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A Gift From Heaven

Divine Life

A Free Gift

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To my wife Teresa and children for their love and support

The human race has long shared a fascination with the idea of eternal life. Often, it has been either fear of the unknown or curiosity that has sparked the need to acquire this knowledge. Even though there are many sources that speak to this idea (Egyptian, Greek, Roman, Chinese, Indian, etc.), this brief overview will draw its information from the 66 documents of the Bible.

The Old Testament

Eternal life is first mentioned within the context of a tragic event in which Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. As a result of their disobedience, God drove them out of the paradise and placed Cherubim on the east side of Eden. With a flaming sword in hand, their assignment was to keep that first couple from gaining entrance into the garden to eat of the tree of life. Genesis 3:23 informs us that if they had eaten of that tree, both would have lived forever. As we know, they both died.

Job 15:14 makes reference to life after death when he finds himself in a state of confusion resulting from His personal trials. He poses the following question, "if a man die, shall he live again?" He also declares with confidence, "For I know that my redeemer lives, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me." (Job 19:26-27) In these passages, Job begins with a question that entertains the idea of life after death and moves to make the bold declaration that he will see God after his earthly life has ended.

David, the psalmist of Israel, refers to life after death. He states, "Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices: my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." (Psalm

16:9-10) Again, he declares, "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness." (Psalm 17:15) "God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave: for he shall receive me." (Psalm 49:15)

David begins by alluding to resurrection when he declares that his body would rest in hope and then makes a bold declaration that his body would be rescued from the power of the grave. He states that his soul will not be left in hell, but will be awakened.

Solomon, the wise king of Israel, states, "The wicked is driven away in his wickedness: but the righteous hath hope in his death. (Proverbs 14:32) Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." (Ecclesiastes 12:7) In these passages, Solomon speaks about the hope of the righteous in his death and of the spirit returning to God.

The prophets also speak of life after death. Daniel, (7:18) in his prophecy about the end of time, speaks about eternity and declares, "But the saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever." He records the words of an angel, "But go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days (12:13). The angel informs Daniel that he would die, but would stand again in the end of time. Speaking of judgment day, Daniel (12:2) declared, "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." Again, the idea of eternal life is referenced. Daniel speaks of the dead being awakened to everlasting life.

Hosea, utters God's promise as he states, "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes." (Hosea 13:14) The prophet makes clear that God is the one that will deliver His people from the power of death.

Isaiah, writes, "God will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken it." (Isaiah 24:8) Again, he records, "Thy dead men shall live and together with my dead body shall they rise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead." (Isaiah 26:19) According to the prophet, God will conquer death. Isaiah continues by alluding to resurrection when he states that the earth will cast out the dead.

The New Testament

The idea of eternal life is also evident in the New Testament. In the four accounts of the gospel, Jesus is repeatedly asked, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (Matthew 19:16, Mark 10:16; Luke 10:25, Luke 18:18) The Jews understood that eternal life was something to be grasped.

In Matthew 25:46, Jesus, while speaking about the final judgment stated, "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal." In this passage, Jesus makes clear that life eternal is reserved for the righteous.

In the gospel according to Mark, Peter is said to inquire about rewards for service. Jesus informs him that one of the rewards reaped by those who follow Him is "eternal life in the world to come." (Mark 10:28) In this passage, Jesus assures Peter of the fact that eternal life is reserved for those who serve Him.

In John's account of the gospel, eternal life is repeatedly discussed. John states, "Whosoever believeth in Jesus should not perish, but shall have eternal life" (John 3:15-16) and again "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth

not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abides on him" (John 3:36). In these passages, eternal life is acquired by means of believing in Jesus.

When speaking to the woman at the well, Jesus declared, "But whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (4:14). In these passages, Jesus informs the woman that everlasting life is acquired by drinking of the living water He offers.

When the disciples of Jesus returned from the market, Jesus declared, "And he that reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit unto life eternal: that both he that sows and he that reaps may rejoice together" (John 4:36). In this verse, eternal life is acquired by those who sow and reap in His harvest.

While Jesus was in Jerusalem, He reprimanded the Jews and stated, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that hears my word, and believes on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life" (John 5:24). In this passage, eternal life is acquired by hearing the words of Jesus and believing on Father who sent Him.

Again, while speaking to the Jews, Jesus challenged them and declared, "You search the scriptures (Old Testament); for in them you think you have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me and you will not come to me, that you might have life" (John 5:39-40). In this passage, Jesus informs the Jews regarding the source of eternal life. While searching for eternal life, the Jews had failed to find it. Jesus informs them that eternal life was found in Him.

Jesus makes reference to the Old Testament when He informs the religious of His time, "You Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they

which testify of me." Jesus understood that the people of His time made it a practice of searching for eternal life in the words of the Old Testament. He told them that their inability to find eternal life was due to the fact that they had not received Him.

After feeding the multitudes, Jesus rebuked the crowds for their false motives. The crowds sought Him for the bread He had provided. Jesus told them, "Labor not for the meat which perishes, but for that meat which endures unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you; for him hath God the Father sealed" (John 6:27). Jesus declared, "And this is the will of Him that sent me, that everyone which sees the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day." (John 6:40, 47). In these passages, Jesus instructs people to labor for meat that endures unto everlasting life. He claims that He is the one who provides access to eternal life. He declared that eternal life is acquired by those who see and believe in Him.

Jesus startled the crowd who followed Him when he declared, "Whoever eats my flesh, and drinks my blood, has eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:54). Jesus informed the crowds that access to eternal life and resurrection from the dead were only possible by eating His flesh and drinking His blood. Upon hearing this teaching, the crowds left in a state of confusion. When Jesus invited the disciples to leave along with the offended multitude, it was Peter who declared, "Lord to whom shall we go?" "You have the words of eternal life" (John 6:68). Peter declared Jesus to be the source of eternal life.

During the Feast of Dedication, Jesus stood in the temple and declared, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand" (John 10:27-28). In these passages, Jesus declared that eternal life belong to those who hear His voice and follow Him.

While speaking to Martha concerning her brother's death, Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believes in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: 26 And whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11:25-26) In these verses, Jesus personifies the idea of the day of resurrection by declaring that He was resurrection. He declared that eternal life belonged to those who lived by and believed in Him.

While discussing his approaching death and resurrection with His disciples, Jesus said, "He that loves his life shall lose it; and he that hates his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal." (John 12:25) In this passage, Jesus speaks about keeping life eternal.

As Jesus prayed to His Father, He declared, "Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." (John 17:1-3) In these passages, Jesus acknowledges that Father gave Him power to give eternal life to those who come to know Father as only true God and Jesus as the sent one.

In his epistles, John also deals with eternal life. In 1 John 1:2, John states, "For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us." In this passage, John equates eternal life to the person of Jesus. He states that eternal life was with the Father and was also manifested to them. In this passage, eternal life is personified in the person of Jesus Christ.

In 1 John 2:25, John states, “And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.” In this passage, John focuses on the promise for eternal life made by Father.

John also states, “Whosoever hates his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.” In this passage, John speaks about the fruit born by those who believe. Eternal life is said to abide within the believer. (1 John 3:15) According to John, God has granted eternal life and it is found in Jesus. (1 John 5:11)

Again, in 1 John 5:12, John states, “He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.” In these verses, John states that the believer can have the assurance that he or she is in possession of eternal life if there is faith in the Son of God.

John declares, “And we know that the Son of God is come, and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.” (1 John 5:20) In this passage, John indicates that we can know God’s Son has come and that we can know Him. John then moves to call Jesus the true God and eternal life. Again, John again personifies eternal life.

In His Revelation of Jesus Christ, John also makes reference to resurrection and eternal life. Reference is made to a kingdom of priests and kings who will reign forever. He speaks of saints in the eternal city. Also, included in the Revelation are passages that deal with judgment and rewards to those who have believed in Jesus Christ.

Luke, in his account of the acts of the apostles writes about Paul and Barnabas, "It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles" In these passages, certain hearers who rejected the truth were considered as unworthy of everlasting life. When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad. They "glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed." (Acts 13:46-48) Individuals that heard and received the message are said to have been ordained to eternal life.

Paul in his epistles also deals with eternal life. To the Romans, he declared: "To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life:" In these verses, Paul indicates that those who seek glory, honor and immortality will be granted eternal life.

Again, he declared "That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." (Romans 5:21) In this passage, Paul indicates that God's unmerited favor has worked righteousness in the believer that will issue in the receipt of eternal life. Paul moves on to declare that eternal life is a gift from God that is provided through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 6:23). Paul then states that the fruit of holiness is everlasting life. (Romans 6:23)

In 1 Timothy 6:12, Paul instructs his son in the faith to "Fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life." In this passage, Paul encourages Timothy to lay hold on eternal life. We are to lay up in store a good foundation against the time to come by laying hold on eternal life (1 Timothy 6:19).

In his letter to Titus, Paul wrote, "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began." (Titus 1:2) According to this passage, eternal life is something that God promised the believer before the world began. He also states that

being justified by grace, we were made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. (Titus 3:7)

Jude, in his letter also spoke of eternal life. He stated, "Keep yourselves in the love of God looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. According to Jude, it is the mercy of our Lord that will bring us eternal life.

Conclusion

We have read several excerpts from authors in both Old and New Testaments. What conclusions about eternal life can we draw from these writers? Firstly, we are informed that eternal life is promised by God to the human race before the world begins. (Titus 1:2)

Eternal life was directly addressed by several authors of the Old Testament. According to Moses, it was available to Adam and Eve in the garden. (Genesis 3:23) Job understood that He would see God after death. (Job 19:26-27) David sang of waking up and declared that God would redeem Him from the power of the grave. Solomon wrote concerning hope in death and of the spirit returning to God. Daniel spoke of resurrection and everlasting life as a reward reserved for the righteous. Hosea declared God's promise to ransom His people from the power of the grave and redeem them from death. Isaiah told the Jews that God would swallow up death in victory and spoke of the dead coming to life. These references above do not provide an exhaustive list of passages that deal with the idea, but do confirm that eternal life was part of the Jewish system of belief in the Old Testament. Even though we do not have many details regarding how it was acquired in the Old Testament, there is evidence of consciousness after the death experience.

As we come into the New Testament, its authors seem to expand on the idea. Whereas the Old Testament highlights the actuality of eternal life, the New Testament elaborates on its source and the means of its transfer to human beings. The four accounts of the gospels inform us that men often inquired about how to possess or inherit eternal life.

While Jesus prayed, He acknowledged that Father had given Him the power to grant eternal life to others. The writers of the New Testament made clear that eternal life is a gift promised by Father and dispensed by His Son. Jesus declared to the multitudes that eternal life was found in Him. When asked about the acquisition of eternal life, Jesus qualified the recipients of the gift. According to the New Testament, the righteous receive eternal life. Who are the righteous? They are those who see Him, hear Him, come to, believe in, live for, follow and serve Him. They are those who labor in His harvest. They are those who believe Father is the only true God and that He sent His Son. The moment we believe, Jesus transfers and dispenses eternal life into us. The moment we trust Him, Jesus as eternal life makes us His dwelling place. John equated eternal life to Jesus. If we trust in Him, we are assured eternal life. John calls Him true God and eternal life. When we trust Him, we become recipients of His life and are ordained to eternal life. Only Jesus has the Words of eternal life.

AN OVERVIEW

Eternity Past

TIME

Eternity Future

Father Promised
Eternal Life

Some ordained to
Eternal Life

Everlasting
Punishment

Everlasting Life

Eternal Life

Source of Eternal Life

A gift from God
Eternal life was manifested
Son gives eternal life
Son is Life
Son is Resurrection
Son is Eternal Life

Distribution of Eternal Life

Past

Father Promised Eternal Life before world began

Present

You can have Eternal Life now
You can know you have Eternal Life now

Future

There is the hope of Eternal Life
You can have Eternal Life in the world to come
The believer has Eternal Life after death

Acquisition of Eternal Life

Believe in Father
Believe in the Only Begotten Son
Drink the water of life
Reap and gather fruit
Hear the words of Jesus
Come to me (Jesus)
Eat my flesh and drink My blood
Labor for enduring meat Son shall give
See the Son
Know Father
Know the Son
Lay hold of eternal life

OTHER BOOKS AND QUICK READS

BOOKS

The Narratives of Christ (Gospel)
Is God Speaking? (Minor Prophets)
God's Life-Changing Curriculum (An Agent of Change)
Worship (In the New Testament)

QUICK-READS

The Authority of the Believer
Transforming Power
Redeemed from the Curse (Entitled to the Blessing)
Emotional Intelligence (Models: A Brief Review)
Why He Came
The Kingdom (13 Parables)
Divine Transition
Divine Expectation
Unclaimed Wealth
Times of Refreshing
Unlocking God's Diary
The House of James
The Will of God (In James)
The Pure Gospel (Galatians)
Paul's Vision of God (Ephesians)
The Journey

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