

“Heirs According to the Hope of Eternal Life” Titus 3:7

The Apostle Paul wrote to Titus of the great hope of eternal life. It is the hope of all brethren in Christ to see the day of our Master’s return and the realization of the hope of which Paul spoke. There is however, confusion in the Brotherhood on the subject of eternal life. The “hope of eternal life” has been replaced for some with the belief that they now possess that for which Paul only hoped. Some claim possession of that which Paul said we are only “heirs” to now.

In support of their position, the writers have claimed that the gospel of John teaches the present possession of eternal life¹. Is this true? Does John teach that we now possess eternal life? Does he teach we possess eternal life in a literal or a legal sense at the present? I believe that this claim is not true. A careful examination of John’s gospel will reveal that John agrees with Paul; that we hope for eternal life to come.

Eternal Life in the gospel of John

The following verses from John’s gospel are submitted by some to prove that there is a present possession of eternal life; 3:15, 16, 36; 4:14, 36; 5:24; 6:27, 40, 47, 54, 68; 10:28, 12:25, 50; 17:2, 3. As we carefully examine them, we will find that these verses do not teach the notion of eternal life as a present possession. The verses in chapters three and four are well known to all. The apostasy’s misuse of them is well known also. I ask the reader to allow us to address these references along with the verses in chapter six, so that we will not have to repeat the same arguments multiple times. We will begin with the account in chapter five.

John 5:24

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.”

In order to determine the meaning of this verse, we must examine the context of the surrounding verses. I do not believe that this has been done, as it should have been. We must also be careful so as not to adopt the apostasy’s view of what it

¹ It is not claimed that the believer possesses literal immortality. It is claimed that there is a legal sense in which the believer now has eternal life. I do not believe this is a scriptural position. Paul says we are “heirs” of eternal life (Titus 3:7). If we possess eternal life in a legal sense, then we are no longer “heirs”. Paul says we are “Heirs”!

means to “hear” and “believe”. Beginning with the twenty-first verse, the subject of the chapter is resurrection and judgment. Look closely –

Verse 21 – *“For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will.”* – Yahshua will resurrect and quicken whom he wills.

Verse 22 – *“For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son”* – The events of the Bema have been given unto Christ. He will judge those to whom he will grant eternal life.

Verse 23 – *“That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him.”* – When the judgment seat comes, the honor that was being denied Christ by his adversaries would be afforded to him, as it should. The context to this point has clearly related to future events.

Verse 24 – *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.”* – Bearing in mind that Jesus has been speaking of the resurrection and judgment, this verse is easy to understand. Those who hear and do² the word of Yahweh will have “everlasting life”, will not come into “condemnation”, and will pass “from death unto life” at the judgment seat of our Lord. Some may believe that the “condemnation” spoken of in this verse is “Adamic condemnation”, but the context does not support such an idea. Not only do the next five verses strictly relate to the judgment seat of the Lord, but also verse 29 clearly shows that the “condemnation” referred to is eternal condemnation rendered at the judgment seat of our Lord.

Verses 28 and 29 – *“Marvel not at this: 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; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.”* - The Greek word for “damnation here is “Krisis” or tribunal. The same word is rendered “condemnation” in verse 24. Therefore the tribunal seat of Christ is referred to in both verses. I would also point out to those who maintain the position of no resurrection outside of covenant relationship, that to maintain that verse 24 teaches the present possession of eternal life would require them to adopt the view that verse 29 teaches a resurrection of uncovenanted persons. I would suggest that this alone would cause some adherents to the present possession of eternal life theory to admit that they have made a mistake. Or, could it be they have changed their position on who will be resurrected as well?

² I say, “hear and do” because the Greek word for “believeth” in this verse implies a faithful walk. It is the word “pisteuo”, which Strong’s says implies faith. As faith without works is dead, a faithful walk is implied here. This understanding of “believeth” also explains John 3:16 correctly as well.

The fifth chapter of John does not teach the present possession of eternal life then. It teaches the reward of eternal life, to those who walk faithfully, at the Tribunal of Yahshua.

John Chapter 6

There are five verses cited from this chapter to support the view of present possession of eternal life³. While I could cite pioneer references that show that the verses have not been viewed as supporting present possession of eternal life in our community historically, I prefer to examine the scriptures alone.

Verse 27 – “Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.” – The people had come unto Yahshua seeking natural bread. The day before, they had seen him feed the multitudes, and wanted more of the same. Yahshua wanted them to seek him for spiritual food. Food that if they would take of it would “ENDURE UNTO everlasting life”. This verse clearly teaches that our present “LABOUR” can result in the reception of eternal life. This is verified in the words spoken by the Messiah, “shall give”, in which the Greek is in the future, not the present tense. I find it very odd that this verse was even cited to support their view. Let us continue through the chapter for more of the context. The people then wanted a sign that was like unto the sign of Moses delivering manna from heaven. To this Yahshua replied -

Verse 35 – “And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.” – This verse receives heavy weight by the principal adherents to the false notion of eternal life now. They are short sighted in believing it supports their position. They claim that we have eaten of the bread of life now and therefore possess eternal life. While it is true we eat the word of Yahweh, is it true that we have eaten the bread of life? The word of Yahweh of which we do now eat is like the quail given in the evening by Yahweh. It has sustained us this long gentile night. The Bread of Life however will accompany the morning of resurrection, when the dew will reveal in glorious sunlight the reward of life that will be given unto the faithful. Let us ask a simple question to set the verse in context, “Do you my dear Brother or Sister no longer hunger or thirst in this life?” This alone answers the question. It is an absurdity to claim we do not literally hunger or thirst once we come into Christ. Do we not all occasionally awake to get a drink of water for thirst’s sake? Do we not feel hunger if we have missed a meal, or in some cases a snack? Of course we still literally hunger and thirst in this present age.

³ Personal conversation has confirmed that it is a “legal” sense, not literal immortal life that is believed. I would submit that any Non-Christadelphian reading these works would not come to that conclusion however. Those who maintain that we have eternal life in a “legal” sense should be troubled by all of the confusion their writings can, and have caused. Paul does not write of us having eternal life in **any** sense. He says we are “heirs according to the hope of eternal life”. The only legal position we have in Christ as it relates to “eternal life” is that we now have the **hope** of it in Christ. The hope of eternal life is far different from the possession of eternal life.

The believer of present possession of eternal life may object here and say; "It is in a spiritual sense that we no longer hunger or thirst when we come into Christ. Yea, we have eternal life now!" This also is an objectionable position when the scripture is weighed. If you do not hunger and thirst spiritually, my dear Brother or Sister, you are spiritually dead. What saith the Master on this! "*Blessed are they which **do hunger and thirst after righteousness**: for they shall be filled*" (Matthew 5:6). So we see that if we are spiritually-minded, we must hunger and thirst spiritually now! If we claim otherwise, we are of no use to the Lord. Consider also the testimony of David, "*As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?*" (Psalm 42:1-2). "*O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary*" (Psalm 63:1-2). David speaks of thirsting to be in Yahweh's presence. We also should desire such.

Isaiah also speaks of the resurrection as a time when hunger and thirst will end, "*Thus saith the LORD, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages; That thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves. They shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places. They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them. And I will make all my mountains a way, and my highways shall be exalted. Behold, these shall come from far: and, lo, these from the north and from the west; and these from the land of Sinim. Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the LORD hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted*" (Isaiah 49: 8-13). See also Revelation 7:14-17.

The testimony of Yahshua, David, Isaiah, and John is clear. If we are desirous of eternal life, we hunger and thirst literally and spiritually in this present life. This Scriptural view of things also shows for us the correct application of John 4:14. For Yahshua said unto the woman of Samaria that when one drinks of the water that he "shall give" one will "never thirst". While it is true that the word of Yahweh is water and bread, John's focus is on the bestowal of immortality when hunger and thirst are forever fulfilled.

The Bread of Life

Why is Yahshua called the "Bread of Life"? Why does eating this bread cause one to never hunger or thirst again? The Master was building on a particular symbol here. The children of Israel fed upon manna for forty years in the wilderness.

While it sustained them, it was not living bread, for if they tried to preserve it “it bred worms, and stank” (Exodus 16:20). The “living bread” was that which did not corrupt, of which no one ever ate (Exodus 16:33), because it was placed within the ark of the testimony of Yahweh. The symbol is consistent with the truth of living bread. While both the children of Israel and we have fed upon Yahweh’s word, neither they nor we have partaken of the “living bread”. It is still before Yahweh. It is said by John in the apocalypse to be the reward of the faithful, *“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the ecclesias; To him that **overcometh** will I give to eat of **the hidden manna**”* (Revelation 2:17). This “Hidden Manna” is the Bread of [the] Life.

I have styled it “The Bread of **The** Life” because I believe it gives the phrase its correct emphasis. The word in the Greek for “life” is “zoe” and is used to express immortal life in the following testimonies. *“To him that **overcometh** will I give to eat of **the tree of life**”* Revelation 2:7. He who overcomes will eat of the tree of “zoe”. *“Be thou **faithful unto death**, and I will give thee a **crown of life**”* Revelation 2:10. To the individual who is faithful unto death, he will give a crown of “zoe”. *“He that **overcometh**, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and **I will not blot out his name out of the book of life**, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels”* Revelation 3:5. To the believer who overcomes and is faithful, he will grant “zoe”, having their names recorded in the book of the “zoe”. Further, John records that Yahshua said, *“Jesus said unto her, **I am the resurrection, and the life**: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live”* 11:25. And again, *“He that loveth his life [psuche] shall lose it; and he that hateth his life [psuche] in this world shall keep it unto life [zoe] eternal”* 12:25.

In all of these references, John uses “zoe” to denote that which we hope for, immortality. “Zoe” is a reward and not a present possession. Upon this foundation, the rest of John chapter six is easily discerned. In verse 40, John says we “*may*” receive everlasting life. In verses 47 and 48, this teaching of “*The bread of [the] life*” is repeated again, which verse 35 said relieves spiritual and literal hunger and thirst. Verse 50 states that all who eat of this “*bread of life*” will “not die”, but many saints have died (cp. 1Thessalonians 4:16; 1Corinthians 15:13; Revelation 20:12). In verse 51 he records, *“I am the **living bread** which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he **shall** live for ever”*. Why must he live forever? Because the living bread is immortality! It is the “hidden manna”! Verse 58 repeats the same certainty; he “**shall** live for ever”.

The subject of eternal life in John chapter six is the immortality given to the faithful servants. They realize that Yahshua has the words of “eternal life” (v. 68). They live by them, and having overcome the world and the flesh, they are given the “hidden manna”, the “bread of the life”. They will never hunger or thirst again, because they have been found to “believe” (pisteuo, or have been faithful) at the tribunal of the Master, and are granted life everlasting with their Lord. This reward cannot be given to the unfaithful.

Epilogue

Examined closely, John does not teach the present possession of eternal life in a legal or a literal sense. He teaches the hope of eternal life as a result of a faithful probation. The exhortation of John is clear; we must digest the words of the Master in this life. If we do so faithfully, that which has not been eaten heretofore will be given to the faithful stewards of Yahweh's word, Eternal Life!

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