



*what is
eternal life?*



ETERNAL LIFE

A Biblical Perspective

In our day and age, there is a real lack of understanding about the New Covenant, and the nature of eternal life.

For that reason, let's take a biblical look at what the New Covenant is all about, and what eternal life is, according to Jesus... who should know.

God's promise of a New Covenant with his people, found in Jeremiah 31:31-34 says:

"The time is coming," declares the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them," declares the Lord. "This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time," declares the Lord. "**I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts.** I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' because **they will all know me**, from the least of them to the greatest," declares the Lord,



"For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."

Notice in that passage that the forgiveness of sins is more a means to an end, rather than the focus of the passage. The real focus is on what God, Himself, is after.

After clearly stating his purpose, God says, "For... or because... I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."

God's actual goal is to have a people whose lives line up with His will and who **know him**... meaning they are intimately acquainted with him, his ways and his nature.

A parallel passage in Ezekiel 36:26-27 reads:

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and **cause you** to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.

So, the goal of the New Covenant is the creation of a people of God who truly walk in his ways, meaning they obey Him from the heart, and who know him,



meaning they are like him... sharing in his very nature.

These are the things God is looking to have in his people. He wants his people to obey him because their hearts are right, not by observing external rules or laws. He wants his people to share in his nature and reflect his glory. I'm convinced that a clear understanding of these truths is essential to an individual and a collective New Covenant walk by believers.

The scriptural evidence for these statements, in addition to the ones already looked at in Jeremiah and Ezekiel, follows:

John 17:1-3: After Jesus said this; he looked toward heaven and prayed: "Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. Now **this IS eternal life**: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent."

So, Jesus himself **defined** eternal life... the heart of the gospel message... as knowing God. This is the only place in scripture where eternal life is actually defined, and the definition the Lord gave has nothing to do, surprisingly, with length, time or eternity... or even heaven.



If Jesus defined eternal life as "knowing God", and God says that "knowing him" is the central issue of the New Covenant [Jeremiah 31:34], then it is vitally important for us to understand what knowing God means, scripturally. We will look at some passages that shed more light on this.

Jeremiah 9:23-24: This is what the LORD says: "Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this: that he **understands and knows me**, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight," declares the Lord.

Jeremiah 22:13-16: "Woe to him who builds his palace by unrighteousness, his upper rooms by injustice, making his countrymen work for nothing, not paying them for their labor. He says, 'I will build myself a great palace with spacious upper rooms.' So he makes large windows in it, panels it with cedar and decorates it in red. "Does it make you a king to have more and more cedar? Did not your father have food and drink? He did what was right and just, so all went well with him. He defended the cause of the poor and needy, and so all went well. **Is that not what it means to know me?**" declares the Lord.

In those two passages, God says that he delights in exercising kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, and that the one who recognizes and apprehends



him as such knows him. He also says that the one who is content with having his basic needs met [did not your father have food and drink?] and who does what is right and just, like defending the cause of the poor and needy, knows him.

2 Peter 1:2-9: Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the **knowledge** of God and of Jesus our Lord. His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them **YOU MAY PARTICIPATE IN THE DIVINE NATURE** and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your **knowledge** of our Lord Jesus Christ. But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins.

There are several things to note about this passage.



First, the knowledge of God and of Jesus is the core issue throughout the passage, and we can be certain this does not mean an academic, head knowledge [bible knowledge]. Second, it is explicitly stated that believers are to **participate in the divine nature**... the nature of God... by laying hold of God's promises. Third, it says that those who do not add the listed virtues to their faith have forgotten that they have been cleansed from their past sins, hearkening back to Jeremiah 31:31-34, which shows the forgiveness of sins to be the means to the end of knowing God.

Let's move on.

1 John 2:3-6: We know that we have come to **know him** if we obey his commands. The man who says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him: **Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.**

1 John 4:16-17: And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because **in this world we are like him.**



What is it exactly which should cause believers to have boldness, or confidence on judgement day?

Will it be that we prayed a prayer on a certain date? Or attended Church faithfully? Or had great knowledge of the scriptures? Or did good and nice things for our friends and neighbors?

No.

That confidence will come simply and only because... **in this world we are like him.**

The good news of the gospel is that God himself has provided us with a new way, a New Covenant, by which we may truly obey him from the heart, and come to know him... to be like him and express his nature. These are the ultimate goals of the New Covenant.

Romans 7:4: So, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God.



Oh, that we as God's people might take hold of these truths and demonstrate, in word and deed that there is a king ruling in the heavens, and soon on earth, who has power to utterly transform His people and bring them into conformity to His very own nature and ways.

