

For thousands of years people have been trying to find a solution for the problem of death.

In ancient times sorcerers sought spells and potions to extend life, possibly forever.

Five hundred years ago some explorers were searching for a fountain of youth.

*For a while the explorer Juan Ponce de León thought that he had found it in Florida.*

*Today you can visit the Fountain of Youth Archaeological Park in St. Augustine, Florida.*

*It is an historical park with exhibits commemorating the founding era of St. Augustine in 1565.*

*Visitors can sample the famous spring, but I warn you, it might shorten your life rather than extend it.*

More recently, some have frozen their bodies before death hoping that science will rescue them someday.

Today the Chinese are dabbling in the science of organ harvesting to extend life.

*I have watched some Big10 Basketball over the past two months.*

*At least once during every game they run the Big 10 commercial carried along by a song.*

*I wanna live forever on a boat out in the sea*

*I wanna build a happy home, a home for you and me*

*I wanna touch the silver lining, we'll be shining everywhere*

*I wanna live forever, I don't care*

*I will take that simple pleasure*

*I will take it and be gone forever now*

*Only how?*

Indeed, it is the human question. How to live forever?

The fact is that death is inevitable, and we are terrified of it. We would like to avoid it.

I like to ask people, "Do you want to live forever?" It leads to interesting discussions.

I have found that we Americans really have no clear concept of life everlasting.

You see, we live amidst a cultural myth.

It shows up in America in our conversation.

Sometimes it shows up in our TV and movies.

The myth is that after this life we die and go to a wispy place, shiny with clouds all around.

And we kinda hang out there... forever, I guess.

Frankly, it sounds boring.

Yep, I said it. The American popular understanding of heaven is dull and uninteresting.

If you know the Lord and read the Bible, you know that this is not our blessed hope.

Our hope is in what Jesus has done and will do for us.

### **Jesus, the Son of God, died and defeated death.**

#### **Romans 1:1-4**

This fact really is the heart of the gospel message, the good news.

And it is very good news.

#### **I. Jesus Christ really died.**

#### **John 19:31-37**

We read of His death described in all four Gospels.

**Luke 23:44-49** Matthew and Mark both tell us that these women were watching from a distance.

**Matthew 27:45-54** When the Son of God died it shook heaven and earth.

**Mark 15:33-39** If you would have been there, you might have said the same.

Jesus, God Himself, bore the penalty for our sins on the Cross. This is what killed Him.

Death is our punishment for sin. It has been so ever since Adam sinned in the garden.

Since then, every person who lives eventually dies. There are no exceptions.

This is the great human problem. It is a problem that must be solved or we are all doomed, forever.

And when we die, we are burned or put in the ground or dumped in the sea.

I suppose there are exceptions.

*John G. Paton and his wife set sail to the New Hebrides in 1858.*

*Their departure didn't come without criticism.*

*On one occasion a respected elder chided the couple, "You will be eaten by cannibals!"*

*To this Paton responded, "Mr. Dickson, you are advanced in years now, and your own prospect is soon to be laid in the grave, there to be eaten by worms; I confess to you, that if I can but live and die serving and honoring the Lord Jesus, it will make no difference to me whether I am eaten by Cannibals or by worms.*

So a person might die and get eaten. Not that it matters, once you're dead.

Well, Jesus died and Jesus was buried, just like many people are.

## II. Jesus Christ was buried.

**John 19:38-42**

This is important. Each one of the gospels describes His burial.

Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, two important Pharisees get permission from Pilate to bury Jesus.

We learn from Mark that Pilate questioned the centurion to make sure that Jesus was dead.

This centurion, responsible for executions, was an expert and a witness.

Joseph and Nicodemus applied some 70-100lbs. of spices to the body and wrapped it.

They laid it in what was probably Joseph's tomb right outside the city.

The stone was rolled over the entrance. No one was getting in.

The Jews asked Pilate to assure that the disciples could not steal the body.

For this reason, Pilate placed a Roman seal on the tomb and a guard to keep it safe.

There was Jesus, dead, in the tomb.

There is some speculation on what He did during the three days that He was dead.

Did He ascend to "paradise" with God? (Luke 23:43)

Did He descend into hell (Hades?) and rescue captives? (1 Peter 3:18-20)

Did He beat the snot out of the devil?

The fact is that we really do not know.

We do know that Jesus was dead and buried from Friday evening until Sunday morning.

But we also know that Jesus did not stay dead. He arose. He is alive!

All of the New Testament and millions of people since attest to His resurrection.

## III. Jesus Christ is the first one risen from the dead.

**1 Corinthians 15:12-24**

This Biblical teaching did not begin in the New Testament.

In ancient times, Job expected a resurrection. **Job 19:23-27ab**

**Daniel 12:1-4** Do you see? There is coming a resurrection for the people who love God.

**Daniel 12:13** Daniel would never in his life see God's promises fulfilled for Israel.

What then does he have to look forward to? The resurrection.

Jesus teaches exactly this. **John 5:28-29**

This is what Martha understood when she spoke with Jesus after her brother Lazarus had died.

**John 11:20-27** She knew there would be a resurrection.

The Jews knew this. Well, most of them did, except for the Sadducees.

The Sadducees thought of themselves as very sensible, practical.

They did not fall for stories of angels, spirits, or resurrections. (Acts 24)

**Mark 12:18-23** See, they thought that their question showed the impossibility of the resurrection.

The problem was that they were asking Jesus, who actually understands all things.

So He answers their question. **Mark 12:24-25**

But then He follows this answer with positive proof from Scripture that a resurrection is coming.

**Mark 12:26-27** He makes his argument from the present tense of the Hebrew verb!

By the time of Moses, Abraham had been dead for 500 years.

But when God speaks to Moses, He identifies Himself with the present “I Am the God of...”

He speaks of the patriarchs as if they are still around, still alive.

And they are, waiting for the resurrection.

If God is your God, you will live forever. God is the God of the living.

Beware asking Jesus stumpers. He won't be stumped.

So, after Jesus has risen from the dead, Peter uses His resurrection as proof that He is the Messiah, Christ.

**Acts 2:22-28** Here he is quoting from the 16<sup>th</sup> Psalm, saying that it must be describing Jesus.

Why? **Acts 2:29-32** Because David is still in his grave. Jesus, David's descendant, is not.

**Acts 2:33-36** Jesus is now alive and reigning in heaven. He has sent the Holy Spirit.

Paul speaks of the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15.

Apparently, there are some who are saying that there will be no future resurrection.

Of course this seems sensible. It is difficult to believe that Jesus rose from the dead.

How much more incredible is it to think there will be a day when millions will be raised from the dead?

But consider Paul's argument. **1 Corinthians 15:12-19**

If Jesus has been raised, what does this mean? **1 Corinthians 15:20-24**

What are the “first fruits?” This is the very first of the grain that is harvested.

To call it “first fruits” necessarily means that more will follow, which is exactly Paul's point.

If Christ has been raised, so too will you be raised if you belong to Christ.

This is exactly what Daniel prophesied.

#### **IV. Jesus Christ has defeated death.**

#### **1 Corinthians 15:50-57**

In **1 Corinthians 15:50** Paul presents us with a problem.

These bodies that we have now actually cannot live forever.

They are corrupted, weak, and perishable. Have you discovered this?

*I have just had a few surgeries. I'm doing better now. But it is temporary.*

Do you see the problem?

God's Kingdom lasts forever. These bodies do not last forever. We cannot inherit the Kingdom of God.

In 1 Corinthians 15:51 Paul begins to explain the solution to the problem.

**1 Corinthians 15:51-53** Something is going to happen to those who have trusted in Jesus Christ.

We will be changed.

1 Thessalonians 4:16 tells us that “the dead in Christ will rise first.”

Then we who are alive at His coming will be changed and join them.

Then we will be always with the Lord, forever.

This will all happen “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.”

We will lose these bodies, whether they are dead or still living.

And we will receive new resurrection bodies that will never perish, fit for eternity.

**1 Corinthians 15:54-57** This is the Lord Jesus Christ's solution to the problem of death.

**Philippians 3:10-14** Paul teaches us that by knowing Christ, trusting in Him, and walking as He walked...

We will someday be raised with Him. **2 Timothy 2:8-13** Jesus is faithful.

**1 Peter 1:3-5** The resurrection is coming.

Someday all of this will become real not only by faith but in your experience.

Death does not have the last word.

Jesus Christ has conquered death, and His words determine our future forever!