

MEETING 5

THE EXPECTATIONS OF A BELIEVER ABOUT THE NEW LIFE

Review of the previous session.

Review the 5 responses that God requires of people who desire to come to him.

▪ Share in the group

Tell which response (reaction) you like most if you want to come to God.

▪ Question.

What may a person who believes in Jesus Christ expect of the new life? of a Christian look like?

▪ Teaching from the Bible.

What does the Bible teach with respect to the future expectation?

The meaning of the expression: “in Jesus Christ”. Ephesians 1:3-7; 2:4-6.

The expression “in Christ”, “through Christ” and “with Christ” refers to the completed work of salvation of Jesus Christ as Mediator between God and man.

“In Jesus Christ” means to be spiritually bound to Jesus Christ and his Body and to share in his completed work of salvation. The expression refers to the legal state or position of the Christian in the sight of God as well as to the real condition of the Christian. Jesus Christ sent his Holy Spirit from his glory and majesty in heaven into the heart and life of the believer, so that the believer dies to sin and is resurrected to live a new life. Thus, with regard to his state/position and to his condition a believer has not only been tried, judged, doomed, crucified and buried, but has also been made alive, has been resurrected from spiritual death and has been seated with Christ in the heavenly reality.

But there is also a time factor. The believer receives this glory not yet in full measure! The right to receive this has already been secured and the new life has already begun! Already now the life of a believer “is hidden with Christ in God (Colossians 3:3-4). Already now the name of the believer has been recorded in the heavenly register (Luke 10:20). Already now his interests are being promoted from heaven (Hebrews 9:24). Already now the believer is controlled by heavenly standards and motivated by heavenly grace (Colossians 3:1-2). Already now heavenly blessings descend on the believer (Ephesians 1:3-14). Already now heavenly grace fills his heart. Already now this heavenly power enables the believer to be “more than conquerors”.

The Bible teaches “what a believer in Jesus Christ already now is”:

- he has already been justified
- he has assurance of salvation
- and he has become a part of God’s family.

These three things are called “the position of a Christian”.

THE FIRST EXPECTATION: A BELIEVER’S POSITION IN CHRIST

1. Your position as a believer in Christ: You stand in the right relationship to God.

- **A Christian has been perfectly justified. Romans 5:1-2.**

Illustration. During a fight, a young man killed another person with his knife. He became very scared of what he had done and fled to his house. There he told his older brother what he had done and that he had terrible remorse. He was also in great trouble, because he could not reverse his evil deed and the police were hot on his trail. The older brother told the younger brother to take off his bloodstained clothes and wash himself. Then he gave his own clean clothes to his younger brother and helped him to escape. When the police arrived and saw the bloodstained knife and clothes, they arrested the older brother. The older brother was tried and sentenced to death. Years later the younger brother could no longer keep silent about what he had done and confessed everything to the judge. The judge said that the sentence for the evil deed had already been carried out and that the older brother had already been executed for the crime of his younger brother. The judge said that the just demand of the law had been fully satisfied. Although the younger brother was not innocent, the judge *declared* the younger brother completely *righteous* and set him free. The judge *regarded* and *treated* the younger brother as completely *righteous*, even though he was not and did not deserve it. The older brother *had died in the place of* his younger brother, so that the younger brother may be justified of his evil deed.

Likewise, when a person believes in Jesus Christ, he is “justified” (forgiven, declared free). He believes that Jesus Christ died on the cross in his place, so that the Judge, God, may *declare* him perfectly righteous and free and *regard and treat* him as completely righteous. Jesus Christ took all our sins away from us and allowed these sins to be put onto his body and nailed to the cross. Jesus Christ “was *pierced* for our transgressions”¹ and “*crushed* for our iniquities”². he bore the

¹ Hebrew: chalal (pierce) + pasha (transgression, rebellion).

² Hebrew: daka (crush) + awon (iniquity, twists)

punishment in our place! He suffered in our place and as a substitution made atonement for our sins. Jesus Christ took *our sins* upon himself and gave us *his righteousness* (the result of his completed work of salvation) (2 Corinthians 5:21) The righteousness which a person does not possess by nature is imputed (ascribed) to him! The previous relationship of enmity has been changed to friendship. The previous lost person is now saved forever!

• **A Christian is now reconciled to God. Romans 5:9-10.**

Jesus Christ brought a sacrifice of atonement on the cross. With this sacrifice of atonement Jesus Christ satisfied the righteous anger of God and took God's righteous punishment for our sins on himself. Thus God made peace with us and reconciled us to himself. God regards and treats us no longer as enemies (Psalm 5:5-6; Romans 5:9-10), but as friends (John 15:13-15)! God now treats us with mercy and love.

2. Your position as a believer in Christ: you have assurance of salvation.

• **A Christian has three assurances. John 5:24; 10:27-28.**

When a person believes in Jesus Christ, he immediately has three assurances:

- He possesses *eternal life*: already now on earth and finally in God's presence in heaven
- He possesses *eternal righteousness*: no on earth and also in the final judgement. He will never come into damnation (hell)
- He possesses *eternal protection*: no-one can snatch him out of the hand of Christ.

3. Your position as a believer in Christ: You have become a member of God's family.

• **A Christian has been adopted by God into his household. Ephesians 1:5.**

When someone hears the gospel and believes in Jesus Christ, "God adopts him as his son"³ into his household and becomes his "heavenly Father". Regardless how imperfect his earthly father has been or still is, he receives a "Father" in heaven who is absolutely perfect in love, in righteousness and in his ability to help. Every Christian receives through the Spirit direct access to his heavenly Father (Ephesians 2:18; 3:12; Hebrews 4:14-16). Regardless how unhappy a Christian may be in his earthly family, in God's heavenly family relationships are determined by love, righteousness and care. Believers in Jesus Christ in the whole world are one another's "brothers and sisters".

A believer in Jesus Christ is "a member of God's household" (Ephesians 2:19), is as "a living stone built into a spiritual house" (1 Peter 2:4-5), is part of "a chosen people", "a royal priesthood" and "a holy people" with responsibilities of a prophet (to declare the gospel), a priest (that prays and serves) and a king (that does God's will on earth) (1 Peter 2:9-10).

• **A Christian is a member of the Body of Christ. 1 Corinthians 12:13.**

By regeneration through the Holy Spirit a Christian becomes a member of the Body of Christ (the Church).

• **A Christian is also a citizen of the Kingdom of God. John 3:3-8.**

By regeneration through the Holy Spirit a Christian enters the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is the kingship of God through the Mediator, Jesus Christ, that is acknowledged in the heart and effective in the life of a Christian (Luke 17:20-21).

Summary. The first expectation of a believer is WHAT HE ALREADY IS IN CHRIST (HIS POSITION). Whoever believes in Jesus Christ, has a position in Christ: He stands in the right relationship to God, has assurance of eternal life and is a part of God's family and of God's kingdom!

B. THE SECOND EXPECTATION: A BELIEVER'S PROGRESS IN CHRIST

The Bible teaches, "what a believer in Jesus Christ ought to become".

He has the responsibility to make progress in three areas:

- He ought to grow as a Christian
- He ought to live as a Christian
- He ought to serve as a Christian

These three things are called "**the progress of a Christian**".

1. Your progress as a believer in Christ: You ought to grow as a Christian.

• **A Christian ought to grow in different areas. Luke 2:52.**

- physical (in stature)
- intellectual (in wisdom)
- social (in grace with people)
- spiritual (in grace with God)

³ Greek: eis huiiothesia

- **A Christian ought to grow up into Christ in all things. Ephesians 4:13-15.**

He must not remain immature so that he is tossed back and forth by every wind of teaching and be dragged along by the cunning and craftiness of false teachers. He ought to grow in the truth by reading and studying the Bible and grow in love in all his relationships.

- **A Christian ought to make roots downwards and build upwards. Colossians 2:6-7.**

After he has received Christ Jesus as Lord, a Christian ought to walk in Christ. He ought to get *invisibly rooted* into Christ by for example having a daily quiet time, reading the Bible and praying in his inner room. And he ought to get *visibly built up* into the Body of Christ to become a mature Christian and a functioning labourer in the church.

2. Your progress as a Christian: You ought to live as a Christian.

- **A Christian ought to glorify God with his body. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20.**

Before a person became a believer in Jesus Christ, he lived in slavery to sin by offering the parts of his body to impurity and ever-increasing wickedness. He was unable not to sin (Romans 8:7-8). But after he became a Christian, he offers the parts of his body to righteousness leading to holiness (Romans 6:13,19).

- **A Christian ought to glorify God with his spirit (mind). Romans 12:1-2.**

A Christian no longer conforms to unbelievers and the godless people of this world, but is inwardly transformed by the renewal of his mind (Romans 12:1-2). In this way he is able to approve what the will of God is. A Christian ought to discern between true and false teaching (2 John 1:7-11). He ought to counter evil spirits and occult forces by making use of the full armour of God (Ephesians 6:11). The body of a Christian is the dwelling place of the Spirit of God and he ought to glorify God with his body and with his spirit (1 Corinthians 3:19-20)! He mirrors the glorious characteristics of God in his personality, character and in his reactions towards his circumstances (2 Corinthians 3:18).

- **A Christian ought to resist all temptations. 1 Corinthians 10:13.**

Before he became a believer in Jesus Christ, he usually submitted to temptations (seductions) of this world such as wealth power and glory. But after he became a believer, the Holy Spirit in his body helps him to say “no” to these seductions. God promised that he would not allow that the Christian is tempted beyond his ability to resist and he promised that he would provide an escape with every temptation. A Christian therefore ought to fight against temptations and overcome them.

- **A Christian ought to allow the Bible to correct his behaviour. 1 Timothy 3:16-17.**

The Bible rebukes our sins, corrects our mistakes, trains us in righteous living and equips us to serve God practically. That is why a Christian ought to read the Bible regularly, study it, meditate on it and obey it.

- **A Christian ought to bend his knees in prayer before God. Ephesians 3:14.**

A Christian ought to bring all his problems and needs in prayer to God (Philippians 4:6-7). God will answer all his prayers either with a “yes”, “no” or “wait”. That is why a Christian ought to always pray, “let not my will, but your *perfect* will be done” (Luke 22:42).

3. Your progress as a believer in Christ: You ought to serve as a Christian.

- **A Christian ought to bear much and lasting fruit. John 15:5,16.**

Before he became a believer in Jesus Christ, he lived only for himself. But after he became a Christian, he desires to have lasting influence on other people. He helps other people to know Jesus Christ, to receive him and follow him as a disciple.

- **A Christian ought to teach and encourage other people. Colossians 3:16.**

That is why a Christian joins a group of Christians (or congregation)..

- **A Christian ought to love other people with deeds. 1 John 3:16-18.**

Love has much influence on people. By sharing your possessions with the needy and caring for the helpless, love receives hands and feet.

Summary. The second expectation of a believer is WHAT HE MUST BECOME IN CHRIST (HIS PROGRESS). Whoever believes in Jesus Christ is continually engaged in a process of progress. He is occupied with what he is now becoming. He must grow as a Christian, live as a Christian and serve as a Christian.

C. THE THIRD EXPECTATION: A BELIEVER'S FUTURE IN CHRIST

The Bible teaches, “what a believer in Jesus Christ will become”.

He has a wonderful future

- and receives a Christ like human spirit
- a Christ like human body
- and a Christ like universe to live in

These three things are called “**the future of the Christian**”.

1. Your future as a believer in Christ: You will receive a Christ like human spirit (character).

- **A Christian will receive a transformed human spirit (character) like that of Jesus Christ. 1 John 3:1-3.**

Already now believers in Jesus Christ are called “children of God” Already now they are growing to Christ likeness and expect that they will be like Christ! That is why Christians commit themselves to live holy, righteous and with love. They practise to increasingly love as Christ. And they purify themselves again and again from sin that penetrates their lives.

But as long as they live on earth, they will not be able to reach their final goal, namely, to be completely conformed to the likeness of Jesus Christ in spirit or character. That will only happen when they will see Christ face to face in heaven after death! When they see him as he is, they will be transformed into his likeness. Their character will be like his: they will be holy, righteous and loving as he is holy, righteous and loving!

2. Your future as a believer in Christ: You will receive a Christ like human body.

- **A Christian will receive a body conformed to Christ’s glorious body. Philippians 3:21.**

As long as a believer is still living on the earth, his body is subjected to sickness, limitations and finally death (Hebrews 9:27) which characterises all people in this sinful world. Then they still possess the likeness of Adam, a man on this earth. Then they still experience the weakness, dishonour and transitoriness of their human bodies. Christians are now still flesh and blood (1 Corinthians 15:50) and wait for the complete transformation of their bodies. Therefore also Christians become sick and will die.

But Christians have a hopeful future! When Christ returns at his second coming, he will resurrect all people that have died on earth (John 5:28-29; Acts 24:15). And he will transform the bodies of Christians who are still living to be like his glorious body and he will destroy death (1 Corinthians 15:49-52). The bodies of believers will be imperishable, glorious, strong and spiritual (i.e. completely controlled by the Holy Spirit) (1 Corinthians 15:42-44).

3. Your future as a believer in Christ: You will receive a Christ like universe.

- **A Christian will experience the the renewal of all things. Romans 8:18-21; 2 Peter 3:9-13; Revelation 21:1-5.**

As long as believers in Christ still live on this present sinful earth, will they know God and fellowship with God. But they will not yet be able to see God. *Christians live by faith and not by sight* (2 Corinthians 5:7). The whole creation groans because it is still subjected to the bondage to decay (Romans 8:21-22). The whole creation has a share in the punishment of the sins of people. The earth produces thorns and thistles (Genesis 3:17), people do not care well for one another so that the earth is being polluted, deforested, abused and destroyed and people carry on with making war against one another (James 4:1-2).

But when Jesus Christ returns at his second coming, he will do three things:

- He will resurrect from the grave all people that have ever lived on the earth
- He will judge all people at the Last Judgement on the basis of how they lived. Only believers in Jesus Christ will be saved and inherit the kingdom of God in its final and perfect phase!
- He will burn this present earth and transform it to become the new earth on which only righteousness will dwell. On this present earth God himself will dwell in the *visible* image of Christ among the believers. On the new earth there will no longer be death, sickness, pain, persecution, etc! On this new earth there will no longer be suffering! On this new earth God will make all things new!

Summary. The third expectation of a believer is WHAT HE WILL BECOME IN CHRIST (HIS FUTURE). Whoever believes in Jesus Christ has a fantastic future in Christ! He will have a Christ like character, a Christ like body and live on the new earth where only Jesus Christ will rule!

Summary. Believers in Christ may have the following three certain expectations about the new life:

1. Justification. Your position as a believer in Jesus Christ is shortly called “justification”.

Justification means that the Christian has been saved from the *penalty of sin*. This is salvation from *sin in the past*.

2. Sanctification. Your progress as a believer in Jesus Christ is shortly called “sanctification”.

Sanctification means that the Christian is being saved from the *power of sin*. This is salvation from *sin in the present*.

3. Glorification. Your future as a believer in Jesus Christ is shortly called “glorification”.

Glorification means that the Christian will be saved from the *presence of sin*. This is salvation from *sin in the future*.

D. OVERVIEW OF GOD'S SALVATION PLAN

Draw or photocopy the following diagram.

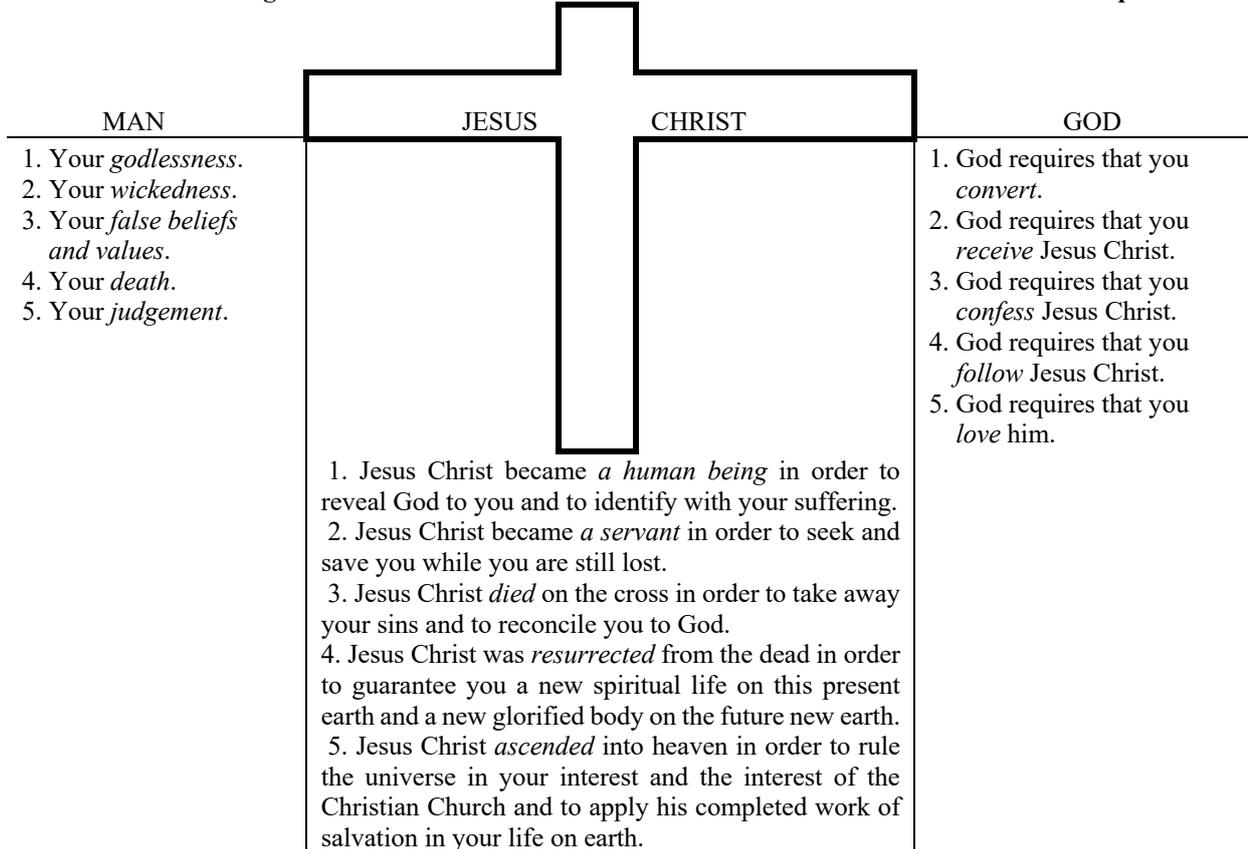
1. GOD'S EXISTENCE

1. The creation reveals the wonder, wisdom, power, beauty and order of *the work of God in the universe*.
2. The Bible reveals the plans, *the words and deeds of God in human history*.
3. Jesus Christ reveals *the nature, personality and character of God*.
4. The heart and conscience reveal *the moral laws of God*.
5. The lives and testimonies of genuine Christians reveal *the power of God to change lives*.

2. THE PROBLEM of sin and suffering

3. GOD'S SOLUTION is Jesus Christ

4. THE RESPONSE which God requires



5. THE EXPECTATIONS OF THE NEW LIFE

1. Your *position* as a believer in Christ is shortly called *justification*. In justification you have been saved from *the penalty of sin*. This is salvation from *sin in the past*.
2. Your *progress* as a believer in Christ is shortly called *sanctification*. In your sanctification you are being saved from *the power of sin*. This is "salvation from *sin in the present*".
3. Your *future* as a believer in Christ is shortly called *glorification*. In glorification you will be saved from *the presence of sin*. This is salvation from *sin in the future*.

E. SHARING AND PRAYER

1. Sharing personal responses.

Ask people if they want to *share* the response they are willing to make to God.

2. Invitation to receive Jesus Christ.

In Revelation 3:20, Jesus says,

“Here I am! I stand at the door and knock.
If anyone hears my voice and opens the door,
I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.”

3. Prayer to receive Jesus Christ.

Ask the people who want to make a response to pray with you (or to pray sentence by sentence after you). For example,

Dear Jesus Christ,

- I *confess* that I am a sinner and lost. I feel sorry for my sins and now *turn* to you.
- I *believe* that Jesus Christ died for my sin and was resurrected to give me a new life.
- I now *receive* you by asking you to come into my heart and life through your Holy Spirit.
- From now on, I commit myself to *follow* you and *love* you, to learn from you and obey you.
- I *confess* that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Amen

[A non-Christian accepts Christ for the first time; a Christian may make a recommitment to Christ]

4. Assurance of salvation.

If as a Christian you made a response that God requires, you may have the above expectations with regard to your position, your progress and your future.

The Bible says,

“And this is the testimony:
God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.
He who has the Son *has* life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.
I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God
so that you may *know* that you have eternal life.”

FINAL ASSIGNMENT

1. Read all the Bible passages of this study again. Think about:

- the existence of God,
- the reasons for suffering,
- God’s solution in Christ,
- the response which God requires,
- and the true and sure expectations which every believer in Christ may have.

Consider whether you ought to take a step towards Jesus Christ.

2. If you have not yet made a personal response to God, then pray to God and receive Jesus Christ into your heart and life.
3. People who would like to continue to search and discuss the Bible are requested to make an appointment.
4. People who have received Jesus Christ in their heart and life are invited to join a discipleship group (a beta course, a delta course or a dota course)