

## DOCTRINE OF ETERNAL LIFE

### A. Definition of Eternal Life.

**John 3:36** He who believes [ present active participle of πιστεύω (*pisteúō*) ] on the Son keeps on having and holding everlasting life; and he who does not believe in the Son, shall not see eternal life, but the wrath of God abides on him. (EXT)

- a. One's attitude toward Christ determines whether he has eternal life or not.
- b. The Greek word πιστεύω (*pisteúō*) in the present tense means you have eternal life the moment you believe and continue to have it.
  1. Eternal life is imputed to the human spirit, which is created for you by God the Holy Spirit at regeneration.

### B. Three Categories of Eternal Life.

1. For the believer who dies in time prior to resurrection, there are three categories of eternal life.
  - a. The believer has eternal life while living on the earth, having both earthly life and eternal life. This is the mortality category of eternal life. This stage of eternal life continues until the Rapture takes place or until we die.
  - b. The believer has eternal life after death while living in heaven and waiting for his resurrection body. This can be classified as having both interim life and eternal life.
  - c. The believer has eternal life forever in a resurrection body, which is resurrection life and eternal life. This is the immortality stage of eternal life.
2. Those believers in the Rapture generation who do not die physically have two categories of eternal life:
  - a. Temporal life plus eternal life.
  - b. Resurrection life plus eternal life.
3. Each category of eternal life reveals a new aspect of God's perfect integrity and plan.

### C. There is a body for each stage of eternal life.

1. Temporal life plus eternal life has the body of corruption with the old sin nature.

2. The interim life plus eternal life has the interim body, which experiences no more pain, tears, sorrow, old sin nature, or sickness.
  - a. In this interim body, you are recognizable. This is the body you occupy while awaiting your resurrection body, 2 Corinthians 5:8; Revelation 21:4.
  - b. The interim life and eternal life stages make no distinction between winners and losers in the Christian life. It provides sublime happiness for every believer.
  - c. This gives great comfort to loved ones at a funeral. Losers and winners have it just as good in heaven in an interim body.
3. Resurrection life plus eternal life has the resurrection body.
4. Therefore, eternal life exists in two or more categories of life. The person who does not die experiences two categories of eternal life; the person who does die experiences three categories of eternal life.

#### **D. Eternal life is attainable only in time.**

1. Eternal life can only be received while a person lives on earth in his temporal life.
2. You cannot get eternal life once you die as an unbeliever.
3. Eternal life begins in time, 2 Corinthians 6:2. You cannot get eternal life in eternity; you have to get it now.
4. There is only one entrance into eternal life—faith alone in Christ alone.

#### **E. Eternal life belongs only to the believer.**

1. The three categories of eternal life do not apply to the unbeliever, who is described in:

**John 3:18** The one who believes in Him is not condemned. The one who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the one and only Son of God. (NET)

2. Eternal life belongs only to the believer who is never without a body. You always have a body with your eternal life.
3. Eternal life is a technical phrase related to the believer in the Lord Jesus Christ.



4. Eternal life is the life possessed by each member of the Trinity. With them it had no beginning. It has a beginning for us, but no end. There is no such thing as “everlasting life,” which is a mistranslation of the original languages. We must break into eternal life by faith in Christ.
  - a. Eternal life begins the moment we believe in Christ.
  - b. Eternal life continues in our mortal bodies as we live the spiritual life of the Church Age. Eternal life continues at the point of physical death.
  - c. We have a life of immortality at the Rapture of the Church. We have eternal life in an immortal body.
  - d. Once you break into eternal life, you have eternal life forever, and you can never lose your eternal life.

**1 Timothy 6:12** Fight the good fight of faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses. (NIV)

- e. When you believe in Jesus Christ in the state of mortality, you are called into the state of immortality, a calling which will take place at the resurrection. Fighting the good fight of faith is that fantastic witness we have by the execution of our unique spiritual life of the Church Age.

**Jude 21** Guard your own soul in the sphere of the love from God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. (EXT)

**1 John 5:11** And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.

**v. 12** Whoever has the Son has [eternal] life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.” (NIV)

5. The mortality of the unbeliever is spiritual death, and the immortality of the unbeliever is called the second death:

**Revelation 20:12** And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne. Then books were opened, and another book was opened — the book of life [ which records the names of all believers ]. So the dead [ unbelievers ] were judged by what was written in the books according to their deeds [ the books of works because their names were not found in the book of life ].

**v. 13** The sea [ the sea gates of Tartarus or the Abyss, the location of the dead: the נְפִילִים (*Nephilim*), see Genesis 6:4 ] **gave up the dead that were in it; and Death and Hades gave up up the dead which were in them** [ second resurrection of all unbelievers ]; **and and each one was judged according to his deeds. (NET)**

**NOTE:** The unbeliever will be in this courtroom for one reason only: His refusal during his lifetime to personally believe in Jesus Christ. Unbelievers are given a resurrection body and will live forever.

**Revelation 20:14** Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death—the lake of fire.

**v. 15** If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, that person was thrown into the lake of fire. (NET)

6. He who believes in the Son has eternal life, but he who does not believe shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.

**2 Corinthians 5:6** Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord—

**v. 7** for we walk by faith, not by sight—

**v. 8** we are of full of courage, I say, and would prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord. (NASB)

## **F. Resurrection power is given to the Church.**

1. There are two general resurrections.
  - a. The first resurrection is for believers only and is a part of eternal life. In that resurrection all of us receive a body of immortality:

**Daniel 12:2** Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but others to disgrace and everlasting contempt [ **Torments and then the Lake of Fire** ].

**John 5:24** “I [ **Jesus** ] tell you the solemn truth, the one who hears My message and believes in the One who sent Me, has eternal life and will not be condemned, but has crossed over from death to life.

**v. 25** I tell you the solemn truth, a time is coming—and is now here—when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.



**v. 26** For just as the Father has life in himself, thus he has granted the Son to have life in himself, thus he has granted the Son to have life in himself,

**v. 27** and he has granted the Son authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man.

**v. 28** “Do not be amazed at this, because a time is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice,

**v. 29** and will come out—the ones who have done what is good to the resurrection resulting in life, and the ones who have done what is evil to the resurrection resulting in condemnation. (NET)

**1 Corinthians 15:20** But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.

**v. 21** For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead also came through a man.

**1 Corinthians 15:22** For just as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.

**v. 23** But each in his own order: Christ, the firstfruits; then when Christ comes, those who belong to him.

**v. 24** Then comes the end, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, when he has brought to an end all rule and all authority and power.

**v. 25** For he must reign until he has put all His enemies under his feet.

**v. 26** The last enemy to be eliminated is death. (NET)

- b. The second resurrection is for unbelievers only at the end of time. The unbeliever is resurrected still in spiritual death, and they go from spiritual death to the second death, which is life forever in the lake of fire.
2. There are two ways of returning from the dead.
  - a. Resuscitation, in which a person returns from the dead in a body of corruption, and subsequently dies again, like Lazarus.
  - b. Resurrection, in which a person returns from the dead in a body of incorruption, which is called a body of immortality with eternal life.
3. The resurrection of Jesus Christ.

- a. Jesus Christ dismissed His spirit into the custodianship of God the Father:

**Luke 23:46** Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!” And after He said this He breathed His last. (NET)

- b. Our Lord’s soul was taken by the Holy Spirit into Paradise to proclaim His victory to the Old Testament believers and the fallen angels imprisoned in another compartment of Hades called Tartarus.

**Joseph of Arimathaea [ Ἀριμαθαία (*Arimathaía*)]. On the evening after the crucifixion he went “boldly” to Pilate and begged the body of Jesus. There is a fine touch in that he himself took down the body from the cross. With the assistance of Nicodémus he wound it in fine linen with species and brought it with to the new sepulcher in the garden near the place of His crucifixion.**

**There they “laid Him in a tomb that was hewn in stone, where never man had yet lain” and ‘rolled a stone against the door of the tomb’ (cf. Matthew 27:57–60).<sup>12</sup>**

- c. Joseph, a member of the Jewish **Συνέδριον (*Sunédriion*)**, went into the grave in:

**Luke 23:53** Then he took it down [ **the body of Jesus** ], wrapped it in a linen cloth, and placed it in a tomb cut out of the rock, where no one had yet been buried. (NET)

- d. In resurrection, the omnipotence of God the Father returned the Lord’s human spirit to His body in the grave, and God the Holy Spirit restored His soul to the body in the tomb. Our Lord then walked through the stone door.
4. The power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead is now available to every Church Age believer, and that has never occurred before in human history.
- a. This power is not available to us when we are out of fellowship. The unique spiritual life of the Church Age is based upon this resurrection power. The power of our Lord’s resurrection is now available in the spiritual life of every Church Age believer as a royal priest.

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<sup>12</sup> C. M. Kerr, “Joseph of Arimathaea” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, vol. III, gen. ed. James Orr (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1956), 1741.



- b. There is an equally phenomenal discipline for rejecting this power. We have an equal and opposite punishment for being out of fellowship. We have the greatest power available to us when in fellowship and an equally powerful punishment for being out of fellowship. We have the option of executing the spiritual life under the greatest power ever given to mankind or the option of the greatest punishment from God if we do not wish to have the power of the filling of the Spirit. We receive the greatest power and receive the greatest punishment for rejecting it.
- c. Only those who advance in the spiritual life will have this power of the Spirit.
- 5. The power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead is available to every Church Age believer for the execution of the unique spiritual life of human history. This power is also involved in the resurrection of the Church.

**1 Corinthians 6:14** By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also. (NIV)

**1 Thessalonians 4:13** But I do not desire to have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them who are asleep for the purpose that you sorrow not, even as others who have no absolute confidence of everlasting life.

**v. 14** For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again and we do believe this, even so God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.

**v. 15** For this we keep on saying to you and to your advantage, in the sphere of the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord at the rapture, shall not precede them who are asleep.

**v. 16** For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven, with the voice command of the archangel [ **Gabriel** ] and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

**v. 17** Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

**v. 18** Therefore, comfort one another with these words!” (EXT)

In the dangerous, corrupt, and blasphemous time in which we live, it is comforting to know that our permanent citizenship is in heaven about which Paul comments in:

**Philippians 3:18** For many reversionistic believes keep walking concerning whom I have communicated to you often and now continue doing so, even though weeping, that they have made themselves enemies of the cross of Christ,

**v. 19** whose termination keeps on being destruction, whose god is their emotions, and whose glory is by means of dishonor, who keep on thinking cosmic things.

**v. 20** But our aristocracy keeps on existing in the sphere of heaven, from which place we eagerly anticipate the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;

**v. 21** Who will transform the body of our humble station in conformity with that of His resurrection body according to the operational power from which this same one, Jesus Christ, keeps on being able also to bring under His authority all things to Himself. (EXT)

The Apostle John seals the biblical testimony with his concluding imperative command to Jesus Christ Himself in:

**Revelation 22:20:**

John: “The one Who testifies to these things says,

Jesus Christ: ‘Yes, I am coming soon.’

This is followed by John’s present middle imperative of entreaty:

“Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!”

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