Death… is it the Final End?
The Mini-Fundamental series
by Chris Famisaran

Thank you, Ben. Let's pray. God, as we continue our Mini-Fundamental series, be with us. In Jesus name, amen.

Some time ago, there was a man who was trying to trace his family of origin. And in the process of his research, he visited several cemeteries, collecting information from the markers at one place, he came across this headstone with the following inscription, "Pause now stranger as you pass by, as you are now, so once was I. As I am now, soon you'll be. Prepare yourself to follow me." Next to the headstone, somebody placed a board with the following words, "To follow you. I'm not content until I know which way you went."

Ah, you know, the idea of death, the idea of passing, sometimes can be a scary thought, amen. Do we simply cease to exist? Are we to be reincarnated? Are we going to burn? Or do we simply all asleep waiting for Jesus to come? Our fundamental belief on the death and the resurrection is this The wages of sin is death, but God alone, who alone is immortal will grant eternal life to His redeemed, amen. And until that day, death is an unconscious state for all people, when Christ who is our life appears, the resurrected righteous in the living righteous will be glorified and caught up to meet the Lord. The second resurrection, the resurrection of the unrighteous will then take place 1000 years later. The truth though, is unfortunately, oh, by the way, here's some verses, I'm not going to go through all of them, we'll try to hit what we can. But this is just a little sample of what you can go back to, and and look at.

But death is an inevitable part of life. Whether you pass away, a loved one, a friend, your neighbor, unfortunately, it's part of life. And it's a hard fact, sometimes in a reality that we sometimes face. Some cases it's expected, but oftentimes, it's not. It can be heartbreaking. And sometimes, for those who've had a long journey of being sick, and everything, sometimes there's a sense of

comfort, though, that they're no longer suffering. Because the next thing that they know, they will see Jesus. But you live long enough, death will sting you.

Noted general and former Secretary of State Colin Powell. I didn't know this, but he was a lifelong tinkerer. He loved to fix things. Whether he was in his garage. He would try to fix stuff. He had a welding machine, he would try to work on his cars. And New York Times that a story, his obituary, and it mentions that he loved going to the local neighborhood hardware store in McLean, Virginia, where he would just go through. He would rummage parts for his houses appliances that were malfunctioning such as a dishwasher, maybe a leaky faucet, maybe an Hvac unit right now, his plywood and wire fixtures with sometimes it would have something to be desired aesthetically. But it gave him a sense of purpose to be able to go and try to fix things. In fact, you know, he tells one of his lifelong friends, that when he was fixing things, he would say there was a result at the end of the day. And it's what made him so happy in a sense to be an army officer because he'd be given a platoon of 16 Guys, he would train them he will lead them and they will get better, they will get stronger. But as I'm sure most of you know, 2019 he was diagnosed with plasma cell cancer. And then later in 2021, he passed. And he also admitted that there were a lot of things that were broken in this world that neither he nor the United States can fix. For instance, he told an assistance. "Going into the garage, I can see a carberator is a problem, and I can fix it. Unlike foreign policy where nothing gets resolved, you're just spending four years doing the best that you can."

Now, General Powell, as hard as he worked, he tried to make a difference. I think we sometimes try to try so hard. And yet, we can't cheat or escape death. In fact, there are many people over the years who've tried to find, for instance, the fountain of youth, I forget the guy's name, but you know, a punch ...., Ponce de Leon, thank you. People are always you watch, hey, take this pill, use this medicine, you'll get better, and you'll live forever. I'm gonna be honest with you. I'm over the hill. Okay, I'm not old. Because there's still life in me. But I know that I don't recover. Like I used to 16, 17, 18 especially little kids, they fall and they bounce up, you know, they'll run into a door or a wall, and they'll be fine. When you're 18, you still feel it. But you know, even after like a long day of hiking or whatever, you can still bounce the next day. Now it's taken a little longer. And I'm assuming as I get older, it's gonna take a lot longer. To even when I'm trying to do

something active or whatever, the next day, I'm not going to be as spry or have a kick of my step. But I thought about it like, what if I live to 200 years old on this chassis that I have currently. I don't know if I would want to look forward to because there's a lot of I already have a lot of mileage on my knees and everything. You know what I'm saying? So yet, we find other people they're trying to find a cure. But when it comes to the idea of death, guess what? The dead are sleeping and they know what? Nothing.

Let's go to Ecclesiastes Ecclesiastes. Ecclesiastes can't speak today. Chapter Nine, verses five and six, Ecclesiastes nine, verses five and six. Okay, all right. Well, y'all ready? Okay, good. All right, starting at verse five. It says, For the living know that they will what? they'll die, but the dead know what? Nothing. They have no further reward and even their name is forgotten. Their love their hate and their jealousy have long since vanished. Never again, will they have a part in anything that happens under the sun. It's kind of depressing, doesn't it? But yet, when we die, we simply as we're going to learn, we simply go to sleep, we don't know anything. It's like going to bed and then waking up the next day. Now, I do have a question for you. Actually, no, I'll, let's wait. I'll ask this later.

Let's now go to the main area of what we're going to say. Let's go to John 11. John chapter 11. And I do probably.... but I've hit this story a little bit, but we can always go back especially when it comes to the idea, the nature of death. And it's a story of Lazarus. Lazarus had two sisters who were the sisters, Mary and Martha, or Jesus and Lazarus tight. They were best friends forever. They're very close. Right? I wonder if John ever felt you know jealous of Lazarus because the allegedly, John was the beloved. Now, in chapter 11, verse one now a man named Lazarus was sick and he was from Bethany, the village of Mary and his sister, Martha. And as a point out here, this Mary was whose brother Lazarus now they sick was the same one who poured the perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with their hair. So the sisters sent word to Jesus, Lord, the one you love is sick. So they send word to Jesus please come heal him. Because they knew that Jesus had this ability to heal people. And then Jesus says something that is counter to what they're requesting. He says, this sickness will not end in what? Death? No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it. And there are several instances where Jesus actually said something similar. Okay, because he's basically going to intentionally wait A few days before he even goes back to Bethany. And

so of course, so as it says in verse five, so now Jesus loved Martha and her sister Lazarus. And so when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed there two more days. Then he said to the disciples, okay, let's go back to Judea, and there was some distance but it wasn't overwhelming. He could have gotten there pretty quick. And then, one of the disciples said, But Rabbi, a short while ago, the Jews tried Jews tried to stone you and yet you're gonna go back. I love this part. He says, Are there not 12 hours of daylight, anyone who walks in the daytime will not stumble, for they will see by this world light, a person walks in the night they stumble, for they have no light. And then he says, Our friend Lazarus and verse 11, has fallen asleep. But I'm going there to wake him up. And his disciples, you know, they're using logic. Well, Lord, if he's asleep, then just he'll get better. Then he points out, Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep. So then he told them plainly, Lazarus is dead. And for your sake, I'm glad I was not there. So that you might believe, but let us go with them. And then I love Thomas, who's also known as Didymus says, Well, let us also go so we might die with them, kind of a bold proclamation. Interesting headspace.

And so how does Jesus equate Lazarus death? How does he describe it? As sleep? Okay, there's other areas of Scripture. This is just one example, though, of how when we die is simply like, we're going back, we're going to sleep. And eventually they make their way over to where Mary, Martha and Lazarus live. And it had been four days, he'd been four days dead in the two, okay. And so Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem. And many of the family, the maybe friends of Mary and Martha had come out together to mourn, comfort them in the loss of Lazarus. But when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, a Mary stay behind. And Martha pointedly goes to Jesus and asks the question, Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. And I, when I hear this, you know, I have to wonder what was the tone of her voice? To me, it sounds kind of accusatory. Like God, Jesus, you could have come here earlier. But she says, but I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask. And Jesus comforter by saying your brother will what? will rise again. So death is not the end of the story, praise the Lord. And so Martha, she says, I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day. So there is hope. And Jesus says, I am the resurrection and the life, I am the one who will be able to I can grant life, and I will one day, in a way, I feel like this is prophetic, because the one

who believes in me will live, even though they die. And whoever lives by believing in me will never die.

Do you believe this? If you have confidence in me, Your brother will live when again, once again. And here she has a big base statement. She says, I believe that you are who? The Messiah, the One who had been waiting the Son of God, who is to come into the world. Now to kind of speed things up ventually Mary also find out Mary was very close to Jesus. She also has the same question. You know, hey, why don't you come faster? Essentially, Jesus goes to go to the tomb. And when they get there, what is what is the request? Move the stone out of the way. One of the sources said, Hey, he's been dead for days and they didn't embalm people back then. They may be put some perfume on them. But Lazarus would have not smelled the best, right? And yet here, he says, Jesus says, Come and see, Lord, they replied, Jesus wept. See how he loved him. Could he not have opened the eyes of the blind men have kept this man from dying. Jesus had some haters there. It says, take the way the stone and Martha says But Lord, the sister of the dead man, by this time he's got a bad odor for he has been there for days and he says, Did I not tell you? He's reminder Did I not tell you if you Believe you will see the glory of the Lord. So they took the stone away. And Jesus looked up and he said, Father, I thank You that You've heard me, I knew that you always hear me. But I also said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you send me echoing the very first part of this chapter, Jesus was going to do an awesome miracle that others are going to see and believe. And then he says, Lazarus come out. And the dead man came out his hands and his feet wrapped with the strips of linen, and cloth around his face. And Jesus said, take off, take off the grave clothes, and let him go.

Now I'm gonna throw out some names. Okay. So Lazarus, the son of the widow of Zarephath, the son of the Shulamite. Woman, the man, sorry, the son of the widow of Nain, Jairus, his daughter, Tabitha, Utticus, what do they all have in common? They all died, and were raised. Did any of them ever say, Heaven was awesome, and I'm so glad to be back here on Earth? Out of all, the many people who've been raised there's at least 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.. Plus, we don't know how many were raised after Jesus died. But yet, none of them said, Hey, I'm so glad to be back here on earth. Because if I died and went to heaven, I would not want to leave heaven. Right? You imagine saying, Hey, you just got here, by the way, you

gotta go back. Not a good doesn't sound like a good idea. But yet, there's this profound narrative that when we die, some believe that we would go were instantly up to heaven, right? Or if you're really bad, you go down there, where it's really hot. And by the way, as Adventists is we do not believe in Hell, we do not believe that you're going to be burning forever. Okay. I'll save that that theological matter for maybe another, another sermon. But go deeper into this in terms of the resurrection aspect? Well, we'll touch on it lightly. But the idea of here is we have this profound narrative that many people believe that when we die, we instantly go to heaven. And the truth is, as Jesus mentions, you know, he was asleep. The dead know nothing. There's many other verses that we could go to and just I'm pressed for time. But we, we simply when we die, we go to sleep. Is that something that we should be worried about? No. So take confidence, okay. I'm not saying you should wish for death, okay. But yet, when you die, you do not have to worry, because you're going to be resting.

But we also find too, so what happens after this, okay, we've died and what's the next step? We know that we believe as Adventists that Jesus is going to return. Praise the Lord. Let's jump to First Corinthians chapter 15:50-58. We're gonna do better reading in the last nine minutes here. First Corinthians 15:53-58. And it says, I declare to you brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Listen, I tell you a mystery. We won't all sleep but we will all be changed in a flash in a twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet, for the trumpet will sound the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed those who perhaps who have died are going to be raised from the dead and they will be changed you're going to get a new body, the dead will be raised imperishable and will be changed for the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable in the mortal with immortality, verse 54. When the perishable has been clothed with imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the same that is written will come true, death has been swallowed up in what victory, where O Death is your victory where O Death is your sting? The death of the sting of death is sin and the power of sin of the law, but thanks be to God, He gives us the what? victory through our Lord Jesus. Therefore, my brothers and sisters, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm, let nothing move you always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor and Lord is not in vain. So, if you believe in Jesus, you

believe that Jesus is your Savior, and if you give your life to Jesus, just like the man in Acts 16, where Paul and Silas and Philippian jailer, he asks, What must I do to be saved? What did Paul and Silas respond with Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved? Just real briefly, I want to read this as well.

Okay. So we know that when we die, we're sleeping Paul also affirms and 1 Thessalonians. Brothers and sisters, we don't want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death so that you don't grieve like the rest of mankind who have no hope. I heard from my brothers and sisters who believe that there's nothing after this life. Look, I could be totally wrong. And if I'm wrong, and there's nothing after this, okay, but what do I have to lose by believing in this entity? This God, the fact that Jesus wants to spend the rest of eternity with me? Do I have anything to lose? I might look ridiculous to other people. But in the end, and I truly believe this, I'm going to be with Jesus. So don't worry about that. We have a hope in Jesus for you. We believe that Jesus died and rose again. And so we believe that God will bring with us Jesus, those who have fallen asleep in him according to the Lord's word, we tell you that we who are still alive who are left until the coming of Lord, we certainly will not precede those who have fallen asleep. When Jesus returns, he's going to raise those who are dead first to meet him in the cloud. In fact, For the Lord Himself, will come down from heaven and with the Cloud command with the voice of an archangel, and with a trumpet call and dead in Christ will rise first. Those who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with him in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. And I would add verse 18, therefore, encourage one another with these words.

So where does this leave us? Number one, how do we potentially prepare for this idea of what if we die? Well, number one, don't be scared because again, Jesus has overcome the world. Amen. Believe in Jesus, live a life of faithfulness to God. Seek God's will for your life, be faithful, love, well care for one another. Serve share the gospel. But I would also add to I plead with you as a pastor, and I know this, it's an awkward thought. But if there's anything such as prepare, well prepare your family. If you so happen to pass away one day, I've attended one too many funerals where I see that what should be a celebration of life. I see family members angry at each other because they're already fighting over. What's going to happen. Mom and Dad perhaps were well to do, or maybe they're not, and

they think that they were. And when everything kind of just when everything hits the floor. It's not a comfortable place to be. So have those conversations. Don't be scared. And I would just say prepare your family. Get your affairs in order because we never know. Are we guaranteed the next hour? We're not. I learned that lesson. Recently, you know, some of you know I lost a couple of close friends of mine. We don't know what's going to happen in an hour. We don't know what's going to happen in 10 years. We are called yes to love God faithfully with everything. But also, even if I'm not guaranteed tomorrow, I know that I can have confidence moving forward. So save your family from destroying each other. have those conversations I truly plead you this as a side note, just as a pastor, okay? Allow that time for your family to grieve, instead of fighting and being angry with each other. Jesus's death and resurrection gives us hope and confidence. Jesus died on Friday. But on Sunday, he resurrected he conquered death. And he wants to extend a life of joy of being with us to live in eternity me extend that gift to every one of us. Those of you who are listening online, he extends it to you. And all you have to do is say Lord, I believe and I give my life to you.

So go with confidence. What scares you about the idea of dying? Regret? I haven't accomplished everything that I want to say me personally, that I think I've mentioned this before the actual thought of dying doesn't scare me. That's not what that's not what keeps me up at night. Instead, if something were to happen to me tomorrow, I worry about Leisa. I worry about my parents. Will they be okay? There's Certain things you can do to mitigate. That's what keeps me up at night. I don't worry about if I'm going to die, the actual process. But yet I know that I'm also loved by God. And I can't wait to actually meet my Lord and Savior. So this challenge this week, and forevermore, go with courage and strength. And as Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, encourage one another. Those of you I know, some of you have recently lost a loved one. And that loss can be hard, whether it's a parent, a sibling, one of your closest friends could just be that neighbor around the street who always just said, Hello. They all meant something to us. And it's natural and okay to agree. My encouragement to you is, Don't bottle it up. Let it out. Accept it. But I remember, go with confidence and know you already. Know when Jesus has conquered death, and regained, praise the Lord,

Father in heaven, Lord, today's topic is it's a challenging one because we're all affected by it. For our brothers and sisters, Lord today who are grieving the recent

loss of a loved one a friend. We pray that you will give them courage and hope. Help them Lord, to be reminded that this is not the end that one day you will soon return. And that right now their loved one, their friend, is simply resting. And so until that fateful day, though, Lord, help us to be faithful and true to you. Needing guidance, help us to grow with courage. And Lord, may this also spring us into action to draw closer to you. Help us in all that we do to be the faithful ambassadors for you in Downey and wherever we live wherever we go. In Jesus name, everybody said, Amen.

Grace and peace, everybody.