

**“...whoever lives and believes  
in Me shall never die.”**

*Roll away the Stone - part 3*

- **John 11:1-44**

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in **Menomonie, Wisconsin**  
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**John 11:1-44** *Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha.*

*2 It was that Mary who anointed the Lord with fragrant oil and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick. 3 Therefore the sisters sent to Him, saying, "Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick." 4 When Jesus heard that, He said, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it." 5 Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. 6 So, when He heard that he was sick, He stayed two more days in the place where He was. 7 Then after this He said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." 8 The disciples said to Him, "Rabbi, lately the Jews sought to stone You, and are You going there again?" 9 Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. 10 "But if one walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him." 11 These things He said, and after that He said to them, "Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up." 12 Then His disciples said, "Lord, if he sleeps he will get well." 13 However, Jesus spoke of his death, but they thought that He was speaking about taking rest in sleep. 14 Then Jesus said to them plainly, "Lazarus is dead. 15 "And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, that you may believe. Nevertheless let us go to him." 16 Then Thomas, who is called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with Him." 17 So when Jesus came, He found that he had already been in the tomb four days. 18 Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles away. 19 And many of the Jews had joined the women around Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother. 20 Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met Him, but Mary was sitting in the house. 21 Then Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. 22 "But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You." 23 Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." 24 Martha said to Him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." 25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. 26 "And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?" 27 She said to Him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world." 28 And when she had said these things, she went her way and secretly called Mary her sister, saying, "The Teacher has come and is calling for you." 29 As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly and came to Him. 30 Now Jesus had not yet come into the town, but was in the place where Martha met Him. 31 Then the Jews who were with her in the house, and comforting her, when they saw that Mary rose up quickly and went out, followed her, saying, "She is going to the tomb to weep there." 32 Then, when Mary came where Jesus was, and saw Him, she fell down at His feet, saying to Him, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died." 33 Therefore, when Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her weeping, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled. 34 And He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to Him, "Lord, come and see." 35 Jesus wept. 36 Then the Jews said, "See how He loved him!" 37 And some of them said, "Could not this Man, who opened the eyes of the blind, also have kept this man from dying?" 38 Then Jesus, again groaning in Himself, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. 39 Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of him who was dead, said to Him, "Lord, by this time there is a stench, for he has been dead four days." 40 Jesus said to her, "Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?" 41 Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead man was lying. And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, "Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. 42 "And I know that You always hear Me, but because of the people who are standing by I said this, that they may believe that You sent Me." 43 Now when He had said these things, He cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth!" 44 And he who had died came out bound hand and foot with graveclothes, and his face was wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Loose him, and let him go."*



On April 2, 1513, Spanish explorer Juan Ponce de León and his crew became the first recorded Europeans to set eyes on Florida. Legend holds that they made this discovery while searching for the Fountain of Youth, a magical water source supposedly capable of reversing the aging process and curing sickness. It seems that the Spanish explorer was and is not alone in such a search. For the United States spends far more than any other country on per capita health care...with an average of \$9,237 for each of us in 2014 with a life average expectancy of 79.1 years. Ironically many

countries on earth match or better that life expectancy for far less. Greece for example only spent about \$2000, and they live longer! Americans spend more than \$30 billion a year on dietary supplements — vitamins, minerals and herbal products, all to make the great attempt at living forever.

Visitors to the Fiji Islands tell of a strange custom of "calling to the dead." The one who has suffered a close or familial death climbs to a high tree or a cliff, and after mentioning the name of the deceased he cries out pathetically, "Come back! Come back!" The heart-rending wail is filled with despair and sad frustration! Any of us who have lost a family member, a dear friend, or a beloved child, can well appreciate the Fiji exercise albeit a desperate and useless act.

Harry Houdini, the legendary escape artist and magician died on Halloween in 1926. He promised his wife, Bess, that if it were possible to communicate from the dead, he would indeed communicate with her, and he gave her a code to help prove it. Bess tried to contact him on the anniversary of his death for 10 years, but after 10 years with no success, she stopped trying. Harry was gone.

In his book "*Living Life Backward: How Ecclesiastes Teaches Us to Live in Light of the End*" author David Gibson begins on page one with the words: "*You are going to die.*" Well that's a bummer when you want to curl up by the fire with a good book! But the reality of death has hung over the heads of humanity since the beginning, and we have tried to run from it, postpone it, or deny it exists for our whole lives. Then along comes an obscure itinerate prophet/preacher named Jesus Christ who would make the earth-shattering statement that we need not ever die. It would of course be laughable if He hadn't done what He did. Gibson's book details the profound life altering affects that accompany the avoidance and fear of this inevitable "crossing." Certainly such changes how we live and how we relate to each other and the world around us.

Martha and her sister Mary were living the anguish and loss that day in Bethany when Jesus said to her, "*I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die.*" The Old King James says "*though he were dead, yet shall he live.*" Certainly those amongst us that have crawled out of that grave spiritually and metaphorically can say "amen" to that truth! The plague of sin carries with it a tremendous price tag. In fact, people start receiving the dividends of sin as soon as they come into the world. How many of us were indeed so very "dead" and are today here to say "I'm alive. I'm here because of Christ." So we know that Jesus cures *spiritual* death. Ephesians 2:1-5 tells us: "*Once you were dead because of your disobedience and your many sins. You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil — the commander of the powers in the unseen world. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God. All of us used to live that way, following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature. By our very nature we were subject to God's anger, just like everyone else. But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God's grace that you have been saved!)*"

Jesus has the power to take a life destroyed by sin and give it a brand new start. He specializes in giving dead men new life! "*This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!*" (2 Cor. 5:17). He can take away the stains of sin and give anyone a fresh start. "*'Come now, let's settle this,' says the LORD. 'Though your sins are like scarlet, I will make them as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, I will make them as white as wool.'*" - Isa. 1:18.

OK, but what about *physical* life? Are we all just doomed bodily to be worm food in the end? We know that this event with Lazarus was not the first time Jesus overcame death. There was Jairus's daughter in Mark 5:41-42 and the widow's son in Luke 7:11. By the time He arrived at the grave of Lazarus, Jesus had already proved His power over physical death. Each time...in each account, it seemed the "dead" individual would get "out there" just a little further

and Jesus would snatch them back from the beyond. Soon, He would raise *Himself* from the grave...coming back from the dead to literally change the world.

To receive this promise of Christ and to be rescued from both spiritual death and the final death of the grave, Jesus told us that we must “believe on Him.” You must have a new start...a “reboot.” You must be born again. That is, you must trust Jesus and Him alone for your soul's salvation. The Bible tells us that we cannot trust our works, our goodness, or our religion to earn our salvation. Neither can we place our confidence in our church and all that goes along with that. Salvation comes only through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. **Works will never get the job done** - Gal. 2:16

2. **Turning over a new leaf and attempts at self-improvement will never get the job done** - Matt. 12:43-45.

3. **Religion will never get the job done** - Titus 3:5

4. When you come to trust Jesus, you will find that the job is already done - 1 John 2:2; Isa. 53:6.

But let us notice one nuance in the words of Jesus that day. *"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die.* We all have heard it before. We know we must “believe.” But Jesus said something else that day that would be a critical error for us to miss. While He said *“whoever **believes** in Him would never die,”* He also said *“whoever **lives** in Him would never die.”* This is not an “option B”, and certainly not some sort of works addendum to salvation. But no life that truly believes in Him will ever fail to **live** in Him! Never can we separate the two, no matter how we might try in the days in which we live.

And the fact herein is this: (and it is absolutely critical that you hear these words...) If you have been reborn in the Spirit, you will “live” in that Spirit, **in the flesh!** If you believe, that belief will absolutely manifest in your living. In fact, you will be the only ones walking around alive in a world of the walking dead. You will be “different” and your lifestyle will reflect different priorities, passions, and attitude.

Certainly, no such walk in Him will ever be perfect on this side of eternity, for today we “see through a glass darkly.” (1 Cor 13:12) But make no mistake! If we have no passion and drive to live for Christ **here**, and to “*seek first the kingdom of God*”...to die to self and selfish plans for His sake, then we do not know Him and we are not spiritually “back from the grave.” Why then would we think that we will return **physically** from such? Why would we want to live forever with a King that we don't want to live for here and now in this brief sojourn?

Jesus said *“**I am the resurrection and the life...**”* We must not separate the *works* of Christ from His *person*. Life on this plane of existence is found **in Him** and **He in us**. Such a statement as this leaves little ambiguity! Jesus is clearly claiming deity; no one other than God in human flesh could say what Jesus says here. He does not merely say that He can *cause* resurrection and life, which would be amazing enough. He says that He literally **is** that resurrection and the life! That those qualities are one with His very being. John 15 expounds in detail and length about this aspect of our relationship with Him.

It is a mistake to think that Christ merely gives life, and miss the fact that He **IS** our life! While I have always been a huge advocate for living large for Jesus in the here and now, let me state for the record that our best is yet to come. Life here is brief and often fraught with aches, pains, testing, and even sadness. But Christ promises a day is coming when there will be no more tears and no more crying. *“He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever.”* (Rev 21:4)

1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 says “...*the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.*”

On my way to church each Sunday morning, I pass one of those exercise and workout places, and there is so often someone there in the early hours of the morning on the treadmill. I can't help but think how such a scene is so classic of life outside of Christ. Just running and running, and going nowhere. Trying to keep alive and suck the marrow out of life on this earth, while I drive by on my way to worship the one who holds that very life in His hands.

John 5:24 – 29 "*Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life. Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.*”

Helen Keller once said “Death is no more than passing from one room into another. But there's a difference for me, you know. Because in that other room I shall be able to see.” Death to us is often seen as an end, but to the reborn, it is but a “passing.”

My wife is a nurse you know, and has been present many times when people passed from this life to the next. And she says she never has to wonder about the spiritual standing of the family members in that room at that moment. Like Mary, and Martha and even Jesus, there are often tears, but there is a calm that is present only in the lives of believers. For them, it is not good-bye, but only a “see you later.” But for those who do not believe and have not Christ in them, there is pure anguish and often extreme emotion of loss in that room. For their loved one is “gone.” But today I know that I will one day see my mother and father...my grandmother, my grandfather. Pastor Dave, my pastor will be there, and *man*, it will be good to see him again!

In my mind's eye, I imagine the passing of time on this earth to be like a large round auditorium with those big double doors on every side, like we had in our high school gymnasiums when we were kids. And time is like a big circular hallway outside those doors. And everyone at the moment of their temporal death will open the auditorium door in their linear time, but we will all affectively being opening the door at the same moment from somewhere else in the circle. We will all open the door to the center room where there will be a great feast readied for us all...the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. Rev 19:5-7 “*And from the throne came a voice that said, “Praise our God, all his servants, all who fear him, from the least to the greatest. Then I heard again what sounded like the shout of a vast crowd or the roar of mighty ocean waves or the crash of loud thunder: ‘Praise the LORD! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. Let us be glad and rejoice, and let us give honor to him. For the time has come for the wedding feast of the Lamb, and his bride has prepared herself.’*” Hey church...**we are that bride!** And I ask you today, *have you indeed “prepared yourself?”*

The great preacher Alan Redpath wrote: *There is nothing – no circumstance, no trouble, no testing – that can ever touch me until, first of all it has gone past God and past Christ, right through to me. If it has come that far, it has come with a great purpose which I may not understand at the moment. But as I refuse to become panicky – as I lift up my eyes to Him – and as I accept it as coming from the throne of God for some great purpose of blessing to my heart, no sorrow will ever disturb me, no trial will ever disarm me, no circumstance will cause me to fret – for I shall rest in the joy of what my Lord is. That is the rest of victory. (Victorious Christian Living [Revell], p. 166):*