

John 3:16

Part 5

Has Eternal Life

30.01.2005

“What do I get?!” The man looked a bit blasé, and folded his arms. He was thinking about the offer. If he paid out over \$1000, he would be let in on the new scheme. But it seemed the honour and privilege of being in the new scheme was not good enough. What else would his money bring him? So the salesman rattled off a list of benefits: the possibility of earning that much each week, a new car, a new house, and a set of steak knives. He then had to think through whether he could trust the salesman's promises or not.

In John 3:16, two benefits are given. One is expressed in a negative way, and one in a positive way. Last week, we looked at the negative one, which is that whoever believes in Jesus will not perish. Today, we will be considering that whoever believes in him has eternal life.

It can be so easy to read into this benefit, all the hopes, dreams and aspirations of the New Testament and many people since that time. And there is a place for understanding what the hope offered in the New Testament is for us, and for what people think. However, today I want to look at what John's Gospel says about eternal life, because I believe it has important implications for us.

The first thing to note is that in John's Gospel, Jesus does not talk too much about heaven. The only description given is in chapter 14, where Jesus says *“In my father's house are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also.”*

We know more from other parts of the New Testament, but in John, that is the teaching about what heaven is like. It is very much like the teaching in Psalm 23, where David knows he will not perish in the valley of the shadow of death, but will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

But John does not select Jesus teaching about heaven to concentrate on. So what does John's Gospel promise for followers of Christ? John's Gospel shows Jesus cared for peoples' well being. He supplied wine for the wedding feast, he gave sight to the blind, he healed the lame man at the pool, he brought Lazarus back from the dead etc.

Near the middle of the gospel, Jesus says in 10:10 *“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.”*

But as he wanted them to have life here to the full, he was also concerned that they'd have eternal life. He would raise them up at the last day. He promises this in passages such as John 6:44 *“No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me; and I will raise that person up at the last day.”*

And as he said to Martha after Lazarus had died *“Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live.’”* He promises that we will live forever in his Father's house, and that he will come to raise us and take us to be with him.

But how do we gain this eternal life?

Straight after mentioning his Father's house in John 14, Jesus says *“You know the way to the place where I am going Thomas said to him ‘Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?’ Jesus said to him ‘I am the way, the truth and the life. No-one comes to the Father except through me.”*

The way to gain eternal life is connected solely in and through Jesus. John 3:16 says it comes through believing in Jesus. He also says in John 6:47 *“Very truly I tell you, whoever believes has eternal life.”*

We do not gain it by working or trying or striving or anything else except by believing in Jesus.

However, Jesus described what this means in

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unusual ways in John's gospel. One way, which is often innocently mistaken for participating in the Holy Communion service and eating the symbols of bread and wine is found in John 6:54. *"Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day."*

Another unusual description is in John 4:13-14 *"Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life."*

And an even more unusual description is in John 12:25 *"those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life."*

Yet even though those verses can be confusing, the overall thrust of the gospel shows that eternal life comes through believing in Jesus. Twice in John 5, Jesus says that belief comes through hearing his words, the Scriptures. As we look at the Old Testament, which speak about Jesus and look forward to his coming, and the New Testament which directly declares what he has done, we need to make the choice whether we want to reject Jesus or believe in Him.

That choice is still the same today. He wants us all to have life, and to have it to the full, both now and for ever. Do you know that you have eternal life? If Jesus gives us eternal life when we believe, then we should know if we have eternal life.

Do you know for certain that if you were to die today that you would have eternal life with God?

There are only two answers to that question. Either Yes I know for certain, or No, I am not certain. Do you know for certain that if you were to die today, that you would have eternal life with God?

If you are not certain that you do, then look again at the promises I mentioned. Jesus says in John 6:47 *"Very truly I tell you, whoever*

believes has eternal life."

He does not give eternal life because you are really good, or kept the commands, or know the Bible, or even know him very well. He gives us eternal life as we trust him.

Near the end of John's gospel in 20:30-31 we get a beautiful summary. *"Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name."*

If you are not sure you believe, talk with me. See me in private, or after church, or call me during the week. You can know for certain that you have eternal life, for Jesus gives it to us as we believe in him. Trust him.