

What is Eternal Life?

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[0:00] Okay. Have you noticed I'm getting old? Just watch me stagger up here. You're going to need to open your Bibles to John chapter 17.

! John chapter 17.

If you haven't noticed, things sort of got messed around. The schedule is sort of upside down.

Glenn preached chapter 17 the second half last week.

I get to do the first half this week. So, and that's just because of circumstances. Things happen, and so we'll just deal with it.

Okay. So I'm going to really concentrate on the first five verses. So you don't have a lot of reading to do, but I really need you to read it to follow with me.

[1:07] Now I'm reading the New English, and I think if you're using a pew Bible, you may have a living, new living. But we may have something else. But anyway, here we go. Let's read the first five verses of this chapter.

And it's, again, the context is it's Jesus is praying. He's been talking to his disciples after the Last Supper, and now he's praying. It says, When Jesus had finished saying these things, he looked upward to heaven and said, Father, the time has come.

Glorify your son so your son may glorify you, just as you have given him authority over all humanity, so that he may give eternal life to everyone who you have given him.

Now this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom he sent. I have glorified you on the earth by completing the work you gave me to do.

And now, Father, glorify me at your side with the glory I had with you before the world was created. And he starts out by saying, The time has come.

[2:13] Now this is not the first time in this sort of sequence of things that he said the time has come. Back in chapter 12, about verse 23, some Greek proselytes had come to him, or trying to come to him, and the apostles were trying to stop him.

And Jesus said, And they said, We got some Greeks that want to talk to you. And Jesus, just sort of out of nowhere, said, The time has come. And what he was talking about was his death and his rising.

So he, you know, Here were these Greeks coming, and he's saying, Okay, this is a sign. The time has come. It's coming. Now is the time, and the kingdom is coming.

I'm going to die, and I'm going to rise and ascend. Then in chapter 13, which is all part of this same sequence again that we've been reading, just before the Passover feast that they held together, that had just occurred when he made this prayer, he said it again, The time is coming.

He knew he was going to die, and he was going to rise, and he's going to ascend. And when he prayed, I have completed the work that you've given me to do. What he was saying is, I know that it's going to happen.

[3:23] I'm going to finish it. I'm going to go to the cross. I'm going to die, and I'm going to rise. I have done what you've asked me to do, what you sent me to do.

And he told the disciples that all this was happening. I mean, that was what he was saying before these prayers, that this is what's going to happen. And he says, I'm going to go away.

And of course, that's the part that had them all disturbed. They understood that. They didn't maybe get the rest of it, but they got that part in. He says, No, I got to go, because if I leave, then I'm going to ascend the Spirit, and the Spirit will guide you into all truth.

The time is at hand. He knows what lies ahead. And he prays, Glorify your Son, so that your Son may glorify you.

And again, I think we have a hard time understanding what the word glory means. The Hebrew word glory is actually attached to the word weight. It's the weightiness of something.

[4:30] Now you think about that. When you have a king, where does he sit when he has an audience? On a throne.

And the throne is usually fancy, or at least symbolic. I think the king of Babylon had a throne, and the throne had two winged lions on the front, you know, on the arms, and the wings went back. And what he was saying is, this is the power I have, the winged lion. And he had the same thing on the gates. You know, the gates had these big winged lions. And he sat up higher than everybody else.

And he didn't dress like everybody else. He wore fancier clothes and a crown, you know, and jewelry and things. What he was saying is, look at me, and see that I am more powerful, more magnificent, more magnificent, weightier than you, really.

Have you ever walked in the presence of someone that was very powerful, a very powerful person? I've had that experience, and Steve and I enjoy this. And I went out on a firing point.

[5:43] I was a lieutenant. Here I am on a firing point with my battery. And this general walks up. And I'm going, oh my goodness, no, what, this isn't just the assistant division commander.

This is, you know, some big wig from Washington, D.C. And he's coming up and he says, okay, lieutenant, what are you doing? And I'm going, oh, you're asking me? You're a general. You know, I understood his weight.

Those stars on his shoulder were heavy compared to that little gold bar I was wearing. He had glory. I didn't. And that's what Jesus is saying here.

Glorify your son. In other words, honor him. Lift him up. People will see that he is, in fact, the son of God. That he may glorify you.

That in what he does, his obedience, he's bringing glory. He's showing your might and your weight as the God of the universe of creation. So that's what he's praying.

[6:48] And in that, he says, there's some things that we need to pay attention to. He says something very interesting. Just as you have given him authority over all humanity or over all flesh, so that he may give eternal life to everyone you have given him.

It's sort of a phrase. I mean, it's not a complete sentence in my thinking, but it, and you go, what? But you stop and think about it.

Jesus has been given authority over all humanity, every human being that ever was or ever will be. He is indeed the Lord of all people over all the earth, the whole world.

And you know why? Go back to, what does Paul say in Ephesians and elsewhere? All things that are were made by him for him.

He's the creator. God created through Jesus. The son was the one who brought all things into existence. So of course he's Lord over all, who he's going to be the king of the kingdom.

[8:02] He has been given all authority. But it's interesting. He says, I've been given all authority by you, my father. Why?

So that I can bring or give eternal life to everyone that you gave me. In fact, in this prayer, he says, I haven't lost any of them that you've given me except one, the son of perdition.

And he was, you know, that he was a gone before we even started. I knew what was going to happen. But all the rest of my life kept. He has the authority to give eternal life.

And we should understand that. Now, we all know that we find eternal life in Christ, but we need to understand what he's talking about in this context.

You see, I think most of us accept the idea that eternal life is found in Christ. If I asked you, how do you get eternal life? You say, you accept Christ. You know, you'd go, yeah, that's, that's a, that's a given.

[9:09] That's an obvious answer. Every person who ever comes to the Lord understands that. And it's through faith that we find rebirth in Christ, which is where we get our eternal life.

And you'll find that idea in scripture, in various places, lots of places. I just have one here. It's Ephesians that I mentioned before. Ephesians two, four through nine. It says this, but God being rich in mercy, because of his great love with which he loved us, even though we were dead in offenses, made us alive together with Christ.

By grace, you are saved. And he raised us up together with him and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus.

To demonstrate in the coming ages, the surpassing wealth of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace, you have been saved through faith. And this not from yourselves, it is a gift of God. It is not from works that no one can boast. Did you pay attention? How are you saved?

[10:26] Grace and mercy. We sang that, by the way. And he says, we were dead in our trespasses, in our sin. We were dead.

We're in the wilderness, and we're dead, spiritually dead. There's no life from God in us. All that's motivating us is the natural human life, the animal life that's in us.

And guess what? It runs out. It's like a battery. It's going to run down, and eventually we're going to do what? Die. And we're going to become dust, just like the dust that Adam was made from.

What we need is a life source that won't run down. Maybe a nuclear-powered battery or something. But even they had to have the fuel changed.

Christ. He says that he made us alive together with Christ. If Christ had never been raised from the dead, there would be no with him.

[11:28] We'd be in the grave with him. But because he was raised, we were raised with him. Think about this. He's talking about something that hasn't, you've been raised from the dead.

Did you know that? You've been raised from the dead. And guess what else? You've been seated in the heavenlies with him.

And this is a picture I love, because there's another place, I think it's Philippians. He says we're seated with Christ in the right hand of the Father. So here we are. If a king has a big throne, God must have a huge one.

And there is Jesus sitting next to the Father, and guess who's sitting next to him? Us. You know, what's the name of that? A laugh-in had that female comedian that liked to be the little girl in the big, huge rocking chair.

You remember that? And she was sitting in this huge rocking chair, and her feet would dangle over the edge. They had one like that at TVR, except if it's an in or on that chair. Or, you know, you can sit. But she'd sit there, and she'd talk in a little voice.

[12:32] That's us. We're on this huge throne, sitting with God on our feet, barely go over the edge. And we're looking down and go, wow, you're amazing, God. Look where you put me. But only because of Christ.

He did everything that we should be able to do, but haven't been able to do because we're weak. Because we're dead. It even says there, and there's some discussion about what it is the gift God refers to, whether it's the grace or the salvation or the whatever.

I think it's the faith. That's the antecedent. You don't even have the ability to have faith to save yourself, except that God gives it to you.

We were dead in sin, but made alive with Christ by faith. And that's because of his grace and mercy.

We were raised with Christ and seated in the heavenly realms with him. It's only as Christ was raised that we are raised. It's only as Christ died sinless that we die with him, sins forgiven.

[13:43] It is only as Christ is alive that we find life with him. He becomes our life force that supersedes what we have otherwise.

And one day, as we put our hope in that grace, looking forward in time, and it could be seconds to years, we don't know, we're going to join all the saints to celebrate the wedding feast of the Lamb and to live on the new earth.

And there, God will live among us. Can you imagine? We're going to be what Adam and Eve had, God walking in the garden with them in the cool of the evening.

I can't wait. We look forward to eternal life, life unending, without pain, without suffering, without tears. And I hate to do this, but I thought this was not planned.

I had thought of this before Janet died, but can you imagine? She's already there. And she had pain all the time. She has no pain today. She's walking, standing, doing.

[15:07] But there's something else here we need to understand. Let's look how Jesus defines eternal life, because we have this idea that it is what? Life unending.

It goes on forever and ever and ever. That's not how Jesus defines it. He says right after, that he had the power, he says, now this is eternal life.

So this is the definition. The God-breathed definition. 10? 10? 10? I think. Now this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you sent. You know, wait a minute. Now, no, can't be. How do I get eternal life out of that? It's this. Eternal life is not just unending life, in the sense of a prolonged duration, as we generally think of it, when we consider it, but rather, Jesus said, it is the quality of life, with its quality, derived from the relationship with God.

eternal life is not so much, how long you live, but with whom you will live.

[16:32] And I think it's sort of, I think what he's telling us is, when we get to the new earth, or wherever, however you want to think of all that, and you're going to live forever, it isn't going to be the life force, that's biologically working inside of you, that's going to keep you alive forever.

What's going to keep you alive forever, is God's presence. Now, think of that. Is that possible? Yes, absolutely. How is this whole universe sustained? By God.

He keeps it all working, and moving. How did Adam come to be a living being? From dust. God breathed into him, and gave him life. Now, when he left God's presence, and went into the wilderness, he got cut off from that.

And so, what did he say? God said, as soon as you go to the wilderness, you're going to what? Start, struggle, and you're going to end up dead. If he'd stayed in the garden, he would have never died.

But in his wisdom, he says, I think I got a better way. He got to find out, that it didn't work out so well. Jesus says, this is a quality of life, where it's quality derived, from the relationship with God.

[17:45] Now, if you pay close attention to scripture, especially even in John, you'll see that shouldn't be such a strange idea, because way back in chapter 1, verse 4, John wrote, in him was life.

Then in chapter 10, verse 10, he says, the thief comes only to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come, so that they may have life, and may have it abundantly.

Then in another place, he said, I think it's John 15, he said, I am the way, the truth, and the life. You want life? Get Christ. Now, we think in terms of, he gives it to us when he does, but as long as we stay connected to him. Have you ever noticed, the closer you get to God, the better your life is, even if you struggle?

The further away you get from God, the worse life is, and how hard it is. It's because God, Christ, is life. Jesus came to reveal what God really is like, and in Christ, we see God fully made known to us.

[18:55] Remember when Andrew told Jesus, just show us the Father, that'll be enough. And Jesus replied to him, if you see me, you've seen the Father. See, even though they're distinct, Father and Son, they're also what?

One. Glenn and I were talking about it before church. That hard part, I'm in him, and he's in me. We're one. We all go, uh, uh, uh, uh, uh, right?

It's true. They're together, but they're unique. And he tells us that he came to give life, and that abundantly.

An abundant life is defined as knowing, that is, being in relationship with the Father and Son. And the only way to obtain that knowledge of the Father is through the Son.

Now, you've got to be careful here, because there's some real long-term heresies out there that come close to this, but don't quite get there.

[20:07] It's not knowing intellectually. That's Gnosticism. You've got to have secret knowledge. That's not what we're talking about. This knowing is not intellectual. Something in the mind.

Rather, this knowing is relational. It's not knowing about. It's rather knowing personally. I'll give you an example. I can know about the Apostle Paul, but I can never really know him relationally, because I never met him.

Now, maybe one day I will. I can know Jesus and the Father. Why? Because I have personally met Christ.

And knowing him in this way brings me into relationship with him. I have a relationship with him, and he with me, and therefore I have one with the Father. I've come into relationship with him through the work of the Spirit in me.

It opens my understanding, causes rebirth, brings me into relationship with him and the Father through faith. And that faith is more than just believing. All right?

[21 : 20] Faith is trusting that he is indeed the way, the truth, and the life. We also need to understand the unique relationship between the Father and the Son.

Jesus prays in verse 5, and now, Father, glorify me at your side with the glory I had before, with you before the world was created. It goes back to Jesus one time.

He was talking about, the Pharisees were talking about Moses, and Jesus says, before Moses was, I am. How could that possibly be?

Moses died thousands of years ago. What they missed was the point. Jesus is not just now. He's not just a human being. He is God the Son in the flesh.

He came from the Father. He was sent by the Father. But he was with him before he was incarnate, before he was born as a human.

[22 : 21] He preexisted creation. Paul tells us everything was created by him, as I already said, and created for him. Jesus says it this way. Everything I have belongs to you, talking about the Father, and everything you, the Father, have belongs to me.

The relationship between Jesus, the Christ, and the Father is one of mutual being. They work together.

They're close. They're of one substance, using the creed word for it, of one substance. But yet, they're distinct personalities. Now, what I want to do now is connect Jesus' word on eternal life to what God's purpose is for us as his people.

From the beginning, Adam and Eve were given life by God, God breathing into Adam, and taking Eve out of Adam's body, and they lived in the garden. God provided everything for them.

Everything. Sustained them. They were not supposed to die, but flourish, and multiply, and fill the earth, extending the garden to cover the whole earth. But they sinned, and were banished from the garden.

[23 : 36] And once they left that garden, and the cherubim there were guarding the way back in. You know why they were guarding? They didn't want him to, God didn't want him to go back in, and have life.

He said, what if he has eternal life? What would we do now? We have a... So he said, banished them, and they started to experience death. Surely you will die, God told them.

And they eventually did, and they turned back to the dust. But God, in his mercy, followed them out. He was there when they were in the wilderness to make their own way.

He was no longer sustaining them as such. But he was watching over them because he still loved them. And he did that in his mercy.

Well, we, too, live in the wilderness because there's only two places you can live, either in the garden or the wilderness.

[24 : 38] and this is no garden. We're outside the garden. The Bible project would say, we went out, we go through, and we come in.

We come out of the garden, or we've missed that part. We're in the garden. We're going through, I mean, in the wilderness. We're going through the wilderness. This is a journey through the wilderness.

If you read Exodus about their trouble, they had troubles. Lack of water, lack of food, hot, miserable existence. And then they went into the new land, the promised land.

Into. We're going into. Where's our promised land? Heaven. The new earth. We all are going to die just like Adam and Eve died unless the Lord should come back.

But we, as a saved, those that belong to Christ, those given to him by God, those chosen to live forever with him, through him, those who have found Christ and the work of his life in us, who have put our trust, we have put our trust in him, we are destined to an unbounded, full life found in God and through Christ.

[26 : 05] And even if we die, we will live. And Jesus said that even if a man die, he shall live. And that by the life that's in Christ.

Now remember, Jesus said, I am the way, the truth, and the life. It is this life found in relationship with him that is what will animate us, bringing full and abundant life through all eternity.

We're headed out of the wilderness. You should be excited. We're headed out of the wilderness.

Only a few more years, days, hours, whatever you got.

Or we got. If he comes back, that would be great. We're headed to the garden where God will again provide all we need.

He'll be our life, literally our life. If you go read, I think it's 1 Corinthians 15, it says that we will become, it doesn't say flesh and blood.

[27:09] You know what it says? Flesh and bone. I think that's an important theological point because what does Old Testament say? The life is in the blood.

If we're raised in Christ to be flesh and bone, then where does our life come from? The Spirit. God sustaining us in life.

And we will live with him and he will be our God and we'll be his people forever, fulfilling the purpose for which we were created in the first place to know him and his Christ and to glorify him, to acknowledge his worthiness and our praise and our obedience and our love.

Just as Christ retained his human body when he ascended, although it was glorified, it was still very real and very physical. We too will receive a new body.

A real body meant to enjoy the fruits of the new creation and our joy will be complete. Let's pray.

Lord, I'm not sure what anyone got out of this, but I just pray that you would use it for your glory.

[28:22] They can look at me and say, that's a strange guy who has no thoughts that are worth it, but Lord, that they would look to you and say, my hope is fixed in you for you are my life.

Help us, Lord. So wander through this wilderness, not to get attracted by the things we find there, but to keep our eyes fixed on the goal of the journey, that with joy and celebration we can enter into the land that you promised us and find in you all that we need, sustained by your life in us, leading us, Lord, by your very presence.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.