

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this meditation and memorisation series you may learn to become a disciple of Jesus Christ. Two teachers will meditate on the meaning of a Bible verse about one characteristic of a disciple of Jesus Christ and then memorise it together. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme. In this third series God teaches that there are 5 things that are important in the gospel message: understanding the nature of sin, knowing that judgement is a punishment for sin, believing that sin must be atoned, realising that salvation is God's gift and personally receiving Jesus into one's life. The topic of today's meditation and memorisation is: A DISCIPLE BELIEVES THAT SIN MUST BE ATONED.

(S)      **POINT 1. MEDITATION OF THE NEW BIBLE VERSE**

The new Bible verse that we will meditate and memorise is Romans 5:8. We will ask one another questions in order to help us to meditate on the truths written in the Bible. Let me read Romans 5:6-10.

Romans 5:6-10. "You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!"

The memorisation verse is: Atonement of sin. Romans 5:8, "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Romans 5:8.

(T)      **The love of God.**

How does God love us? According to 1 John 4:7-19, God's very nature is love. He loves like a shepherd, seeking lost people and defending threatened people. He loves like a father and mother, feeding us, educating us and comforting us. Above all, he loves like only God can love by nature and that is self-sacrificially. God gave himself when he took on the human nature in Jesus Christ and died as a sacrifice of atonement for sins. Moreover, God loved us first. Before the creation of the world, he loved us and chose us. Before we knew him, he sent people on our way to preach the gospel to us and sent the Holy Spirit to work in our hearts. Before we accepted him, he accepted us. Finally, according to Jeremiah 31:3, God loves us with an everlasting love. God's love does not diminish. God's love does not weaken. And God's love does not fade. God loves us today as much as he loved us in the past on the cross! And God will love us tomorrow as much as he loves us today!

(S)      **The death of Jesus.**

What kind of a death did Jesus die?

First. Physical death is the natural consequence of sin and consists of the separation of the body from the soul. Romans 6:23 says, "The wages of sin is death". However, this was not the way in which Jesus became subject to death, because he had no personal sin.

Second. Eternal death consists of God forsaking man forever. 2 Thessalonians 1:9 says, "They are shut out from the presence of the Lord". And Matthew 25:46 says, "They go away to eternal punishment". However, this was also not the way in which Jesus became subject to death. When his body was in the grave, the divine nature or divine Spirit of Jesus Christ remained united to his human nature or human spirit. We know this, because according to John 10:17-18 Jesus Christ arose from death through his own power. When Jesus Christ died, God the Father did not forsake the divine nature of Christ and he did not withdraw his love and good pleasure from Christ. According to Luke 24:46, Jesus Christ did not despair on the cross, but prayed to God the Father and committed his spirit into his hands.

Third. The death of Jesus Christ was the judicial punishment of sin. It is significant that Jesus Christ did not die a natural death and he did not die an accidental death. He was also not assassinated, but died *a judicial death*. He was *sentenced to death by human law*, not for any crime that *he* had committed. Nevertheless, by condemning the innocent Jesus, the governor Pontius Pilate condemned himself as well as human justice as he applied it. But at the same time Jesus Christ was *sentenced to death by divine law*, for the sin of the whole world. By dying on the cross, Jesus met the extreme demands of God's law.

It is also significant that Jesus Christ did not die in the customary Jewish way. He was not beheaded and he was also not stoned to death, but he was crucified on a cross. Crucifixion was not a Jewish form of punishment, but a Roman form of punishment. Crucifixion was regarded as so infamous, that it was not applied to Roman citizens,

but only to the scum of mankind, to the meanest criminals and slaves. By dying in this way, Jesus Christ took the place of the worst sinner or criminal in the world that believes in him.

**(T) The burial of Jesus.**

What happened to Jesus immediately after his death?

First. The burial of Jesus forms a part of his humiliation. Burial means that man is returned to the dust from which he was created (Genesis 3:19). But in the case of Jesus, he was not long enough in the grave to decay (cf. Psalm 16:10).

Second. The burial of Jesus proved that Jesus was really dead. Many Jews and the Roman soldiers saw that his human body really died. They even thrust a spear into his side. And his friends rolled bandages together with fragrant spices around his whole body before they laid him in the grave.

Third. The burial of Jesus removes the terrors of the grave for Christians. Christians know that also their bodies must die. But Christians do not fear death, because they too will share in Christ's resurrection from the grave!

Fourth. The burial of Jesus was not followed by his descent into hell or the place of dead spirits. An old Christian confession of faith in the Latin language dating from the 4th century AD says, "He descended into hell" These words were translated into the Greek as follows. "He descended into Hades", which in the popular mind was the underworld or place of the departed spirits. Based on 1 Peter 3:18-20 and 1 Peter 4:6, some people believe that between his death and resurrection, Jesus Christ went to this place of departed spirits to preach the gospel and give all people, who have never heard the gospel during their lives on earth, a second chance to be saved. This view is not biblical and even impossible!

1 Peter 3:18-20 says, Jesus Christ "was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit, through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built."

The word 'spirit' in verse 18 does not refer to the human spirit of Jesus, but to the Holy Spirit, who made him alive again, that is, who resurrected him from the dead. The word 'went' in verse 19 does not refer to Jesus Christ 'going down' to the place of the dead, but refers to Jesus Christ 'going up' into heaven, as verse 22 proves. The word 'preached' in verse 19 also does not refer to 'preaching the gospel', but refers to his 'going up' or triumphant ascension into heaven as a 'preaching or proclamation of his victory' over all the human and spiritual beings in the universe, as verse 22 proves! The 'spirits in prison' certainly refers to the spirits of people who lived in the past in the days of Noah, but it is a *symbol or expression* for all people that lived in the past and that live in the present as the people lived in the days of Noah, as Matthew 24:37-39 proves.

Thus the 'going' and 'proclamation' of Jesus Christ did not take place *between* his death and resurrection, but took place *after* his death and resurrection! His 'going' was not a 'going down to the place of dead spirits, but a 'going up' to heaven. His 'preaching' was not a 'preaching of the gospel', but a 'proclamation of his victory' to all beings in the universe, past and present! In this resurrected state, Jesus Christ went up to heaven proclaiming his triumph over sin itself and proclaiming his victory over all the evil spiritual powers in the universe.

In Colossians 2:15, Jesus Christ is pictured as making this triumphant journey to heaven after his death and resurrection with all the evil powers and authorities in his train, chained as it were, to his victory chariot. He had conquered his enemies by his death and resurrection. He had conquered all the evil powers that had opposed him, captured them and as it were took them along as prisoners of war during his triumphant entry into heaven. According to 1 Peter 3:22, when Christ entered heaven and sat at the right hand of God, all the angels in heaven as well as all the evil powers on earth submitted themselves to Christ as the King of kings, whether willingly or reluctantly!

Therefore, the words "he descended into hell or Hades" in the apostolic confession must be interpreted as "the hell Christ suffered *before* he died"! It refers to "the agonies Christ suffered in Gethsemane and the sufferings he suffered during his trial and crucifixion" *before* he died! It is there that he experienced the feeling of being forsaken by God. The Bible does not teach that Jesus Christ descended into hell or Hades *after* he died! For the three days that his *body* was in the grave, his *spirit* or *soul* was in the hands of God the Father (cf. Luke 24:46).

**(S) The meaning of the death of Jesus.**

What are the results of the death of Jesus Christ?

First. Jesus Christ died to make atonement for sin. 1 John 4:10 says, "This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as *an atoning sacrifice for our sins.*" To make atonement for sin is to satisfy God's holy and righteous demand to punish all sin and thus to remove his holy and righteous anger against the sinner. Christ's death on the cross was an atonement sacrifice, a sacrifice that turned away God's wrath against our sin. Christ's sacrifice of atonement ended all other sacrifices and the temple worship became useless. This was symbolised when the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom (cf. Matthew 27:51). From now on everyone who believes in Jesus Christ and his sacrifice of atonement for their sins has direct access to God through the Spirit of God (cf. Ephesians 2:18).

Second. Jesus Christ died to justify the sinner and to reconcile the sinner to God. Romans 5:6,8,10 says, “When we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. ... While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ... When we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son.” To justify the sinner is to declare the sinner “not guilty” in God’s eyes. Once for all time, God forgives the sinner, acquits him from eternal condemnation and *declares* him righteous. From the very moment that we believe in Jesus Christ, our ungodliness, sins and enmity is crucified with Christ’s body on the cross. From the very moment that we believe in Jesus Christ, God *declares* us 100% righteous in his eyes and from then onwards always *regards* us and *treats* us as 100% righteous (cf. Romans 5:1-2). From the very moment that we believe in Jesus Christ, we are immediately brought into the presence of God and *reconciled* to God. Through the death of Jesus Christ on the cross, God made peace with us and we made peace with him.

Third. Jesus Christ died to sanctify the sinner. Hebrews 9:14 says, “How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God.” To sanctify the sinner is to cleanse his conscience from guilt and evil plans, to crucify his old sinful nature and attraction to the sinful world and to make him holy and perfect forever. Because a believer is justified and sanctified, he or she is able to serve the living God. While justification happens at the moment you believe for the first time, sanctification happens all through your life.

Fourth. Jesus Christ died to cancel and abolish the Old Testament ceremonial law. Colossians 2:14 teaches that Jesus Christ cancelled the law with all its regulations as a way to approach him. Ephesians 2:15 teaches that Jesus Christ destroyed the law with its commandments and abolished it from his community. Jesus Christ came to make an end to every religion that holds people a slave through its commandments and regulations.

Fifth. Jesus Christ died to disarm the devil and all his evil spirits. Colossians 2:15 says, “Having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross”. By his death, resurrection, ascension to heaven and enthronement at the right hand of God in heaven to rule over the universe, Jesus Christ bound Satan, all his evil spirits and all evil authorities on earth. From the first coming of Christ all these powers and authorities are compelled to submit themselves to the authority of Jesus Christ.

Sixth. Jesus Christ died to establish God’s kingdom and church on earth. In Revelation 5:9-10 the elders in heaven say to Jesus, “You are worthy ... because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God.” And in Acts 20:28 Paul says that Jesus Christ bought the church with his own blood. This kingdom or church consists of believers from every tribe, language and nation in the world! By his death on the cross, Jesus Christ paid the price for their salvation and now they all belong to him.

Seventh. Jesus Christ died to set Christians free from the fear of death. Hebrews 2:14-15 says, “By his death, Christ might destroy him who holds the power of death, that is the devil - and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.” Because Jesus Christ died as the punishment for the sins of the world, all those who believe in him need not fear death anymore. Jesus Christ took the sting out of death (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:56). When he returns, he will resurrect the bodies of all the dead. While unbelievers will be thrown body and soul into the eternal fire, the believers with their resurrected bodies and complete perfect souls will inherit the new earth.

#### **(T) POINT 2. MEMORISATION OF THE NEW BIBLE VERSE**

Write the Bible verse on a card or in a notebook. The topic today is “Atonement of sin.” and the reference is Romans 5:8. Let us memorise the Bible verse together.

**(T+S)** Atonement of sin. Romans 5:8. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Romans 5:8.

**(S)** Atonement of sin. Romans 5:8. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Romans 5:8.

#### **(T) POINT 3. REVIEW OF THE LAST BIBLE VERSES YOU HAVE MEMORISED**

Do not forget to review the last 5 Bible verses that we have memorised without looking at our notebooks.

#### **(S) POINT 4. ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK**

First. Daily review the last five memorised Bible verses once every day for 5 weeks.

Second. See the workbooks “Go and make disciples” and Internet on www etc.

Third. Listen on short wave radio every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY to “Discipleship training on the air”.