

# What Is Eternal Life & How Do We Inherit It?

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[0:00] Lord our God, we praise you and we give you thanks for your amazing grace.! Please would you be glorified in our singing, in our praying, in our speaking, in our doing.

May you be glorified. And as we open your word, please would you speak to us. Please would we encounter you. And please would you be glorified. In Jesus' name, amen.

If you have a Bible, please would you turn it to Mark chapter 10 as we continue our studies in Mark. Mark chapter 10 from verse 13 down to 31.

Jesus was with the disciples and others. And it says in Mark 10, 13, And they were bringing children to him that he might touch them. And the disciples rebuked them.

But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant. And he said to them, Let the children come to me. Do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God.

[1:42] Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it. And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them.

And as he was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him and asked him, Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?

And Jesus said to him, Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. You know the commandments. Do not murder. Do not commit adultery. Do not steal. Do not bear false witness.

Do not defraud. Honor your father and mother. And he said to him, Teacher, all these things I have kept from my youth. And Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said to him, You lack one thing.

Go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you'll have treasure in heaven. And come, follow me. Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

And Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God. The disciples were amazed at his words, but Jesus said to them again, Children, how difficult it is to enter the kingdom of God. It's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God. And they were exceedingly astonished and said to him, Then who can be saved? Jesus looked at them and said, With man it's impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God. Peter began to say to him, See, we've left everything and followed you. Jesus said, Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house, or brothers or sisters, or mother or father, or children or lands for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now, and this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands with persecutions, and in the age to come, eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first. Amen. If someone came up to you and asked you in the street,

[4:27] What must I do to inherit eternal life? What would you say to them? Maybe you would say something as simple as, Believe in Jesus. But what does that mean, that phrase? What does that look like in your day-to-day life? It's interesting in our passage that Jesus didn't say anything like that. In fact, he seemed to address things that prevent people from inheriting eternal life. He seemed to address the things that we're preventing this man. We see the disciples first. The disciples are the first people to prevent people. In the start of our passage, the disciples are preventing people bringing their children. And then we see that many possessions and riches prevent this man from following Jesus.

So, someone comes up and he asks you how to inherit eternal life. Even if you gave an answer, perhaps there would be things in their life that would prevent them. Whatever the answer was that you gave them, perhaps they've got things in their life that are going to prevent them from inheriting eternal life or better still from entering the kingdom of God. Now, remember back in chapter 8, Jesus said, whoever would save his life will lose it. But whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospels will save it.

Are there things in our lives that we don't want to lose? What are things in our lives that could prevent us because we don't want to lose them? We want to hold on to our lives, try to hold on to certain things. Jesus also said, what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? What can a man offer to ransom his soul? Nothing.

Perhaps the answer to the question of what you must do to inherit eternal life, perhaps the answer is, well, you must lose your life for the sake of Christ. That's what you must do. What must I do to inherit eternal life? Well, you must lose your life for the sake of Christ, for his gospel. How would people respond if you said that? Someone came to church, what should I do to inherit eternal life? And you said, yeah, lose everything. Lose your life, everything, including you and your life for Christ. How would people respond? How do we respond? Probably things in our lives we're not too keen about losing. Do we realize that following Jesus involves losing your lives in some way? Eventually, completely.

[7:31] So, as we look at this entire passage, I want to just look at two things. Firstly, I want to look at what is eternal life, and secondly, how do you inherit eternal life? And so, what must we do? Firstly, what is eternal life? Did you know the average person's heart will beat around 2.5 million times before it gives up? That's your count. That's what you've got. If you're lucky, 2.5 million heartbeats. You ever just stopped in a day and just thought about your heart, how it just keeps beating like a battery that doesn't run out? How thankful you are that God keeps it beating? And remember the people that you know that has stopped 2.5 million times before giving up. That's a lot of heartbeats. But with CPR, we can add a few more on to that. Some people get more now than they would have 100 years ago, 2,000 years ago. But is eternal life simply as Celine Dion said, that my heart will go on and on?

Is that eternal life? Is death just a pesky problem to be solved so that we can have eternal life? Is eternal life just perpetual life? Is that what eternal life is? If you happen to have a decent amount of savings for between \$28,000 and \$200,000, you can be cryogenically frozen.

You can have your body frozen and preserved, preserving your flesh and bones at the point of death with the hope that at some point future technology will catch up in advance to be able to bring you back to continue your life and deal with whatever problem it was that killed you.

The whole entire industry of cryogenics is based on a future hope that technology will be able to solve the problems that we need to be solved to wake us back up. Imagine it would be like going to sleep, and then you could wake back up in 100 years' time.

Now, that might be interesting to see what the world's like in 100 years' time, but I don't know how fond you are of this life, if you want it to just keep going on and on and on.

[10:16] Is that eternal life? Just to keep the heart, the brain, the body functioning? In fact, for a little bit cheaper, this is a scary thought, I don't know, a little bit cheaper than that, you can have just your head and your brain frozen. I don't know what that means or what your body's going to look like, you're going to be Robocop or something. Do we envisage this world being a place that we want to live in indefinitely? Because even in 100 years' time, the world's not going to get any better.

All this thing about the world thousands of years ago being rather primitive, and look at us with our technology, has the world got any better, any holier, any more righteous, any cleaner? No.

Now, I suppose it depends on what you think the alternative is. That might be appealing if you think the alternative is to that death is scary and you're just going to waste away and that's it forever.

Annihilation, complete blackout. You're going to not experience anything, your family are going to miss you, and you're going to lose everything. Is death our biggest problem? Or is death just a symptom of a bigger problem? The Bible says that death is the wages of sin. And no matter how

much technology advances, because it's advanced a whole lot, has technology ever, has any advancement on earth ever been able to eradicate sin? No. Therefore, it's never going to be able to prevent death. No advancing technology is going to be able to eradicate sin. And as long as we have sin, we will die. Life and sin are not compatible. Sin is a threat to life.

What we need is a new heart, a new body, a new life, a new world. Now, when we look at this passage, what struck me about this passage was that after this man asked Jesus about eternal life, the man leaves before he even hears Jesus mention those two words. Jesus doesn't talk about eternal life to this man. Do you notice that?

[12:46] It's hard to wrap our mind around eternal life. We tend to think of it like life going on and on and on and on forever. Perhaps we're thinking that way because we're all too aware that life doesn't go on.

We feel it at every funeral. We feel it in our bodies. We know that we just can't keep this up forever. And so when we think about eternal life, we think about it just going on and on. Yet, look at what Jesus talks about. He eventually will mention those two words, eternal life, but not until the very end of the end of the day. Yet, we see this man asking about inheriting eternal life, but then we hear Jesus talking about entering the kingdom of God. Five times in our passage, Jesus talks about the kingdom of God, and he mentions eternal life just once. And so, how does the kingdom relate to eternal life?

What does that have? What's the relation? Recently, I had a wee look at what was required to become a citizen of the United Kingdom.

Here are some of the requirements if you want to be a citizen of this country. You must be the right age. You must be of good character. How many people in our country feel that?

You must be currently living in the UK. You must meet the language requirements. Loads of people fail that as well. You must pass the life in the UK test. There's a test.

[14:29] Just for fun, I took the test. I failed the test. I got 66%. It's not even hard. The test isn't even hard. But a lot of it is about UK culture. Like, you would pass the test if you watched Coronation Street. I'm just, I'm not interested in the UK culture. I'm not that interested in the culture of this kingdom. I'm more interested in another kingdom. I wonder how I would fare, though. I wonder how many of us would fare if we took a test of life in the kingdom of God. How would we fare?

You see, this world, including this kingdom, kingdoms rise and they fall. This world is dying. It's a dying world. It's fading away. 1 John says that this is a kingdom of darkness, but it's passing away. The kingdom of God, however, is a kingdom of light that has already dawned.

It's already dawned, and it's begun to shine. And this kingdom will never fade or pass away, and there's no end to it, and the darkness will have no place at all in this kingdom.

It's so easy to just think about this world that we're living in. It's so easy for me. I need to be reminded every day that this world that looks so permanent is passing away, and there's something that has already begun to shine that is going to last forever. It's going to outlast all of this stuff that we struggle with. To Jesus, eternal life is not separate from life in the kingdom of God.

They're not separate. They're one and the same thing. Jesus is the king of the eternal kingdom. His kingdom is the everlasting kingdom promised to the Son of David, a kingdom where his government and peace will have no end. His kingdom will be established and upheld with justice and righteousness forever, says Isaiah 9, a kingdom of light in which there is no darkness at all, where there is no sorrow, no pain, no more tears, no more mourning, no sickness, and no death. The former things shall pass away.

[16:42] It says Revelation 21. A kingdom where nothing unclean and no evil is allowed to enter. That's really good news, unless you are unclean. Now, we all feel that. It's bad news for us. But if he can transform us, how good would it be to be in a kingdom where nothing evil or unclean will ever enter it?

That's so good. Do we not feel like in Britain not to say that we are any better because we're not? But do we not feel like wouldn't it be good if our borders were a bit tighter? Not from strangers, I'm not saying that, but from evil and from danger and from threats. We want to live in a safe place, a safe neighborhood, a gated neighborhood. We want to be safe. His kingdom, there will be no evil, no unclean thing shall enter it ever. That's a problem for every human. It's a problem for every

human, except that Jesus can transform us. See, people have a problem about sinners entering heaven.

No, no sinner will enter heaven. He will transform us before we ever enter His kingdom. And that's the thing that people don't get. It's not like a murderer can enter heaven. No, that, you know, Paul says we need to die. We need to be crucified with Christ. That person who the world knows is guilty must be crucified. And the new person who Jesus makes as a new creation, that's who He brings into His kingdom. Praise God. And if you believe in Jesus, you know that struggle. Inwardly, you're being renewed day by day, but outwardly, you're wasting away. Outwardly, you're struggling with sin, but inwardly, you long to do the will of God. Wouldn't it be good to just shake off that part of you that wants to sin? Yeah, one day that will be a reality. If you trust in Christ, He will do that for you. In His kingdom, a kingdom where the throne of God and the Lamb will be in it and His servants will worship Him. They will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads, and night will be no more.

There's not going to be need for lamp or light or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever. This is the kingdom of God and His beloved Son, and this is how Jesus thinks about eternal life. His kingdom is eternal life. John 17, Jesus said, This is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. Eternal life is not knowing of God. It's not knowing about Jesus. It's knowing Jesus. That is eternal life. I want to share with you a quote from C.S. Lewis on this subject matter.

[19:51] The present is the point at which time touches eternity. Of the present moment and of it only, humans have an experience, analogous to the experience which God has of reality as a whole. In it alone, freedom and actuality are offered to humans.

C.S. Lewis goes on to say this. This is in the Screwtape Letters, and this is talking about imagining a demon trying to tell another demon how to tempt humans away from God.

He says this, Our business is to get them away from the eternal and from the present. With this in view, we sometimes tempt a human, say a widow or a scholar, to live in the past.

But this is of limited value, for they have some real knowledge of the past, and it has a determinate nature. To that extent, it resembles eternity. It is far better to make them live in the future.

Biological necessity makes all their passions point in that direction already, so that thought about the future inflames hope and fear. Also, the future is unknown to them.

[21:24] So in making them think about it, we make them think about unrealities. See that? When we think too much about the future, we think about unrealities. In a word, the future is, of all things, the thing least like eternity.

It is the most completely temporal part of time. Unreality. For the past, the past is frozen, and it no longer flows.

And the present, well, the present is all lit up with eternal rays. You ever thought about the present like that? Right now, in this present moment, time is touching eternity.

This moment right now, although it doesn't feel like it in this dusty old building, this present moment is all lit up with eternal rays. It is absolutely buzzing with life.

And where does life come from? It comes from God and God alone. The past is frozen. The future is an unreality. The present is lit up with eternal rays.

[22:31] And so eternal life, it's not knowing about God. It's not knowing of God. It's not knowing about Jesus. It is knowing Him. Knowing Him personally.

Knowing Jesus, the one through whom life comes. He holds all things together. And by the word of His power, the universe is held together.

Yeah, all things were created through Him and for Him. This is why in our passage, Jesus goes on to talk about entering the kingdom of God.

Because one cannot have eternal life without entering the kingdom of God. One cannot have eternal life without being connected to the Son of God. Jesus is making the point that by collecting treasure on earth, it will be near impossible for this man to enter the kingdom of God and thus have eternal life.

His riches prevented him from coming to Jesus. And yet, what did the children have? Children had nothing. And they wanted to come to Jesus. Eternal life must be understood in the context of living

in the kingdom of God, and more specifically, knowing the Son of God.

[23:47] Whether or not this man understood that, we don't know. But it's true in our day that many people want the benefits of God's kingdom without having to be a citizen of God's kingdom.

Many people want the benefits of heaven without wanting the King of heaven. What does it take to be a citizen of His kingdom?

Do we need to take a life in the kingdom of God test? What must we do? And so, let's take a look. What must a person do to inherit eternal life?

Let's consider who this man is, okay? This rich young man, ruler, he's called in one of the other Gospels. He's Jewish.

Okay, he's got a good head start on the kingdom of God. He's a ruler, perhaps a synagogue ruler. He has great wealth, and he's religious.

[24:46] If you were to ask the twelve disciples, what must I do? If Jesus wasn't there and He asked the disciples, what must I do to inherit eternal life? And they examined this man, they would say, well, this is an ideal candidate.

This guy is an ideal candidate for the kingdom of God. In fact, he's probably better than any one of those disciples. He seems to have ticked all the right boxes for the life in the kingdom of God test. Race, tick. Religion, check. Riches, he's got them. Righteousness, he's done it. But Jesus makes it clear that none of these things guarantees him entry into the kingdom of God.

His race doesn't guarantee him entry. His religion doesn't guarantee him entry. His riches don't buy him a ticket. His righteousness are not righteous enough. He doesn't have a birthright to eternal life. His religious status won't give him a pass. As to his wealth, you cannot buy your way into the kingdom of God. And as to his law keeping, no amount of good deeds is going to give any of us the righteousness required to enter his kingdom.

[26:02] All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Not only are these things inadequate to gain him entry, some of them are actually a barrier.

And this confused the disciples. They thought prosperity was a sign of God's favor. How could such a prosperous man find it so difficult to enter the kingdom of God?

You see that later on, the disciples were astonished at this, amazed at his words, exceedingly astonished. They said, Who can be saved then? If a rich man, if a Jewish, religious, righteous, wealthy ruler cannot be saved, then who can be saved?

Surely he's like the closest. No, that's not how it works. Twice, Jesus says, how difficult it will be. And then he says, it will be easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle.

And the disciples exclaimed, Who can be saved? Jesus says, With man, it is impossible. So, no one, if you're leaving it to man, no one can be saved.

[27:15] But with God, all things are possible. You see, it's not just difficult for a rich man to enter the kingdom. It's impossible for a rich man to enter the kingdom.

In fact, it's not just impossible for a rich man to enter the kingdom. It's impossible for any man to enter the kingdom of God. We need God. All things are possible for him.

And so, what about these children? What is it the children have that this man did not have? Think about all that this young man had. He had it all. He was in his prime.

He had risen the ranks to be a ruler. He had gathered great possessions. Think about how he compared with these children. And yet, Jesus said there was one thing he lacked.

It looked like he lacked nothing. Folks, there's people out there in the world and they look like they lack nothing. Don't believe it. Don't believe it.

[28:13] Jesus looks at this man and he says, you lack one thing. And it's the lie of the world. Having money means you won't lack anything. That's not true.

That's a lie. This man thought he had it all. In fact, the one thing that he thought he lacked was eternal life. But Jesus seemed to indicate the thing he actually lacked was the only thing that could help him enter the kingdom and that was the thing that he lacked was being like a child.

Be like a child. Don't depend on yourself. Realize that you have nothing. You've got nothing to offer. What is it he says? Look at verse 31. What is it Jesus says right at the end of the passage? Many who are first will be last and the last first. And so when you look at these little children who the disciples are trying to prevent coming to Jesus and then you look at this rich young ruler imagine him walking up and the disciples are like oh make room make room for him. He should be first in the queue. And yet Jesus says no the first will be last and the last will be first. What he lacks is being like a child. You must receive the kingdom of God like a child.

[29:34] Notice as well how the man asked the question what must I do to inherit eternal life? And so let me ask you a question.

What can a person do to inherit anything? The answer is in the question how can anyone inherit anything by their own efforts?

You don't inherit something by your efforts do you? No you don't. You don't inherit anything by your efforts. You need to be part of the family and part of the will and that's not your choice.

You don't get a say in that. I mean you might make a lot of noise about it but it's not your choice. It's not by your efforts. It's by the one who puts you in the will.

It's by being a part of the family by being a child. Only by being a child in the family and possibly being in the will can you inherit anything.

[30:37] You must receive the kingdom like a child. Be a child. Be part of the family. How do you be part of the family? John 1 12 says if you believe in his name then you will become a child of God.

Romans 8 says if we are children of God then we are heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ. We receive the kingdom of God like a child coming to Christ with nothing but trust and dependence and we enter as children sharing in his inheritance as children of God.

It's the only way. As John 1 12 says it's not something we do. It's not by the will of man or by the will of flesh. It's only by the will of God that we would become children.

To inherit one must be a child by the will of God and one must be in the will of God. Therefore it's not by anything that we do but by what he has done.

It says in Hebrews 9 Jesus is the mediator of a new covenant so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant for where a will is involved the death of the one who made it must be established.

[32:02] You see that? Where a will is involved the death of the one who made it must be established for a will takes effect only at death since it is not in force as long as the one who made it is alive.

Jesus does he not say in the last supper breaking of the bread this cup is my blood of the new covenant.

He makes a covenant with us and his will takes effect at the place of his death. So what will you inherit?

As long as your inheritance is in this world, no matter what it is, it will run out and it will fade away. And maybe it already has. Maybe you've received an inheritance and it's already ran out.

Perhaps you received an inheritance long ago, but for those who come to Jesus like a child, who follow Jesus with nothing to offer but trust and dependence, those are the children who are yet to receive an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, unfading, which is kept in heaven for you who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be received, revealed in the last time.

[33:28] Do you know that your faith is guarding you? And more to the point, God is guarding you by faith in order that you would receive that inheritance that is kept in heaven for you.

Faith, it just seems like such a simple thing, but it is a powerful thing. It is God's means to guard us and to bring us into his kingdom. Paul says in Colossians, give thanks to the Father who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints and light.

He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son in whom we have redemption and forgiveness of sins. Whoever has followed Jesus, no matter what you've given up, if this man would give up his earthly riches, he would have received a hundredfold now and eternal life in the age to come.

As it is, this man might stand at the gate, the gate to the kingdom of God, with all his righteous deeds and his great possessions, and he'll see these little children running in, being allowed into the kingdom of God while he's not.

And the man might say to these children, wait a minute, child, I'm first. Did you keep all the rules that I've kept? Have you worked hard to become a ruler like I have?

[34:56] Have you got any possessions or wealth that you can offer like I have? Why? Why are these children allowed in with nothing?

And yet I've acquired all these things and I'm not allowed in. And it's like Alistair Begg says, the children will just say, he told us we could come. Yeah. Without any rule keeping, without any wealth, without being a ruler, without religion, without all their riches, just because they're little children and they want to come and they've got nothing to offer, but they accept the invite.

Jesus gave this man an invite. I don't know if he gave him an answer as such. What must I do to inherit eternal life? Really, in the end, it's not about the giving away of stuff.

That's not a requirement for entering the kingdom. It's not a rule that we must all give away all our possessions to the poor. It's a very good thing. It's a good thing and Jesus says especially it's a good thing because it takes away barriers from us that would prevent us.

The giving away of stuff wasn't a requirement for him to get in. It was simply to remove a barrier that was stopping him. But the answer that he gave him was, come, follow me.

[36:18] Come and follow me. Yeah, wait till you see where that leads you because Jesus is the one who gives life. And so, let me finish just with a simple text from 1 John 5.

Jesus says, sorry, 1 John 5 says, this is the testimony that God gave us eternal life and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life.

Whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. Let me pray. Let me pray.

Lord, there are so many things on this earth, not bad things, but things that we acquire, things that we gather, and things that can become a barrier to us, that prevent us from truly coming after you. Riches can entangle us so much. please would you help us, Lord, to hold anything that we have with a loose hand and a loose grip, even our own lives, and help us to follow you, knowing that we would have treasure in heaven and better still, knowing that we would have you, that we would know you, and that you are our life.

[37:44] Eternal life is knowing you, and life comes from you. So please help us to become like children, to receive the kingdom of God like children, and to follow you the rest of our lives.

Amen.