

## New Life in Real Life

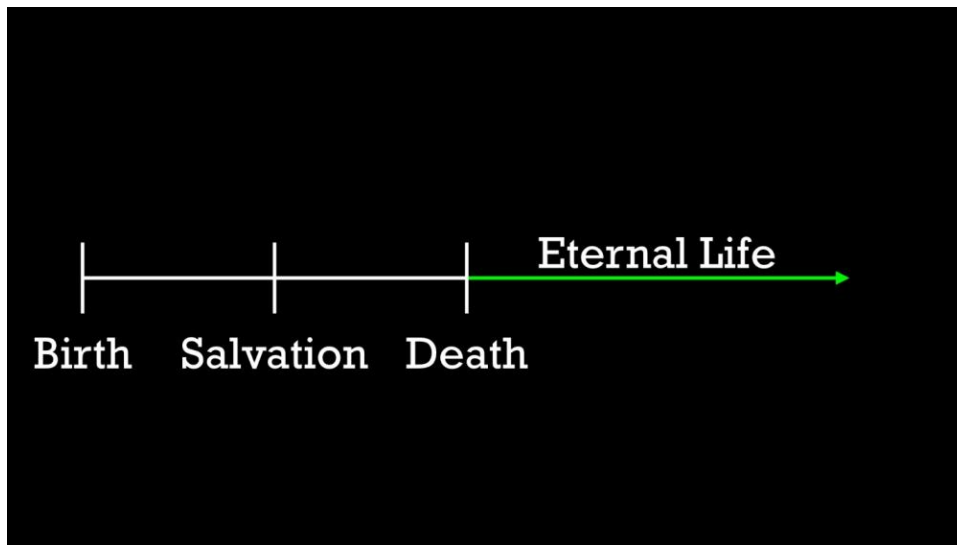
April 23, 2017

Steve DeWitt

What a great Easter weekend we had! Thank you everyone for all your help, your prayers, your serving, or just parking far, coming early, or friendliness. It all went great. We had more people than we have ever had before and all of them heard about eternal life in a resurrected Savior.

The essence of our message last weekend was that Jesus' resurrection was the invasion of the future kingdom's power into man's kingdom. He came in to the present to fix our problem from the past to give us life and hope for the future. Light in darkness. Life in the Deathly Hallows.

Remember the illustration I shared of the bar along the interstate with the huge billboard that read, "*Free Beer Tomorrow?*" Clever. Why? It's never tomorrow, it's always today.



So many people's perspectives on resurrection and eternal life are like this chart. They think eternal life is in the future. But this is not true. The resurrection of Jesus isn't just some assurance about a someday resurrection after I die in the theoretical future; it is a life-changing truth and reality today. Now.

Unlike the free beer where it's never tomorrow, with the new life in Christ, it's always today. The resurrection means that tomorrow has invaded today.

Tomorrows are hazy. We live in today. So what does the resurrection of Jesus mean for today? What does this new life mean in real life?

Let's come at this with an interesting question,

### **How Was Jesus' Resurrection Different From Lazarus' Resurrection?**

I had this question posed to me after one of the services last week. A young woman came up to me and asked, "*What about Lazarus' resurrection? Wasn't he resurrected like Jesus?*" Excellent question.

First, how is Lazarus the same as Jesus? Both were dead. Both were buried. Both had been dead a few days. Both were raised by the power of God. Both were the reuniting of the spirit and the body.

However, what happened to Lazarus after he was resurrected? He got old & wrinkly. His body started breaking down. He died. Lazarus died twice.

Jesus was resurrected, but Jesus' resurrection was in a different kind of body from Lazarus. Not the same decaying body but a glorified body.

*"But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep."* (1 Corinthians 15:20 ESV) Jesus' resurrection was the "firstfruit." That's an agricultural term. The firstfruit is the first strawberry or tomato on the vine. That first one. But you look at the rest of the vine and you see buds everywhere. The first tomato is an indication of the number and quality of many tomatoes to come. Jesus' resurrection was the first of many to come and indicates what all the other resurrected bodies will be like.

*"But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body."* (Philippians 3:20-21) There is so much here, but what I want you to realize is that God's plan for the believer's future is not merely the immortality of the soul. This is a constant confusion in people's minds about our future. We are not simply souls or spirits who live forever; our future is physical. In a body. In a new heaven, and a new earth which will be wonderfully like this one, only without any of the things we don't like about this one AND with all the things we love and more.

So let's do an object lesson. Christian, do you want to know what you will feel like forever? Take your right hand and grab your left bicep. Feel that? That's what you are going to feel. Squeeze a little. Are you able discern a muscle in there? Now, I suspect in eternity we won't feel as much, shall we say, "cushion" in our arms and the muscle will likely feel firmer than it does now. But here's the point: forever you will have a body very similar to the one you have now. It will be just like Jesus' body but now in what the Bible calls glorified, which is to say, without the effects of the fall, sin, decay, and death. And that's the first thing to know about New life in Real Life.

### **Jesus' Resurrection was the Inauguration of New Life in This Life**

The resurrection brought the power of the coming age into the present age. Remember, Martha replies to Jesus' statement that her brother Lazarus would be born again—someday at the final resurrection. Jesus' response reshapes her timeline, "*I **am** the resurrection and the life.*" (John 11:25) Why those two together—resurrection and life? It signals what Lazarus really needed. He was dead. He clearly needed resurrection and Jesus could provide that.

But what did Lazarus really need beyond resurrection? *Life*. When Jesus' talks about life he's not talking about life as we know it in the kingdom of man. He is talking about life in the kingdom of God. Life eternal. Not just immortality. People in hell live on forever. Life is vibrancy and fullness. Remember Jesus said, "*I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.*" (John 10:10)

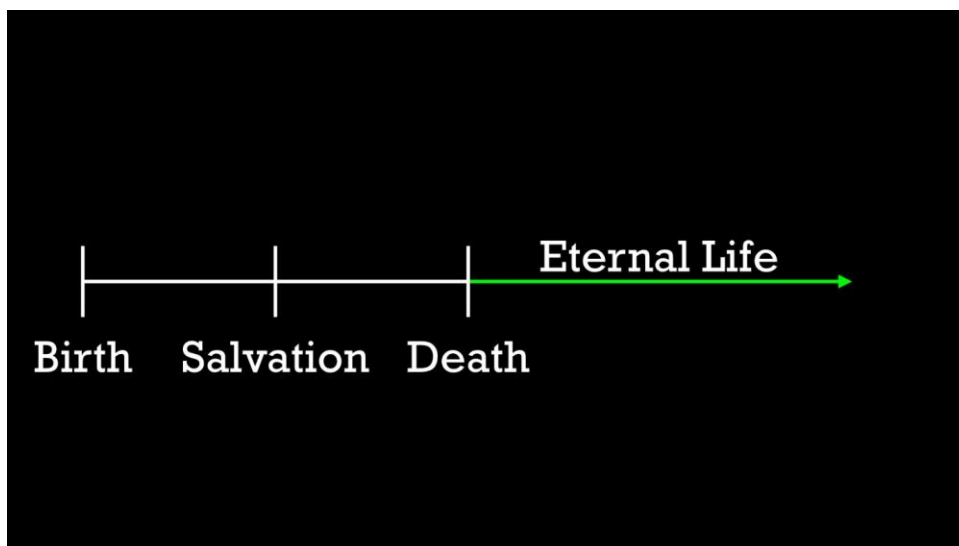
*"I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he **live**."* (John 11:25, emphasis added) More than simply being raised again, we need *life*. That's what he's saying here. *I am not merely the one who brings you back from the dead. I*

*am the one who grants you life.* Jesus is talking about eternal life; unending life. And not merely an unending existence. It is human life to its maximum fullness. Maximum flourishing. Maximum joy. We're not all on life support for eternity. He came that we may have an experience of fullness, and righteousness, and relationship with God, and physical vibrancy, and joy, and pleasure, and gladness, and beauty, like nothing we've ever known in this world.

In other words, the life given by faith in Jesus is life in the realm of the kingdom of God, a life not merely ended by physical death. It is a life sustained by the same power that raised Jesus from the dead.

### **Jesus' Resurrection Indicates a New Kind of Life is Available in This Life**

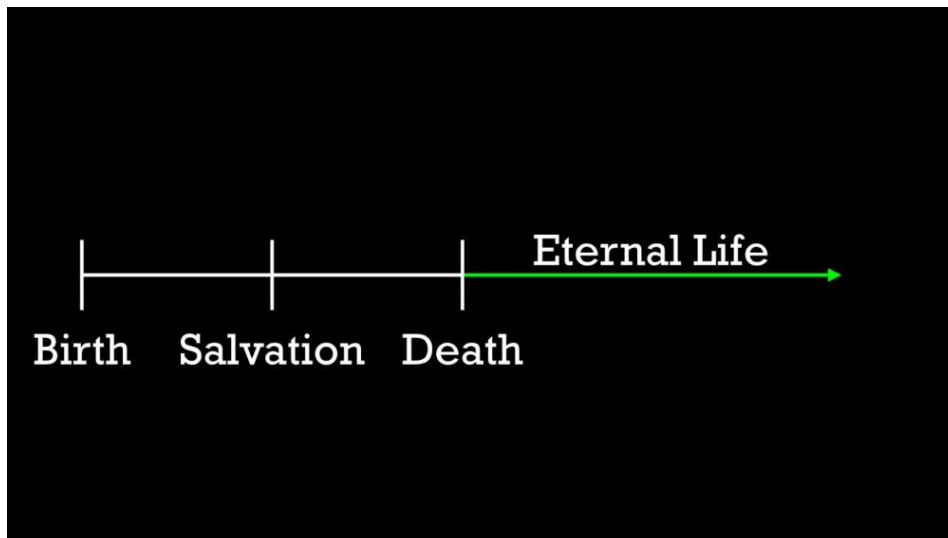
I think we have long thought about this wrongly. Here is the chart again.



This approach produces seriously weak Christianity. Except for forgiveness of sins, the really great stuff about being a Christian is someday. So I just try not to blow it by walking away from the faith or doing something so bad that I wonder if I'm really saved. Just hang in there. Suffer along as a dying sinner. But our struggles aren't in the future, our issues are in the present.

- *"I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."* (Galatians 2:20)
- *"We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life."* (Romans 6:4)

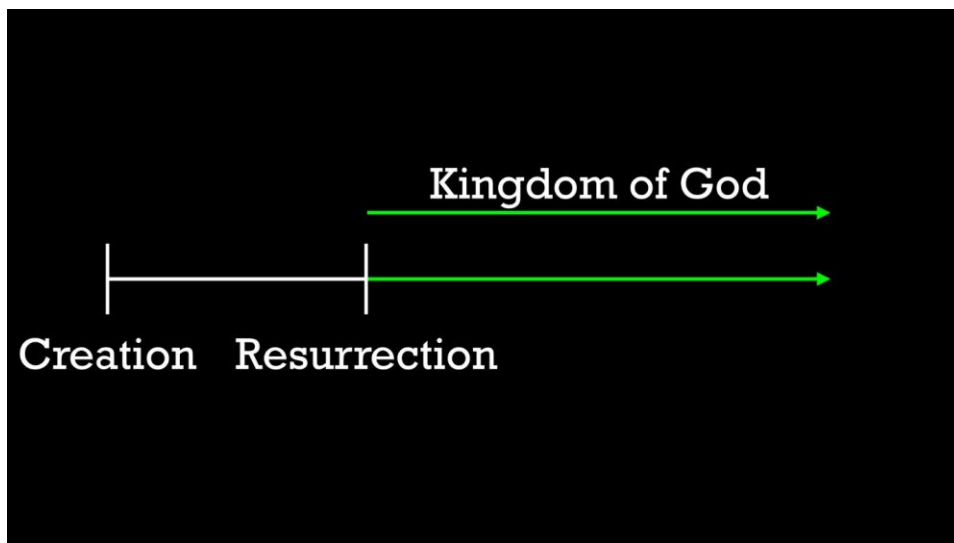
Romans 6:4 is a key verse. It connects Jesus' resurrection with our present walk which it describes as "newness of life." How? Let's go back to our chart.



What's wrong here? Our view of resurrection life or eternal life is too exclusively in the future. Romans 6:4 says that Jesus' purpose in being raised from the dead was that we might live now in newness of life. Future? No. Present walk. Present life. Newness. Resurrection life now.

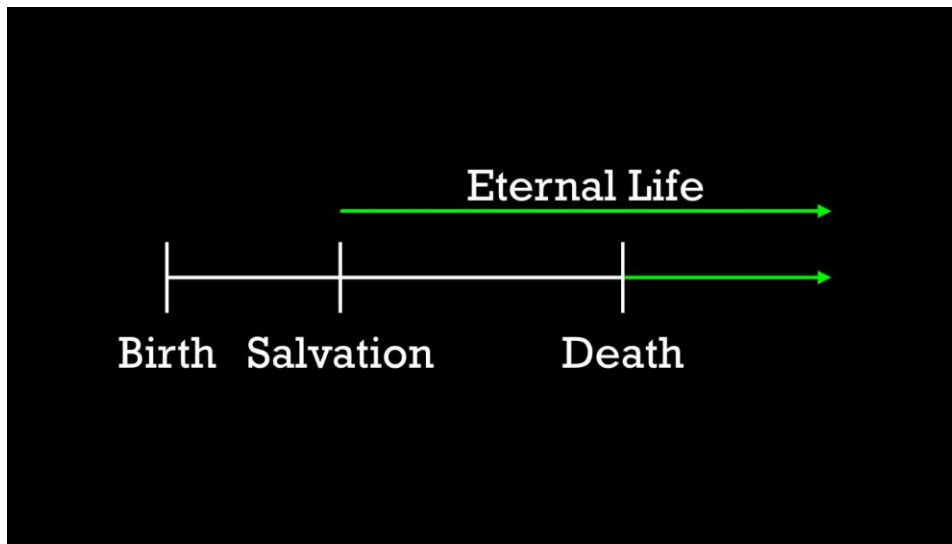
Anyone want some newness in their life? How do people attempt to get it? New Car. New spouse. Go to some exotic location and wish life was always like those 10 days. But what happens after the new spouse and 10 days in Tahiti? I'm still stuck with the same me. My external circumstantial "new" can't change the old sinful, selfish me inside.

But Christ was raised so we could walk in newness of life today. What happens is this:



What this means is, in the big picture, what the Bible is communicating is that there was Creation, and then mankind fell (not on the chart), and the kingdom of man was superseding in our minds the kingdom of God. When Jesus was resurrected, it brought into this age, this kingdom of man, the power of the future kingdom. Biblically, we are actually living in the new age now. The Dawn has come. Tomorrow's new life is available today. Jesus' resurrection was the first light into the darkness of the old kingdom of death. By faith

in Jesus, we have the power and the capacity to walk in newness of life. That's the big picture. But now, let's look at your picture.



You were born. If you're a Christian, at some point in your life, you put your faith in Jesus; you were converted. From that moment on, you are now walking in what is known as eternal life. Now you can't necessarily see it, not in a way that you do when you die, but you have it right now. It is within you. The power of God. The kingdom of God.

You Christian, have a spiritual nuclear reactor within you. And God is exerting the force of his glorious realm to transform you into the likeness of his glorious Son. And that is the most glorious existence that we can have—to be like Christ. And the Bible calls that newness of life.

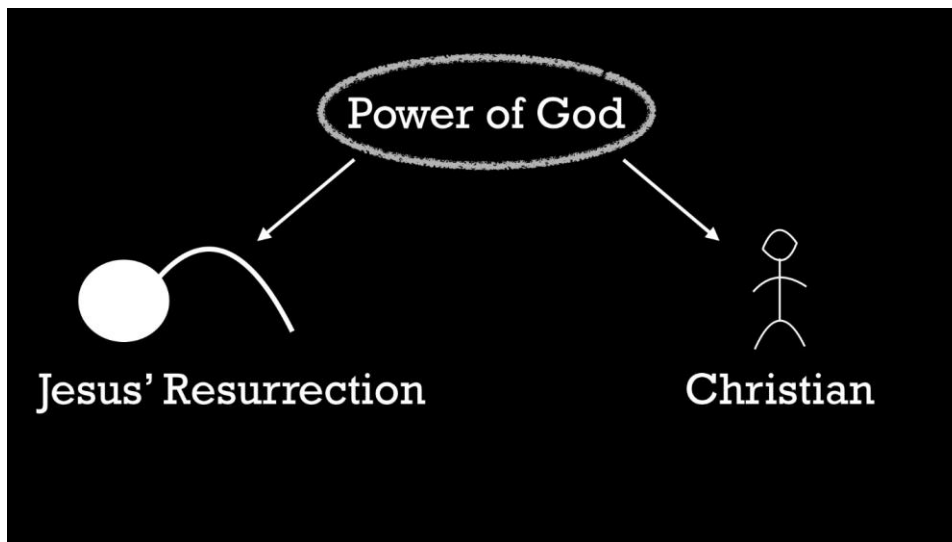
### **New in what way?**

#### **We can change**

*"What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus."* (Romans 6:1–11)

You can change. How? If we died with Christ, we also live with him. There's that word. Live. Life. A new kind of life. A life no longer enslaved to sin (verse 6). A new life lived to God. Newness of life.

This language can sound a little confusing, especially if you are a new Christian. How about another chart to help explain it?



The power or life that raised Jesus from the dead is now the same power or life that lives in us. This is the power at work within us.

*"And what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places."*  
(Ephesians 1:19–20)

You may say, I can't change. My life can't change. I'll never change. What's harder? You overcoming your alcohol dependency or raising Jesus from the dead? What's harder? You transforming as a wife to your husband or raising Jesus from the dead? What's harder? You overcoming lust and porn or raising Jesus from the dead?

Ever go to a tractor pull? Some of you may be too sophisticated, but they are great fun. My Dad was a 40-year employee of John Deere so I've been to my share of them. Basically, they hook up a tractor to a sled and as they pull it the sled has a weight that gets progressively more difficult to pull. The stronger the tractor, the farther it can pull. Some of these tractors are seriously souped-up. It's easier at first, but gets harder as it goes.

God did the opposite. He did the hard thing first—raising Jesus from the dead. The easier things are fixing our marriages, changing our attitudes, breaking our pride, and replacing them with humility, servanthood, and love. In other words, giving us a whole new life.

*"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come."* (2 Corinthians 5:17) Who wants some new life? The same power that raised Jesus from the dead dwells within every believer. A kind of spiritual nuclear reactor in you. It is more powerful than nuclear fission. It's resurrection power in you. You can change. Your life can be different by this power.

## We are free

I went on a walk on one of the nice days this week. Madeline was in the stroller and Kiralee was walking—or I should say skipping. She pretty much skipped and ran and danced the whole way. There was one transcendent moment. She was next to me. Her long brown hair was blowing in the wind. She was singing a little girl type song. I just looked at her and she just seemed so alive. Cute beyond words. Vibrant, and to me, beautiful. She's three or if you ask her, almost four. But if look at her through the lens of truth, she won't always be this way. There is a 20-year-old her inside waiting to blossom. There is a middle-aged version of her already forming. Someday she will likely be a wrinkly old lady. Now she is vibrant, but she is subject to decay.

So are you. Can you feel it? Do you sense yourself slipping? You're not quite what you were. The Bible calls that bondage to decay. It's like we are sentenced to death. Not just physical but internally we are in bondage to the curse of sin.

I think of this week's suicide of Aaron Hernandez. You sports people know who I'm talking about. He's the former tight end of the New England Patriots. Had the world by the tail. He won a national championship with the University of Florida, catching touchdowns from Tim Tebow. He became the youngest player on any roster in the NFL. He caught touchdown passes from Tom Brady.

But then in 2013 he was indicted and found guilty of murder. There were other allegations. He presented himself as a tough guy and bad boy. He was imprisoned without the possibility of parole. This week he committed suicide in his jail cell. Hung himself. You probably heard it in the news.

What you may have not heard is that written across his forehead in red letters was John 3:16. In his cell was a Bible opened to that verse. *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."* Whether Aaron Hernandez had a prison cell conversion or not, we may never know. Here's what we do know—he wanted to be free. Not just from the cell of that prison, but free from guilt. Free from the shame of his fall from fame to murderer and criminal.

We are all in bondage. We are in a jail cell. We want to be free. New life in real life means jail break. It means when Jesus came out of that grave, he brought all us out with him. He sets us free to a new life. Real life. A life free of shame, despair, and decay. This is the life we've always longed for.

## We have living hope

*"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."* (1 Peter 1:3) Why does he call it a living hope? Because our hope is in a living Savior. *"Christian hope is ever living because Christ, the ground of that hope, is ever living."*<sup>1</sup> There is a future dimension to this new life in Christ. Hope is fundamentally future oriented. Tomorrow. *Free beer tomorrow.* That offer is tricky because tomorrow never comes.

In Jesus, tomorrow is here now and in his resurrection yesterday we are given the promise for our tomorrow. This is no trickery. It is truth. There is new life—eternal life—offered to all

---

<sup>1</sup> Karen Jobes, *1 Peter (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament)*, p. 85.

who believe in him. It is as sure as Jesus is alive. That's living hope. That's confident expectation. It's what conquers fear and anxiety and worry. Why? In the words of Jesus to those women at his tomb, "*Do not be afraid.*" (Matthew 28:10) If he was resurrected, we shouldn't ultimately fear anything ever again.

*"Because He lives, I can face tomorrow.  
Because He lives, all fear is gone.  
Because I know He holds the future.  
And life is worth the living just because He lives."*<sup>2</sup>

Resurrection power is at work in us today. New life in real life and eternal life now and forever.

Scripture quotations are taken from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version. ESV® Permanent Text Edition® (2016)*.  
Copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.

© 2017 by Steve DeWitt. You are permitted and encouraged to reproduce and distribute this material in any format provided that: (1) you credit the author, (2) any modifications are clearly marked, (3) you do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction, (4) you include Bethel's website address ([www.bethelweb.org](http://www.bethelweb.org)) on the copied resource.

---

<sup>2</sup> William & Gloria Gaither, *Because He Lives*, 1971.