

Living the Eternal Life Now

It's always important to me, whenever I teach a class, that you all get something out of your time here:

- **I hope you've seen that God has told us a lot more about what happens after we die than you thought He did.**
- **I hope this class has made you think.**
 - Made you challenge some of your traditions that may or may not be based on God's word.
 - Best response ever: "It made me go home and see for myself."
- **I hope this class has removed some anxieties you may have had**
 - Some of you told me you now feel a lot more peace about death
 - Some of you admitted they were actually concerned about being bored in heaven!
- **I hope you don't take MY word on all of this!**
 - It's not my word that counts - or yours - but God's Word that counts.

A quick overview of the class sessions:

- 1. Did sin cause physical death, or was death always part of the plan?**
 - "...flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." (1 Corinthians 15:50)
- 2. What does the Bible teach about resurrection?**
 - "...a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out- those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned." (John 5:28-29)
- 3. What will we be like when we're resurrected?**
 - "Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed- in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality." (1 Corinthians 15:51-53)
- 4. Do we go straight to heaven when we die? No**
 - "...a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out..." (John 5:28)
 - "No-one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven - the Son of Man." (John 3:13)

- 5. Where are we between death and going to heaven? Sheol**
 - "...so man lies down and does not rise; till the heavens are no more, men will not awake or be roused from their sleep." (Job 14:12)
 - "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up." His disciples replied, "Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better." Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep. So then he told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead..." (John 11:11-14)
- 6. What's the parable of the rich man & Lazarus teaching us?**
 - This is NOT a parable about Hell (the word is "hades" not "gehenna")
 - In context, it's telling us: Don't wait until it's too late!
- 7. What happens on the Judgement Day?**
 - "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left." (Matthew 25:31-33)
- 8. What will heaven be like?**
 - "For the old order of things has passed away... I am making everything new!" (Revelation 21:4-5)
 - Not physical, not boring - a relationship!
- 9. What's the nature of hell?**
 - "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell." (Matthew 10:28)
 - "destroy" = ἀπόλλυμι (well, ἀπολέσαι)
 - NEVER means "rendered useless" - always "abolished"
- 10. Is the "rapture" really going to happen?**
 - "Jesus said, My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place." (John 18:36)

We've also learned that, when we die, God says these things will happen:

1. Our spirit (life force) leaves our body
2. Our body goes away (to dust)
3. Our soul "sleeps"
4. Our soul is raised
5. Our soul is either...
 - a. wrapped in a new "immortal" body
 - b. destroyed

As much as we CAN learn, there will ALWAYS be a mystery

- until we get over to the other side
 - because we just CAN'T get it
-

Today's question is: What is eternal life?

If this is all about where we'll "be" for eternity...

...We need to understand "eternity" and "eternal"

- **The concept of eternity has been around for a LONG time and in nearly every culture**
 - There are many symbols for "eternity" around...
 - Ouroboros (Greek)
 - Endless Knot (Buddhist)
 - Scarab (Egyptian)
 - Möbius strip
 - Infinity (mathematics)
 - Most have the concept of no beginning & no end - a loop
- **I've heard eternity described a lot of ways:**
 - An ant moving all beaches on the Pacific coast to the Atlantic coast 1 grain of sand at a time. When he's finished, one second of eternity has passed.
 - In Buddhism, eternity is described as an infinite number of "kalpas"
 - Take a piece of silk, drag it across a 16 mile high mountain once every 1000 years, and the mountain will be gone before the kalpa has ended.
- **As far as time is concerned...**
 - Our lives - even human history - is brief. A flash.
- **But these are all just a way of describing a REALLY long time.**
 - **That's "eternity"**

What's interesting is, in the Bible:

- "eternity": 2 times
 - never about the afterlife
- "eternal": 79 times
 - often to describe God's nature
 - always the term used to describe the afterlife

The term we're really interested in is "eternal"

- "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have **eternal life**." (John 3:16)
 - The opposite of perishing (dying) is continuing on (living)
 - **But - forever?**

So what is "eternal"?

- **Is "eternal life" referring to just a loooooong life?**

- **It's something God wants us to consider:**
- **But** in all the talk of "eternal" in scripture, it is **NEVER** about time.
 - **it's not "a long long long time"**
- **Thinking of time at ALL is to think in HUMAN terms, not God's**
 - God seems to see time very differently than us.
 - We should not think of eternal as "time"
 - Once we get off this globe, this realm, time has no significance.
- **When talking of eternal life, it's the KIND and QUALITY of life, not the LENGTH**
- Look at this passage:
 - "Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, **an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands.**" (2 Corinthians 5:1)
 - **Time isn't an issue here - it's the KIND of house. Eternal.**
 - **Built by what? Godly hands - not human.**

So, "eternal life" is...

- **Divine in quality**

Jesus defines it...

- Rarely do we get such a direct answer to our question, but Jesus gives us in black and white (or red & white) exactly that:
 - Jesus said (without mentioning time at ALL):
 - **"Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent." (John 17:3)**

So, what is eternal life?

- *Knowing God - having a relationship with him.*

This goes back to our lesson on Heaven.

- Heaven is about our relationship with God FINALLY coming to fruition
 - **It's a marriage!**
 - Your life as a Christian is like the engagement.
 - Judgement day is the wedding
 - Heaven is the eternal, close personal relationship with God
 - It's not about a place, a time-length, or what we do, it's about having a relationship with God that could NOT be closer!
- **Relationship!**
 - *"...that they may KNOW YOU..."*

Eternal Life Now

Then, when does "eternal life" start?

- *Now*
- *We have eternal life now!*

That's what the "gospel" really is - the promise of eternal life now

- That the "gospel" is NOT just about sin forgiveness, but that YOU - ANYONE - have access to that Kingdom

Eternal life STARTS at our conversion

- that's the doorway into the kingdom
- not the end-goal

- **"Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood *has* eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day." (John 6:54)**
- *"I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me **has eternal life** and will not be condemned; he **has crossed over** from death to life." (John 5:24)*

- Don't put eternal on a timeframe
- It's time and no-time simultaneously
- **Eternal Life & Eternal Death are not clock and calendar expressions**
 - They are a reality

We are eternal beings saved eternally now.

We have eternal life NOW.

Our Response

SO THE QUESTION IS:

After all we've considered about the afterlife...

Knowing that our ETERNAL LIFE starts NOW...

- **What kind of people should we be?**

This is where the rubber meets the road in this class

Peter poses a question:

- *"Since everything will be destroyed in this way, **what kind of people should you be?"** (2 Peter 3:11)*
- *I would also add: **Since you have eternal life RIGHT NOW... what kind of people should you be?***

The answer?

- *"You ought to **live holy and godly lives** as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming." (2 Peter 3:12)*

There's obviously a lot wrapped up in that.

What's a good way to think of it?

- *"So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, **but on what is unseen**. For what is seen is temporary, but **what is unseen is eternal.**" (2 Corinthians 4:18)*

Our focus should be on the spiritual

- **Is it seen?**
 - Stuff? Clothing? Promotions? Sports teams? Governments?
 - **Not important**
- **Is it unseen?**
 - Relationships? Purity? Truth? Faith? God? Salvation? Souls?
 - **Important**

So, how should we live?

What's our job?

- *Live holy and godly lives.*
- *Look forward to His return.*

I look forward to an eternal life with you all.