:45 (NIV)

Discuss

What does it mean to pay a ransom? Who do you think the 'many' are that Jesus describes here?

A ransom is a payment made on behalf of someone else. Jesus says he will give his life to pay a ransom for others. The 'many' whom he will die for are those who want to know God and to receive his death as a payment for their own wrongdoing.

The Bible teaches that those who allow Jesus to pay their ransom will spend eternity with Jesus living in a renewed and perfect form of this world. From just a few examples in Mark's biography alone we learn the following about eternity with Jesus:

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| Example 1 | Mark 8:35 – We will have life! |
| Example 2 | Mark 10:29-31 – Eternal life with Jesus is at least 100 times better than anything we might give up following him. |
| Example 3 | Mark 10:37 – Jesus will be seen in all his glory. In the Bible 'glory' relates to knowing the truth and substance of something or someone. In eternity we will see Jesus for who he is – perfect and radiant. |

Discuss

How does Mark's account of the new creation match up to your picture of heaven? Did anything surprise you?

No clouds or harps are mentioned. Instead, an eternity with Jesus is not boring, floating about in the skies. It is life, and life to the full, being in the presence of Jesus himself.



Reflection

Allow a time of reflection that is most appropriate to your group.

You may wish to reflect quietly or discuss the following:

- ◆ What is your view on whether there is or is not an afterlife?
- ◆ When Jesus warns about hell do you think he is being a killjoy and stopping people enjoying themselves or is it a kind thing to do?
- ◆ Is Jesus' offer of ransom something you would like? Why or why not?
- ◆ What action, if any, would you like to take today?

Have the words of Revelation 21:1-7 available for reflection that tell us more about what eternity will be like for those who believe in Jesus.



Further resources

What Difference Does Jesus Make? A nine-minute video from bethinking.org