

BIBLICAL REFERENCES TO THE PROMISE OF ETERNAL LIFE FROM THE GOSPEL AND LETTERS OF JOHN

John emphasizes that eternal life is directly connected to Jesus and the power that God has granted to him. On the one hand, the future reality of eternal life follows resurrection and judgement. On the other hand, in terms of the promise of faith, it is a present reality as well.

John 3 (Jesus came to give eternal life to those who believe)

13 No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. 14 And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, 15 that whoever believes in him may have **eternal life**. 16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have **eternal life**."

35 The Father loves the Son and has placed all things in his hands. 36 Whoever believes in the Son has **eternal life**; whoever disobeys the Son will not see **life**, but must endure God's wrath.

John 4 (Jesus' Word is the water of life)

14 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**."

John 4 (Jesus speaks of the call to harvest the faith sown in the Word)

35 Do you not say, 'Four months more, then comes the harvest'? But I tell you, look around you, and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting. 36 The reaper is already receiving wages and is gathering fruit for **eternal life**, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together.

John 5 (Jesus himself has the power of resurrection, judgement, and eternal life)

21 Indeed, just as the Father raises the dead and gives them **life**, so also the Son gives **life** to whomever he wishes. 22 The Father judges no one but has given all judgment to the Son, 23 so that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. Anyone who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him. 24 Very truly, I tell you, anyone who hears my word and believes him who sent me has **eternal life**, and does not come under judgment, but has passed from death to life.

25 "Very truly, I tell you, the hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will **live**. 26 For just as the Father has **life** in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have **life** in himself; 27 and he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. 28 Do not be astonished at this; for the hour is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice 29 and will come out — those who have done good, to the resurrection of **life**, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.

John 5 (The Scriptures testify to Jesus' power to give life)

39 "You search the scriptures because you think that in them you have **eternal life**; and it is they that testify on my behalf. 40 Yet you refuse to come to me to have **life**."

John 6 (Miraculous signs point back to Jesus as the giver of eternal life)

6 Jesus answered them, "Very truly, I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. 27 Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for **eternal life**, which the Son of Man will give you. For it is on him that God the Father has set his seal."

John 6 (Eternal life will commence on the "last day")

39 And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. 40 This is indeed the will of my Father, that all who see the Son and believe in him may have **eternal life**; and I will raise them up on the last day."

John 6 (Eternal life is also a present-tense promise)

46 Not that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God; he has seen the Father. 47 Very truly, I tell you, whoever believes has **eternal life** ...

Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. 54 Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have **eternal life**, and I will raise them up on the last day..."

John 6 (True disciples recognize the promise of life in Jesus)

67 So Jesus asked the twelve, "Do you also wish to go away?" 68 Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of **eternal life**. 69 We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God."

John 10 (Jesus' power over life and death extends to his followers as well)

17 For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. 18 No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father."

27 My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. 28 I give them **eternal life**, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand. 29 What my Father has given me is greater than all else, and no one can snatch it out of the Father's hand. 30 The Father and I are one."

John 11 (Jesus himself is the resurrection and the life; he makes it happen)

23 Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." 24 Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." 25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life.* Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, 26 and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.

John 12 (An earthly death leads to eternal life with Jesus)

24 Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. 25 Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for **eternal life**. 26 Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.

John 12 (The Word of God will be our judge; Jesus has the authority of eternal life from God)

48 The one who rejects me and does not receive my word has a judge; on the last day the word that I have spoken will serve as judge, 49 for I have not spoken on my own, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment about what to say and what to speak. 50 And I know that his commandment is **eternal life**. What I speak, therefore, I speak just as the Father has told me."

John 14 (Jesus alone is the way, the truth, and the life)

5 Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" 6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the **life**. No one comes to the Father except through me. 7 If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him."

John 17 (Jesus authority to grant eternal life in faith)

1 After Jesus had spoken these words, he looked up to heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, 2 since you have given him authority over all people, to give **eternal life** to all whom you have given him. 3 And this is **eternal life**, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

1 John 1 (God's Word affirms the promise of eternal life in Christ)

1 We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of **life** — 2 this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it, and declare to you the **eternal life** that was with the Father and was revealed to us — 3 we declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.

1 John 2 (Eternal life has been promised to us in faith)

24 Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you will abide in the Son and in the Father. 25 And this is what he has promised us, **eternal life**.

1 John 3 (Eternal life is a promise that abides in us, but not in all)

14 We know that we have passed from death to life because we love one another. Whoever does not love abides in death. 15 All who hate a brother or sister are murderers, and you know that murderers do not have **eternal life** abiding in them.

11 And this is the testimony: God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. 12 Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

1 John 5 (John writes so that we would believe in Jesus and have eternal life)

11 And this is the testimony: God gave us **eternal life**, and this life is in his Son. 12 Whoever has the Son has **life**; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have **life**. 13 I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have **eternal life**. ...

20 And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding so that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and **eternal life**.

SOME SELECTED NEW TESTAMENT REFERENCES TO THE PROMISE OF ETERNAL LIFE

The uses the phrase "eternal life" to speak of the hope and promise of a future life, brought about by God. Referred to by Jesus as "the age to come", it is a period that follows the resurrection and judgement, to be experienced only by the "righteous" who belong to Christ. Likewise, the Apostle Paul speaks of eternal life as the outcome of faith and justification — a future life with Christ. The book of Revelation also connects the promise of life in the new creation with those who are claimed by Jesus.

Matthew 19 (inherit eternal life, at the time of judgement/renewal)

28 Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man is seated on the throne of his glory, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. 29 And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold, and will inherit **eternal life**. 30 But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first.

Matthew 25 (eternal life follows judgement day)

44 Then they also will answer, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?' 45 Then he will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' 46 And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into **eternal life**."

Mark 10 (eternal life = in the age to come)

29 Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the good news, 30 who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age — houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields, with persecutions — and in the age to come **eternal life**. 31 But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first."

Luke 18 (eternal life = in the age to come)

28 Then Peter said, "Look, we have left our homes and followed you." 29 And he said to them, "Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, 30 who will not get back very much more in this age, and in the age to come **eternal life**."

Acts 13 (The message of salvation is a message of eternal life)

46 Since you [Jews] reject it and judge yourselves to be unworthy of **eternal life**, we are now turning to the Gentiles. 47 For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, 'I have set you to be a light for the Gentiles, so that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.'" 48 When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and praised the word of the Lord; and as many as had been destined for **eternal life** became believers.

Romans 2 (Our faith is shown by how we live)

6 For he will repay according to each one's deeds: 7 to those who by patiently doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give **eternal life**; 8 while for those who are self-seeking and who obey not the truth but wickedness, there will be wrath and fury.

Romans 4 (Faith is trusting that God has the power to bring us back to life)

16 For this reason it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants... in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives **life** to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.

Romans 5 (Justification leads to eternal life in Christ)

20 But law came in, with the result that the trespass multiplied; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, 21 so that, just as sin exercised dominion in death, so grace might also exercise dominion through justification leading to **eternal life** through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Romans 6 (The end of sin is death; the end of faith is eternal life)

21 So what advantage did you then get from the things of which you now are ashamed? The end of those things is death. 22 But now that you have been freed from sin and enslaved to God, the advantage you get is sanctification. The end is **eternal life**. 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is **eternal life** in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Galatians 6 (When the Spirit is sown in us, we reap eternal life in the end)

7 Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for you reap whatever you sow. 8 If you sow to your own flesh, you will reap corruption from the flesh; but if you sow to the Spirit, you will reap **eternal life** from the Spirit. 9 So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up.

1 Timothy 1 (Jesus saves us through faith, giving us eternal life)

15 The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners — of whom I am the foremost. 16 But for that very reason I received mercy, so that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display the utmost patience, making me an example to those who would come to believe in him for **eternal life**.

1 Timothy 6 (We need not be ashamed to claim eternal life in faith)

12 Fight the good fight of the faith; take hold of the **eternal life**, to which you were called and for which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. 13 In the presence of God, who gives **life** to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you 14 to keep the commandment without spot or blame until the manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ, 15 which he will bring about at the right time ...

2 Timothy 1 (God has brought life and immortality to light in the gospel)

He saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to his own purpose and grace. This grace was given to us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, 10 but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought **life** and **immortality** to light through the gospel.

Titus 1 (We have hope because God promises eternal life, and God does not lie)

1 Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth that is in accordance with godliness, 2 in the hope of **eternal life** that God, who never lies, promised before the ages began ...

Titus 3 (Jesus saved us and made us heirs of eternal life)

4 But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, 5 he saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy, through the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit. 6 This Spirit he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of **eternal life**. 8 The saying is sure.

Jude (Hold on to faith, looking forward to eternal life; have this same mercy on others)

20 But you, beloved, build yourselves up on your most holy faith lay in the Holy Spirit; 21 keep yourselves in the love of God; look forward to the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to **eternal life**. 22 And have mercy on some who are wavering; 23 save others by snatching them out of the fire; and have mercy on still others with fear, hating even the tunic defiled by their bodies.

Revelation 2 (The promise of future life, come from the one who overcame death)

7 Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches. To everyone who conquers, I will give permission to eat from the tree of **life** that is in the paradise of God. 8 "And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: These are the words of the first and the last, who was dead and came to **life** ... Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of **life**. 11 Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches. Whoever conquers will not be harmed by the second death.

Revelation 20 (Condemnation is based on works; salvation on the Lamb's book of life)

Also another book was opened, the book of **life**. And the dead were judged according to their works, as recorded in the books. 13 And the sea gave up the dead that were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and all were judged according to what they had done. 14 Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire; 15 and anyone whose name was not found written in the book of **life** was thrown into the lake of fire.

Revelation 21 (Those who will dwell in eternity are written in the Lamb's book of life)

22 I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb... 27 But nothing unclean will enter it, nor anyone who practices abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of **life**.