

Eternal Life

Eternal life is also a fact. Jesus said, “*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). Life is the enjoyment of the blessings of God. Physical life is the enjoyment of the physical blessings of God. Spiritual life is the enjoyment of the spiritual blessings of God. When Adam and Eve sinned, they lost spiritual life and became spiritually dead (Eph. 2:1). Only through faith in Jesus is spiritual life restored. When we believe that God has forgiven our sins for Jesus’ sake, we can again rejoice in the presence of God. It is in the enjoyment of God’s gracious love that our spiritual life consists.

Heaven is the continuation and the full enjoyment of that full life which began when we were brought to faith by the Holy Spirit. We have eternal life now already (John 5:24; 6:47). This new life we have with God will never end. Jesus said, “*I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in Me will never die,*” (John 11:25,26).

What will heaven be like? When the Bible describes heaven, it often speaks in terms of what will not be there. That is because we simply do not have the ability in our sinful state to understand or appreciate all that heaven will be.

Concerning eternal life Paul wrote, “*And so we will be with the Lord forever,*” (1 Thess. 4:17). The chief joy of eternal life is that we will be forever in the presence of our loving God and Saviour. The Bible does not speak of a carnal type of heaven, which Muslims hope for. Heaven will not be full of the material pleasures people long for in this life, such as wine, women, and song. Rather, in heaven we will live forever in the loving presence of our Saviour. It wouldn’t be heaven without Jesus!

In heaven we will enjoy what has been called the beatific vision. Jesus had said, “*I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of My Father in heaven,*” (Matt. 18:10). The good angels always behold the face of God. There never is a time when they do not see Him. In a similar way, we also will be granted the blessed vision of always being able to see our loving Saviour. John wrote, “*We know that when He appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is,*” (1 John 3:2). Job said, “*I myself will see Him with my own eyes - I, and not another,*” (Job 19:27). David wrote, “*And I - in righteousness I will see Your face; when I awake, I will be satisfied with seeing Your likeness,*” (Ps. 17:15).

This blessed vision of God will serve to confirm believers in holiness. It will not be that God by His almighty power prevents us from sinning. Rather, those in heaven will have no desire to do anything but the will of God. We will be like the good angels, who were confirmed in holiness after they obeyed God. As Jesus said, “*They can no longer die; for they are like the angels,*” (Luke 20:36). Death is the wages of sin. If there is no death, there is no sin. It will be impossible for those in heaven to fall away. The church father Origen (A.D. 185-289) believed that there could be no virtue unless there was a possibility of sinning. Thus he held that angels and resurrected believers are subject to temptation and apostasy. Yet John describes heaven in this way: “*On no day will its gates ever be shut, for*

there will be no night there,” (Rev. 21:25). The gates of a city were shut when there was danger of an attack. Such danger never threatens the heavenly Jerusalem. Therefore, its gates never need closing.

In heaven we will have glorified bodies patterned after the resurrection body of Christ (Phil. 3:21). We will be like the angels. Jesus said, *“Those who are considered worthy of taking part in that age and in the resurrection from the dead will neither marry nor be given in marriage, and they can no longer die; for they are like the angels,”* (Luke 20:35-36). We shall know our earthly spouses in heaven. We will enjoy their company forever. But the institution of marriage is for this life only. The ordinary family relationships we know here on this earth will not apply in heaven.

We look forward to a blessed reunion in heaven with our loved ones who also died in faith in Christ. Paul wrote, *“For the Lord Himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever,”* (1 Thess. 4:16-17).

In heaven, the painful separation brought about by death will be over. We will be reunited with our loved ones around the Saviour’s throne of grace. In heaven, the curse of sin will be removed. John writes of heaven, *“He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain,”* (Rev. 21:4). As Isaiah described it, *“The sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it [Jerusalem] no more. Never again will there be in it an infant that lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his years,”* (Is. 65:19-20).

Jacob described his life as *“my years have been few and difficult,”* (Gen. 47:9). But John wrote of heaven, *“Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat,”* (Rev. 7:16). *“The old order of things has passed away,”* (Rev. 21:4). It will be as David wrote, *“You have made known to me the path of life; You will fill me with joy in Your presence, with eternal pleasures at Your right hand,”* (Ps. 16:11).