

Go Deeper
02.27.22

SALVATION AS KNOWING GOD, ETERNAL LIFE IN THE PRESENT

In the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke), salvation is identified especially with the entrance into the kingdom of God. In John it is usually described as eternal life. John does occasionally speak of the kingdom of God, and the Synoptics speak of eternal life, but these references are exceptional. Both John and the Synoptics describe salvation as both “already” and “not yet,” having both present and future dimensions. But the greater emphasis in the fourth gospel is on the present. The Son came to bring eternal life, and this is now available to all who believe. Jesus says, “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full (John 10:10). While Jesus will raise the dead on the last day, he is already the resurrection and the life, bestowing eternal life on those who believe. This is called ‘realized eschatology’; God’s end-times salvation is already present in the life of the believer.

Salvation is a present possession because eternal life is equivalent to knowing God, a relationship with the Father through the Son. “Now this is eternal life; that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent” (17:3). This relationship with God happens through regeneration, being “born again,” when the Father and Son come to live in the believer. When this happens, they come to know the truth and are set free. They now walk in the “light.”¹

- Pastor Corey mentioned that “This life is not all there is.” In light of what John’s Gospel teaches about eternal life, how would you articulate the notion that ‘this life is not all there is?’
- Have you ever thought about eternal life in present terms? Or have you only considered that it begins upon physical death?
- How might we live differently if we believed that eternal life begins the minute one surrenders their life to Jesus?
- How do you think this truth would impact the way you share your faith, if at all? Should this knowledge affect the way we talk about life and death?
- Have you ever thought of eternal life in terms of knowing God?
- Do you believe that the freedom that is usually attributed to the heavenly future inheritance is actually available now in the earthly life as a present reality?
- There is a sense in which as a Christ follower, having received eternal life now, that you cannot die. There is a passing from one reality to another, but death is not death because of what Jesus accomplished on the cross. Are you emboldened by this? Why or why not?

¹ Mark L Strauss, *Four Portraits, One Jesus: A Survey of Jesus and the Gospels*, 2nd Edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2020).