

SESSION 2

YOU'LL NEVER DIE



What have you heard promoted as the next “fountain of youth”?

QUESTION #1

The resurrection of Jesus makes our own resurrection possible.

THE PASSAGES

John 11:25-27; 20:24-29

THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

Oh, the things we will do to live longer! We all know that a healthy diet and exercise improve our bodies and, therefore, help us live longer. Beyond that, though, researchers have discovered a few more things that might increase your life span.

- ▶ Live on top of a mountain. It may be because of the clean mountain air or because half of your walking is uphill, but people who live at high altitudes live longer.
- ▶ Learn a new language. Studies have shown that being able to speak multiple languages slows the onset of two fatal diseases: dementia and Alzheimer's.
- ▶ Live on a reduced calorie diet. One of the longest-living people groups limits their daily intake to about 1,200 calories a day.
- ▶ Work harder. Serious and persistent workers tend to live longer than carefree employees.¹

You could try all these—eat sparingly while living on a mountain where you work hard to learn a new language—and while you might increase your life span, you can be sure you're still going to die.

Jesus told us the only way not to die is to believe in and follow Him. And He made that possible when He rose from the dead.

John 11:25-27

25 Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live,

26 and everyone who 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 coming into the world.”

As John 11 opens, we see “Lazarus of Bethany” (John 11:1) a man who was sick and at the point of death. Lazarus was a beloved friend to Jesus (vv. 3,5,11), yet Jesus intentionally delayed making the trip to Bethany to heal His friend. Jesus delayed, and Lazarus died (v. 14).

When Jesus finally arrived in Bethany, He sought to comfort Lazarus’s grieving sisters, Mary and Martha. He told Martha, “Your brother will rise again” (v. 23). Martha did not disagree; she accepted the popular view taught by the Pharisees that there is an afterlife, and the Jewish people would experience a resurrection someday. But Jesus was referring to something a lot more immediate!

To explain the miracle He was about to do, Jesus gave one of His seven I AM statements.² This one carried a great claim of Deity: “I am the resurrection and the life.” Implied in this statement is the truth that Jesus is the One true God; He is not just any god, but one that can resurrect Himself. He did not say He would bring about the resurrection or He would be the cause of the resurrection; Jesus said He *is* the resurrection.

Resurrection from death and the promise of eternal life are so closely related to Jesus that we can only find them in a relationship with Him. That relationship begins with believing. Jesus went on to say “Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.”

Wait. If I’m dead, doesn’t that mean I’m not alive? Yes, your physical body will die, but *you* will not cease! For those who believe

in Jesus, they are and will remain spiritually alive in Christ—and they will be resurrected to a new glorified body. Jesus promised us a life with Him in heaven (John 14:2-3). Furthermore, the apostle Paul wrote, “[He] will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself” (Phil. 3:21).

What brings this truth about Jesus into our lives is the word *believe*. This verb means far more than acknowledging something. The Greek word carries the idea of placing our confidence and trust in that which we believe. In this context, we are to believe in Jesus.

This great truth of Jesus as the resurrection calls for a response. Jesus asked Martha, “Do you believe this?”

She affirmed her belief and trust in Jesus as “the Messiah, the Son of God, who is coming into the world.” She had seen His miracles and heard Him teach; now she came to the only possible conclusion: *Jesus is the Messiah*.

And John recorded many of Jesus’ teachings and miracles “so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name” (John 20:31).

What does it mean to believe in Jesus as the resurrection and the life?

QUESTION #2

John 20:24-25

24 Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came.

25 So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe.”



The resurrection can be a difficult reality to grasp. It's hard to think that two thousand years ago a Man loved us enough to give His life for us—and it seems even more fantastic that He would come back to life. Yet that very truth—the resurrection of Christ—is the cornerstone of our whole belief system. No other religion can claim the resurrection; it is uniquely ours. Can other religions claim death? Sure, every religion can point to their founder's death, but only Jesus died and came back to life. Only Jesus walked out of His tomb in His restored, fleshly body after it had been physically destroyed. Only Jesus was resurrected. Only Jesus *is* the resurrection.

The disciples had no doubt Jesus died. The sole duty of a Roman soldier assigned to a crucifixion was to ensure the victim was dead. Should a criminal escape death, the soldier paid with his own life. The women saw where Jesus was buried (Luke 23:55), so there was no question they went to the right tomb—which was empty (24:1-3). And now the disciples had seen Jesus alive (John 20:19-20)!

The resurrection was surely a hard reality for the disciples to believe at first, considering the shock of Jesus' death. Yet here He stood in front of the disciples.

Except Thomas. John did not tell us why Thomas was not with his fellow disciples, but he did give us Thomas's reaction to the news. Thomas, most likely in awe and confusion, demanded to see Jesus' scars and wounds before he would believe. This is where we get the phrase "doubting Thomas," an unfair distinction for Thomas. He wasn't the only one who doubted. The other ten disciples initially refused to believe as well (Luke 24:11). Thomas merely wanted the same reassurance of seeing "in his hands the mark of the nails," just like the others had seen when they first saw Jesus.

It's hard to believe without seeing. We're not all that different from Thomas. It's far easier to believe when evidence and proof are right in front of us. The Christian life is one of faith, but that faith has to be grounded in something solid. Otherwise, it's just blind faith, something we simply hope might be true. Faith is only as good as its foundation.

Consider the last time you sat in a chair. You probably didn't give a second thought to sitting on it. You had an inherent faith the chair would support your weight, but that faith was based on previous experiences with chairs or a confidence in the one who built or offered you a chair. The action of sitting implies a faith—a trust—that it will support you.

So how can we have faith in the reality of the resurrection? Like Thomas, up to this point, we haven't seen the physical, resurrected body of Jesus. Thankfully, God has given us ways to believe and trust with confidence. He did that for Thomas, and He has done it for us.

What obstacles often hinder people from believing in the resurrection of Jesus?

QUESTION #3

John 20:26-29

26 Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.”

27 Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.”

28 Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!”

29 Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

John gave us “the rest of the story” when Jesus appeared again to the disciples. “The doors were locked,” indicating the disciples were still scared. They may have worried that the Jewish leaders who had wanted Jesus dead were after them too. They could have been confused, not knowing what to do next. Should they simply go back to their previous careers? Do they continue to live in hiding?

Into this locked room, Jesus appeared. Some biblical scholars think the doors were opened miraculously, similar to Peter’s miraculous escape from prison (Acts 12:6-10). “Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace be with you.’” This was not the spirit of Jesus, but Jesus in flesh and blood. With His presence, Jesus gave His disciples “the peace ... which surpasses all understanding” (Phil. 4:7); the peace only He can give; the peace the world will never understand unless they are followers of Christ (John 14:27). This is yet another reminder that Jesus is our peace. Our circumstances do not dictate our peace.

Jesus then turned His attention to Thomas. He did not rebuke Thomas for his disbelief; instead, Jesus compassionately offered him the reassurance he needed. Jesus met Thomas exactly where he was; He met Thomas with reassurance, compassion, and grace. We might wonder if Thomas fell to his knees weeping as he exclaimed,

“My Lord and my God!” This was his clear confession of his belief. Through seeing the scars in Jesus’ hands and the wound in His side, Thomas found a new faith in Jesus—a faith that no longer included doubt or fear.

Is it possible for a person to have doubt and faith at the same time?

QUESTION #4

Thomas and the other disciples got to see firsthand what we can’t see today: Jesus Himself doing His ministry. Is Jesus still performing miracles? Absolutely. I have seen more miracles than I can count. I have seen people healed of cancer. Marriages restored. Emotional bondage broken. I have praised God for each of these amazing miracles. But Thomas and the disciples got to physically walk with Jesus as he performed these miracles. Jesus knew many believers like you and me would come after Him, who would be unable to see and experience what the original disciples did. So, He told Thomas, “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” We are still blessed even though we did not get to walk with Jesus during His earthly ministry.

So why do we believe? We trust the words and witness of those who did see Jesus alive. Disciples like Thomas. Paul underscored the witness of those who saw Jesus.

“He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me” (1 Cor. 15:5-8).

We don’t simply believe the resurrection of Jesus happened, but

it is an event that we can trust to be life changing. All through the Gospels, Jesus spoke of His resurrection (Matt. 16:21, John 2:18-22; 10:17-18). He also spoke of eternal life for us (John 3:16). Jesus offers us a resurrected, eternal life because of His own resurrection. As we saw earlier in John 11:25, Jesus is the resurrection and the life. Jesus IS the resurrection, and life only comes through Him.

It comes back to belief. Will you trust the evidence you've been given—evidence like the testimony of Thomas? If you want eternal life, trust the truth of the resurrection, follow the words of Jesus, and believe.

What does it mean to confess Jesus as “my Lord and my God”?

QUESTION #5

PEACE BE WITH YOU

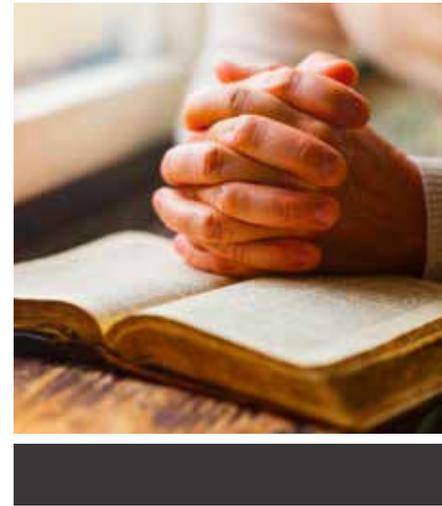
Jesus said, “Peace be with you,” when He appeared to His disciples after the resurrection. How you have experienced the peace Jesus gives because of His resurrection?

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LIVE IT OUT

We can do nothing on our own to have eternal life. Reduced diets, living on a mountain, or even embracing religion will not get us what we need. Eternal life comes from Jesus. All we do is believe in Him, trust Him, and follow Him. Here are some things to think about:

- ▶ **Believe.** Jesus is alive, and He invites you to follow Him. If you have never trusted in Christ, place your full faith in Him. Read the inside front cover of this book to learn how you can do this. Talk to someone in your group about your desire to believe and trust in Christ.
- ▶ **Investigate.** If you still wonder if the resurrection of Jesus is something we can count on, look into it for yourself. Many books address the reality of the resurrection, such as *Buried Hope or Risen Savior: The Search for Jesus' Tomb* by Charles Quarles or *The Case for Christ* by Lee Strobel.
- ▶ **Share.** Who has God put on your heart to hear the truth of the resurrection and eternal life? Let God use you in the life of another person. Ask God to put someone on your heart who needs to hear about His resurrection and promise of eternal life.



END NOTES

1 <https://listverse.com/2012/05/31/10-unusual-ways-to-live-longer/>

2 The seven "I AM" statements: (1) I am the bread of life – John 6:35; (2) I am the light of the world – John 8:12; (3) I am the door of the sheep – John 10:7; (4) I am the good shepherd – John 10:11; (5) I am the resurrection and the life – John 11:25; (6) I am the way, the truth, and the life – John 14:6; and (7) I am the true vine – John 15:1.