

**Comparing the Message of Life in John's Gospel
and in the Rest of the New Testament**
by Bob Wilkin

Introduction

Zane Hodges wrote a booklet called *Did Paul Preach Eternal Life? Should We?* The answer was obvious and remains obvious. Of course Paul preached eternal life and of course we should too. But not only did Paul and John preach eternal life, so did Peter and James and Jude.

The Message of Life in John's Gospel

The Greek expression *zwhn aiwnion* is used 17 times in John's Gospel. It means *life everlasting* or *live for the age to come*.

The expression *everlasting life* occurs eight times in John's Gospel (John 3:16, 36; 4:14; 5:24; 6:27, 40, 47; 12:50). The same Greek expression is translated as *eternal life* another nine times (John 3:15; 4:36; 5:39; 6:54, 68; 10:28; 12:25; 17:2, 3).

In addition the word *life* is used in reference to everlasting life another 16 times in John.

There are also many allusions to everlasting life in John's Gospel without using the word *life*.

The message of life is this: whoever believes in Jesus Christ for everlasting life has that life, life which can never be lost (e.g., John 6:35; 11:26). This is emphasized repeatedly in the Fourth Gospel.

As John 3:15-16 shows, the message of life, that is, the promise of everlasting life, is only possible because the Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross for all our sins, past, present, and future. Compare John 1:29.

Most Mentions of Everlasting Life in John Refer to the Present Possession of Jesus' Life

"He who believes in Me has everlasting life." That is the message of John 1:12; 3:16; 5:24; 6:35-47; 11:26; 20:31; to name just a few verses in John that speak of the present possession of everlasting life.

Approximately 30 of the 33 references to everlasting life refer to the present possession. That's 91%.

Some Refer to a Fullness of Everlasting Life in the Kingdom (or Now)

John 10:10

John 6:68

John 4:36

John 17:3.

The Message of Life in the Rest of the NT

The expression *everlasting life* occurs three times in Paul's epistles (Rom 6:22; Gal 6:8; 1 Tim 1:16) and once in his recording preaching in Acts (Acts 13:46). Eternal life is found an additional seven times in Paul's letters (Rom 2:7; 5:21; 6:23; 1 Tim 6:12, 19; Titus 1:2; 3:7).

The simple word *life* is used in reference to *everlasting life* up to seven more times in Paul's writings (Rom 4:17; 7:10; Gal 3:21; Eph 4:18; Phil 2:16; Phil 4:3; 2 Tim 1:1).

First John has six uses of eternal life. In First John the simple word *life* refers to everlasting life five times.

Peter has two references to everlasting life in his epistles. In addition, Peter refers to being born again, which clearly refers to gaining everlasting life, in 1 Pet 1:23. See also Acts 5:20.

James alludes to everlasting life when he speaks of the new birth in Jas 1:18.

Jude refers to everlasting life once in his short epistle (Jude 21).

The promise of life is prevalent in the epistles, even though the epistles are not evangelistic.

The Expressions the Promise/Word of Life

There are several references in the NT to “the promise of life” (2 Tim 1:1; 1 John 2:25), “the word of life/the words of this life” (compare John 6:68; Acts 5:20; Phil 2:16; 1 John 1:1). The expression *the word of life* also can be understood as *the message of life*.

The Book of Life

God keeps a book called *the Book of Life* or *the Lamb’s Book of Life*. While in Exodus 32 God’s book referred to all who are physically life, in the NT the Book of Life refers to all who have everlasting life. This expression is found once in Paul (Phil 4:3) and six times in John’s fifth book, Revelation (Rev 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12, 15; 21:27).

It is also alluded to once in Jesus’ ministry, when He told His seventy disciples, “Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice *because your names are written in heaven*” (Luke 10:20, emphasis added).

The Water of Life

The Lord Jesus famously spoke to the woman at the well about living water (John 4:10). He alluded to that living water in His bread of life discourse, “he who believes in Me shall never thirst” (John 6:35).

Revelation 21:6 picks up on the living water when John says that God gives “the water of life” freely to all who thirst. Revelation 22:17 is the last evangelistic verse in the Bible and it too refers to the water of life: “And the Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let him who hears say, “Come!” And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.”

Is This Message Calling for Faith in Faith?

Application

1. Base your own assurance on the promise of everlasting life (John 11:25-27; 1 John 2:25).
2. When you evangelize, make sure to share the promise of everlasting life (John 3:16) and that you emphasize John’s Gospel.
3. Have a verse or passage in John’s Gospel that you use as your anchor verse when telling your testimony or when evangelizing.
4. If someone lacks assurance or is not yet believing the promise, urge them to prayerfully read a chapter of John’s Gospel each day.
5. When you disciple believers, teach them to find assurance in the promise of life and to evangelize by sharing the promise of life from John’s Gospel.
6. When people asks you questions, after you answer, make sure to return to the promise of life by repeating your anchor passage from John.
7. Teach people that the basis of eternal condemnation will not be what is in the books of deeds (Rev 20:12-13), but instead what is in the Book of Life (Rev 20:15).

Conclusion

The message of life is the message that the Lord Jesus Christ guarantees everlasting life to all who simply believe in Him. It is a simple message. But is also the most profound message. May we proclaim it boldly and to all who will listen.