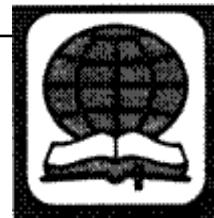


Lesson 27**EVERLASTING LIFE****Reading John 3**

You will already have noted in this Bible course that the first man Adam was made by God forming a body and then breathing into it the breath of life. But Adam and Eve sinned and so became dying creatures. All men and women eventually die, because all are sinners, and the punishment for sin is death (see Romans 5:12). We are all mortal (or dying). It is unthinkable that sinners should live for ever.

Only one man has been made immortal (never to die again), and that is Jesus. He overcame the power of death by living a sinless life. That is why God raised him from the grave and gave him everlasting life. Of course, God Himself is undying; He is "from everlasting to everlasting". Apart from God, only Jesus Christ and the angels possess immortality at the present time. Please read 1 Timothy 6:15-16.

The wonderful thing about the gospel is that through a belief in God's purpose and the saving work of Jesus, it is possible for us to have the hope of everlasting life.

"(God's grace) is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel..." (2 Timothy 1:10).

We cannot earn everlasting life

"The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

As we have already seen, everlasting life is God's gift. None of us, however good, deserves it. As sinners, the best we can expect is to enjoy some of the benefits of life on this planet for up to 70 or 80 years.

Look at the contrast (found in Psalm 90):

GOD'S ENDLESS NATURE

(Psalm 90:2)

"Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God."

MAN'S DYING NATURE

(Psalm 90:10)

"The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away."

So we will go to the grave and corrupt, to be no more, unless we have the Bible hope of eternal life in Jesus Christ.

All the great Bible characters who believed God's promises had this hope. They looked for a better time to come in the future.

See what is said about Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, David and many others (in Hebrews 11:13).

"These all died in faith, **not having received the promises**, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth."

Paul and John, like other apostles, looked forward to eternal life (see Titus 1:2; 1 John 2:25).

"In **hope** of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began."

"And this is the **promise** that he hath promised us, even eternal life."

Everlasting life is not for everybody

If everyone automatically were to receive everlasting life there would be no point in striving to obey God's commandments. The promise of living for ever is made only to those who are seeking to respond to God's love. If you read Romans 2:6 - 7, you will see that we all have a choice. God will give eternal life to those –

"who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality."

If we do not seek for it, then there is no hope of a future life.

Eternal life and everlasting life

You will have noticed that some of the passages we have quoted talk about immortality (or everlasting life), while some use the phrase 'eternal life'. Eternal life is life which shows God's qualities. If we live lives which are truly Godly, God by His grace will reward us with endless life (everlasting life).

**TO HAVE ETERNAL LIFE MEANS TO LIVE FOR EVER IN
RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HARMONY WITH GOD**

When will this eternal life which lasts for ever be given?

It will be given by Jesus Christ to the faithful after the resurrection from the dead. The prophet Daniel looked forward to it:

"Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt" (Daniel 12:2).

This will be when Jesus comes back and calls those who 'sleep' in the earth. They 'sleep' because the Lord will call them from the grave to life.

"For the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life" (John 5:28-29).

In lessons 25 and 26 we discussed the raising of the dead and the judgement which will follow when Christ will give his verdicts. Those who have faithfully followed Jesus will be those called 'the saints' - the ones selected to rule with King Jesus during his 1000 years reign in Jerusalem.

These men and women will receive eternal life, not only because it will be the gracious gift of God for their faithfulness in this age, but also because it will be necessary to have perfect and healthy governors in the Kingdom of God.

Why is that? In our present systems of government, rulers and officials are rarely just and righteous; they are not sufficiently wise to solve the evils of the world; they often do not have the resources or authority to do the good things they would like to do; and even the best of them, when they do manage to make some progress, become old or fall sick and die.

Those who have eternal life will not change or weaken, and since they have been appointed by God they will be wise and just.

A SAINT IS A TRUE BELIEVER

'Saint' means 'set apart' or 'holy'. True believers are not like the people in the world; they try to be godly.

What will the immortal saints look like?

Many wonder what the saints will look like when they have been made immortal. Will they be recognisable? Will they eat and sleep? Although we do not know all the details, the Bible does give us some information on the matter.

We know that Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and the prophets will be recognised in the Kingdom (see Luke 13:28).

We have the example of Jesus himself, when he was clearly recognised by certain women and by the apostles after his resurrection. He shared meats with the disciples. His body still had the marks of the cruel torture on the cross, and the disciples were allowed to touch him.

It is true that there were moments when they wondered if he were some sort of ghost when he appeared miraculously in front of them. But he told them:

"Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see: for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have" (Luke 24:39).

It is clear that Jesus, possessing everlasting life, still had 'flesh and bones'. The record does not say that he had flesh and blood, because in Bible terms, "the life of the flesh is in the blood" (Leviticus 17:11). In other words, ordinary life is energised by blood, but Jesus now lived by God's power.

When Jesus gives people everlasting life, their human bodies will become "spiritual bodies" (1 Corinthians 15:44, 53). Their new bodies will then be energised by the Spirit of God instead of the blood which dies. There will be no pain, no depression, no weakening of the mind or of the body. There will be no suffering of any kind.

"And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Revelation 21:4).

The marvels of everlasting life!

What a wonderful way to live; to be able to enjoy fully all the good things which God gives us.

There will be the blessings

of health
of strength;
of good food;
of peace and security;
of knowing more about the things of God.

There will no more struggle against sin for the righteous.

You will remember that for a short while in the first century the apostles were given gifts of the Holy Spirit. Some could preach the gospel in foreign languages; some could heal the sick and cure mental diseases. These were just the 'firstfruits' - a pointer to the harvest of such gifts which the saints of the Kingdom of God will possess.

What a marvellous glimpse we are given of the future!

Eternal life is not just for 1000 years; it is for ever. Perhaps this is difficult for us to understand, because it is so different from life today. Some have been tempted to think that everlasting life would be boring. But God would never promise something which would be unattractive.

"For since the beginning of the world, men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him" (Isaiah 64:4).

We cannot understand the wonders of that time. When the great and rewarding activity of the millennium (the 1000 - year reign of Jesus Christ) is over, there will be an even better time! For then "God will be all in all" (1 Corinthians 15:28), and there will be a perfect relationship between the Creator and all His creation. This is how God planned it in the beginning.

This is the promise of eternal life.

Summary

1. God, Jesus and the angels are the only ones who have immortality now.
2. After the judgement, the righteous (or saints) will be given eternal life and be made immortal.
3. Those made immortal will have spiritual bodies. They will not suffer pain and will be unable to sin. They will be full of God's energy.

Passages to read

Daniel 12:1-3; John 17; 1 Corinthians 15:50-57

Learn by heart

John 3:16

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."