

# Core Beliefs

## Our Eternal Destiny



God visiting our world is the greatest event in human history. In the bodily form of Jesus, the divine creator came to change us and our destiny for the better. As Jesus told the religious leaders of his day, “I have come so that they may have life and have it abundantly” (John 10:10). To Jesus, having “abundant life” is more than just having a heartbeat. In the original language, this term means to overflow with life, both in quality and quantity. Jesus is saying he came to give us the experience of being fully and endlessly alive.

### **The Abundant Quality of Life**

When we look back at the creation story, we see that Adam and Eve exchanged their quality of life for something less. They lived in God’s perfect garden, where they didn’t have to worry about producing food, facing dangerous predators, or dealing with sickness, fear or shame. God filled their lives with blessings and they experienced his presence like no other human beings. It was life to the fullest.

But they traded that in for the false promise of something better. God warned them to stay away from the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil,” telling them that eating from that tree would only bring death. But the serpent convinced them that fruit from this tree could give them a fuller life—one in which they could be like God. So, they ate from the tree and immediately discovered that the life Satan promised was really one filled with suffering, fear, isolation, and death.

The rest of the Bible tells the long story of God redeeming people and restoring them to a full life. And that process came to a climax when Jesus came offering them abundant life. We see glimpses of that life when he made the sick and lame healthy again (John 5). We see it when he gave hope to the sinful and outcast (Luke 7). We see it when people heard his teachings and were filled with hope that they could experience God’s abundant life (Matthew 5). And we see it when Jesus raised dead people back to life (John 11).

In fact, in the story of Jesus giving life to dead Lazarus, Jesus tells his grieving sisters, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die” (John 11:25-26). Everyone who heard that statement eventually died physically, but they understood that Jesus meant something greater when he said that they would never die. First of all, the abundant life Jesus promised is about the quality of the lives we live.

God created us. He knows our blueprint and what leads to our flourishing. All his commands and his promises are designed to provide us with the best life possible. We will still struggle with the hardships that living in a fallen world brings, but Jesus promises to provide us a life with purpose, integrity, and promise.

## The Abundant Quantity of Life

Medical science and healthy living have extended life expectancy by decades, but we know we won't live forever. Or will we? From Jesus' earliest teachings, he gives hope to people with the promise of eternal life. In fact, the most famous verse in all of Scripture ends with that promise, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). Although many think life ends at the grave, Jesus gives hope that we can experience eternal life after death.

We get a taste of that life when we experience the forgiveness and hope that Jesus offers. But Paul explains what it will be like to fully experience that life. He said that Jesus will return one day with great fanfare and those Christians who have died will be raised to life and taken up to be with Jesus along with all those believers who are alive to witness this event (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18).

People often ask, what will dead people look like after they come back to life? Will they be ghosts or zombies? Will they be old, or young? Overweight or skinny. (I vote for skinny.) While we don't get a lot of details, God makes one thing very clear—we will be changed — from being perishable and mortal people into beings that will not grow old and feeble. Our earthly bodies will be transformed into ones that will never die (1 Corinthians 15:51-57).

Scripture reveals that we will be reunited with God and experience an endless life with him, just like Adam and Eve did in the garden. Grasping the full impact of that kind of life of beyond our understanding, but one thing is certain—it will be a full and abundant life.

## If We Need Proof

It's hard to imagine a life beyond the confines of this world. In fact, it sounds almost too good to be true. But Jesus tells us that we can trust his promises. And if we needed proof that we will live beyond the grave, Jesus demonstrated it for us by coming back to life.

Paul says the resurrection of Jesus is the cornerstone of the Christian faith. Not only because it confirms he is the Messiah and the Son of God, but also because it proved that life beyond the grave exists for all of us. Paul would call Jesus the "firstfruits" of all who have died (1 Corinthians 15:20) and says that God raised him as proof that he will also raise all of us from death to live abundantly (1 Corinthians 15:23).

## The Promised Change

That promised abundant life—abundant in quality and quantity—is available to all who follow Jesus as their Lord and trust his promise to save them. John says people who accept Jesus as the Son of God and trust him to cleans them of sin—they "have the Son." And "Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life" (1 John 5:13). If you want to learn how you can "have the son," visit our "Becoming a Christ-follower" page.