

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 4-20-14 AM NOTES  
"HOW TO AVOID DEATH"  
JOHN 11:25-26

**Hebrews 2:14-15 (NKJV)** "14 Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, 15 and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

**Hebrews 9:27 (NKJV)** "And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment."

**Ecclesiastes 3:11b (NASB)** "He has also set eternity in their heart..."

I. The Claims of Christ (v. 25)

**John 11:21-22 (NKJV)** "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.'"

**John 11:23 (NKJV)** "Jesus said to her, 'Your brother will rise again.'"

**John 11:24 (NKJV)** "Martha said to Him, 'I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.'"

A. I Am the Resurrection (v. 25a)

**Colossians 2:10a (NKJV)** "and you are complete in Him..."

I am the bread of life (6:35), I am the living water (John 7:37-38), I am the light of the world (John 8:12), I am the door (John 10:9), I am the good Shepherd (John 10:11), I am the vine in which you abide (John 15:1), I am the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6), and in our text in **John 11:25 (NKJV)** "I am the resurrection and the life."

B. I Am the Life (v. 25b)

**Ephesians 2:1 (NKJV)** "And you *He made alive*, who were dead in trespasses and sins."

**Acts 3:15 (HCSB)** "And you killed the source of life, whom God raised from the dead; we are witnesses of this."

**1 John 1:2 (NKJV)** "the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you **that eternal life** which was with the Father and was manifested to us."

II. The Promise From Christ (v. 26a)

**James 4:14 (NKJV)** "whereas you do not know what *will happen* tomorrow. For what *is* your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away."

**Revelation 20:14 (ESV)** "Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire."

**Philippians 3:20-21 (NKJV)** "20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself."

III. The Question for You (v. 26b)

*Pistis*—A noun translated “faith”

*Pisteuo*—A verb translated “believe”

A. Knowledge of Facts

**Romans 10:14b (NKJV)** “And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?”

B. Acceptance of the Facts

**James 2:19 (NKJV)** “You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!”

C. Rely on and Trust in the Person of Christ

“...in order to be saved, I must decide to depend on Jesus to save me. In doing this, I move from being an interested observer of the facts of salvation and the teachings of the Bible, to being someone who enters into a new relationship with Jesus Christ as a living person.”  
—Wayne Grudem

“When we turn to Christ *for* salvation from our sins, we are simultaneously turning *away* from the sins that we are asking Christ to save us from. If that were not true, our turning to Christ for salvation from sin could hardly be a genuine turning to Him or trusting in Him.”  
—Wayne Grudem

**Matthew 11:28 (NKJV)** “Come to Me, all *you* who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

“Weep not, I shall not die; and as I leave the land of the dying, I trust to see the blessings of the Lord in the land of the living. We call this world the land of the living; but it would be in fact more correct to call it the land of the dying. Through Jesus Christ we know that we are journeying, not to the sunset, but to the sunrise.”

—King Edward the Confessor

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 4-20-14 AM

“HOW TO AVOID DEATH”

JOHN 11:25-26

EASTER MESSAGE

Studies show that 10 out of every 10 people die. Someone said that man is the only creature who knows that he is going to die and is desperately trying to forget it. I challenge you to try an experiment. The next time you are at a formal gathering where people are standing around “chit-chatting”, bring up the subject of death and watch what happens. Maybe you’d better not try that. One reason that people don’t like to talk about death is that they are afraid of it. **Hebrews 2:14-15 (NKJV)** “<sup>14</sup>Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, <sup>15</sup>and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” So many people are in bondage to the fear of death and the only way they know how to deal with it is to avoid talking and even thinking about it. In the message today, I want to show you how you can avoid death – not just avoid thinking or talking about death, but avoid death itself. Jesus said in our text in **John 11:26a (NKJV)** “And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die.” The Bible also says in **Hebrews 9:27 (NKJV)** “And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment”. The Bible doesn’t contradict itself so obviously there is more than one

kind of death. There is physical death and there is spiritual death. We will look at the two kinds of death in depth later in this message. The kind of death that that should scare us (spiritual death) can be avoided. Jesus Christ rose from the dead to give us a kind of life – eternal life – that physical death can't extinguish. I know that everyone listening to this message knows down deep within that physical death – when our heart ceases to pump blood and our brain activity ceases – is not the end. You may be fuzzy and uncertain about what happens after physical death, but you know that there is something out there on the other side. Here's how I know that deep down you believe that. The Bible says in **Ecclesiastes 3:11b (NASB)** "...He has also set eternity in their heart..." Go to any culture and they have some kind of belief about life after physical death. Why? When God created us, He put an innate knowledge in us that physical death is not the end. Even the atheists, who argue that death is the end and we die like a possum that didn't make it across the road and decomposes and that is it, know deep down that there has to be something more. Their vehement arguments are many times their attempts to convince themselves.

In the message today, we are going to see how the resurrection of Jesus Christ defeated death and made it possible for us to never truly die. The death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ was the death of death for those who have savingly believed on Him.

## I. The Claims of Christ (V25)

Let's set the scene for these claims of Christ. Jesus' friend Lazarus has died. Jesus arrives at the home town of Lazarus and his two sisters, Mary and Martha on the fourth day after Lazarus' death. Martha went out to meet Jesus and lamented in **John 11:21-22 (NKJV)** <sup>21</sup> "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died." <sup>22</sup> "But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You." Jesus answered Martha in **John 11:23 (NKJV)** "Your brother will rise again." Martha, like most Jews who believed the Old Testament believed in a final resurrection on the last day and assumed that was what Jesus was referring to. She said in **John 11:24b (NKJV)** "...I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." All Martha had was the common hope of most of the Jews, but that was little help to this grieving sister in the present. Jesus was not referring to that general future event. His plan involved something more immediate and more amazing. Look at the first claim of Jesus.

### A. I Am the Resurrection (V25a)

Let me share something with you that most find hard to grasp. I am praying that the Spirit of God will make this clear to you (for only He can). Jesus says, "Martha, your eyes are on an event and not a person; I am the resurrection and the life." Learn this; what Jesus is, He gives. He is the content of the Christian life. The Christian life is Christ! He is our life! He doesn't just give us resurrection; He is the resurrection. The Christian life is Christ. When you have Jesus, you have all you will ever need. **Colossians 2:10a (NKJV)** "and you are complete in Him..." Listen, the Christian life is not **JUST** believing a bunch of facts; it is a living, vital, dynamic, growing relationship with a person. That person is presented in John's Gospel with multiple "I am" statements. He says, I am the bread of life (6:35), I am the living water (John 7:37-38), I am the light of the world (John 8:12), I am the door (John 10:9), I am the good Shepherd (John 10:11), I am the vine in which you abide (John 15:1), I am the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6), and in our text in **John 11:25 (NKJV)** "I am the resurrection and the life". Whatever we really need, Jesus Christ is!

Jesus Christ doesn't just give resurrection; He is the resurrection. That is what makes our resurrection from the dead so sure. The Puritan writer and preacher Thomas Watson said, "We are more sure to arise out of our graves than out of our beds". Why? It is because Jesus who is the resurrection has promised it. We can face death with absolute assurance because Jesus who is the resurrection has promised a physical resurrection to all who are His. Don't make Martha's mistake. Look to Jesus, not a future event.

### B. I Am the Life (V25b)

Jesus doesn't just give life; He is the life at our salvation. The life that He gives us is His life which is **eternal life**. The order in John 11:25 is really important. First, He is the resurrection and second, He is the life. He spiritually resurrects us. **Ephesians 2:1 (NKJV)** "And you *He made alive*, who were dead in trespasses and sins" We were spiritually dead separated from God and true spiritual life, and we were on

the road to an eternal death in hell when Jesus who is the resurrection opened our eyes and made us alive in Him who is the resurrection. Then Jesus who is the life gave us His eternal life because He is eternal life. In **Acts 3:15 (HCSB)** Jesus is called "...the source of life, whom God raised from the dead..." This life is called "eternal life" in several places. One example is **1 John 1:2 (NKJV)** "the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us". Before a planet was spoken into existence or a star began to shine, Jesus who is the life existed because He is eternal life. At salvation, the Holy Spirit baptized us into union with Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13) and God sees us "in Christ" (and how God sees us is how we are). At salvation we were made partakers of His eternal life. Let me remind you of a great truth: Eternal life is not extinguished or interrupted by physical death. That's why He says in the last part of verse 25 in **John 11:25b (NKJV)** "...He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live." For a follower of Christ, at physical death, he will never have been more alive. When the Puritan preacher, Richard Baxter lay dying, some of his friends came to see him. Among his last words was his answer to this question, "Dear Mr. Baxter, how are you?" Richard Baxter replied, "Almost well" and in a short time he died. A follower of Christ is not really well until he or she experiences physical death which sets us free from the chains of flesh and the power of sin so that Christ's eternal life might flow through us unhindered.

The resurrected Christ claims to be the resurrection and the life. Physical death cannot extinguish that eternal life.

## II. The Promise from Christ (V26a)

To understand what Jesus is saying, we must accurately understand what is meant by living and dying in this passage. There is a distinction between physical life and spiritual life, and there is a distinction between physical death and spiritual death. Let's define some terms.

**Physical Life** – This is self explanatory. It is a physical body that is still functioning. The heart is beating and the brain is functioning.

**Physical Death** – This is when the physical body ceases to function. Since sin came into the world, our bodies are temporary. They are compared in 2 Corinthians 5 to an earthly house or tent. Our bodies grow old and eventually cease to function. That becomes so obvious when we look at old pictures of someone. Several years ago some folks from Kathy's graduating class at Lake City High School wanted to get together to plan a reunion. She was told that they would meet at a certain shelter at Norris Dam Park. I went with her. We saw a group at the place where we understood they were to meet, but figured we had the wrong place because it was a bunch of old people and we got back in the car and kept looking. They were old, but it was her classmates. Our earthly tents get old and die. Sometimes through disease or accident, they die even before old age. Our physical lives are very fragile and from a human standpoint uncertain. James speaks of our physical lives in **James 4:14 (NKJV)** "whereas you do not know what *will happen* tomorrow. For what *is* your life [physical life]? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away."

**Spiritual Life** – As we have already seen, spiritual life is when we who were dead in trespasses and sins were regenerated and baptized into Christ and thereby are made a partaker of His eternal life.

**Spiritual Death** – Spiritual death is separation from God. Spiritual death is the default condition of all of Adam's natural born descendents. All of Adam's descendents inherit the consequences of sin coming into the world when God told Adam in Genesis 2:17 that on the very day that he disobeyed God he would die. Adam's spirit (that part of man that allows him to know and have fellowship with God) died immediately to God. When Adam's spirit died to God we were all in Adam and thus every descendent of Adam is born with a spirit that is dead to God. The Bible tells us that a person who is spiritually dead when he experiences physical death is separated from God forever. This is called "the second death" three times in the book of Revelation. One instance is **Revelation 20:14 (ESV)** "Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire." When we understand those definitions, it clarifies the promises of Christ in these verses. In the last part of verse 25, He is saying that even though a person who is in Christ experiences physical death, he continues to have spiritual life because that

spiritual life is eternal life. As I said earlier, death cannot end or interrupt eternal life because it is eternal! In verse 26, he is saying that whoever has been given spiritual life and savingly believes in Jesus will never experience separation from God (spiritual death) and certainly will be delivered from the second death which is the lake of fire. That is why the Bible says that those who die physically in Christ that they are absent from the body and present with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:8). Spiritually, those in Christ never die. Verse 26 literally says, “And whoever lives and believes in me shall never, no never die...” If you ever hear that I died, don’t believe it. I may have moved out of my earthly tent, but the real me; the one who lived in the tent is gone to be with the Lord. Real life is not a physical body.

So we see the claims of Christ and the promise of Christ.

### III. The Question for You (V26b)

After sharing with Martha who He is and giving the promise that whoever lives and believes in Him shall never die, Jesus makes it really personal. He says, “Martha, do you (personally) believe this?” That is the question I want to ask you today. Do you believe this? Notice that Jesus speaks of faith and not feeling. He didn’t say, “Martha, does what I have shared with you about who I am make you feel better? Have you found these truths comforting?” It is not feelings; it is faith! Feelings can be very deceiving. Faith is like an anchor that holds. Jesus says, “Martha, do you really believe that I am the resurrection and the life? Do you really believe that whoever lives and believes in me shall never die?” Let’s explore what it means to believe. In English, the words “believe” and “faith” don’t seem to be related, but in the Greek, the noun translated “faith” is “pistis” and the verb translated “believe” is “pisteuo”. In other words “faith” is the noun form, and “believe” is the verb form of the same word. To believe is to put faith in action. There is a type of believing that is not to salvation and a type that is to salvation. The Puritans used to use the phrase “savingly believe” for a belief that results in salvation to distinguish it from a type of believing that is not to salvation. What makes belief saving belief? There are three elements to saving belief.

#### A. Knowledge of Facts

There must be a basic knowledge of who Jesus is and what He did. One doesn’t have to have a theological degree from an accredited seminary to savingly believe in Christ. There are some basic facts that we must know. **Romans 10:14b (NKJV)** “And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?” There is the basic knowledge that Jesus is the Son of God, that He died for us (in our place), and that He rose from the dead. Saving belief does not require that you can be able to fully explain the Trinity and define propitiation. But it does require some basic knowledge of our sin and knowledge concerning who Jesus is and what he did.

#### B. Acceptance of the Facts

To savingly believe means that one must accept the knowledge as true. In other words, someone cannot be saved who says that he or she doesn’t really believe that Jesus was a historical person. A person could not savingly believe that Jesus was a fraud who claimed to be the Son of God – God in flesh. A person could not savingly believe who believed that Jesus was a special man (only a man) who was crucified as an example of dying for what you believe in. There must be mental assent that the facts of the Gospel are true.

While there must be mental assent (approval) of the facts of the Gospel, that mental assent is not savingly believing. The Devil has that kind of belief and he certainly is not saved. **James 2:19 (NKJV)** “You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe--and tremble!” This is what some call “head belief” and no one is saved with head belief alone.

#### C. Rely on and Trust in the Person of Christ

This is the personal deciding to turn from every other hope for salvation and forgiveness and to rely upon and trust totally in Christ Jesus and what He did for me on the cross. I am relying on the fact that His poured out life, His shed blood is sufficient to save me. It is way more than knowing and accepting facts as true! I like the way that theologian Wayne Grudem puts it: “...in order to be saved, I must decide to depend on Jesus to save me. In doing this I move from being an interested observer of the facts of

salvation and the teachings of the Bible to being someone who enters into a new relationship with Jesus Christ as a living person.” [Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, Page 710].

Someone may ask, “What about repenting of sin?” The word “repentance” means to be so sorrowful for our sin that we renounce it, and sincerely commit to forsake it and to walk in obedience to Christ. I believe that repentance is necessary for salvation, but the words “repent” and “repentance” are not found in John’s Gospel. Here’s why I believe that John didn’t specify repentance as a requirement for salvation. I think repentance is included in savingly believing in Christ. It is impossible to trust completely in Christ apart from turning from everything that is against Christ – specifically sin. Again to quote Wayne Grudem, “When we turn to Christ *for* salvation from our sins, we are simultaneously turning *away* from the sins that we are asking Christ to save us from. If that were not true our turning to Christ for salvation from sin could hardly be a genuine turning to Him or trusting in Him.” [Wayne Grudem, page 713].

#### CONCLUSION

How can you avoid death? Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will never die. Oh, certainly you will one day leave this failing aging body, but you will never be more alive. The King of England from 1042-1066 AD was Edward the Confessor. Listen to his dying words: “Weep not, I shall not die; and as I leave the land of the dying, I trust to see the blessings of the Lord in the land of the living. We call this world the land of the living; but it would be in fact more correct to call it the land of the dying. Through Jesus Christ we know that we are journeying, not to the sunset, but to the sunrise” [Quoted in Erwin Lutzer, “The Vanishing Power of Death”, Page 114]. **John 11:26 (NKJV)** “And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?”