

# The PROMISE Of Eternal Life

by Casey Head

While to some it may appear to be an insignificant point, the question of when we actually obtain eternal life is nothing short of controversial. Many denominational folks will argue that Christians are currently in possession of eternal life, and then conclude that we cannot lose something that is eternal. The Bible, however, teaches plainly that Christians will not actually obtain eternal life until they reach their heavenly home. Let us establish this point from the scriptures.

The apostle John could not be any clearer when he says in 1 John 2:25, “And this is the promise that He hath promised us, even eternal life.” In other words, eternal life is not something we actually possess in this life, but is something that has been promised to us. A similar point is made in 1 Peter 1:4-5 where God says, “To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, *reserved in heaven for you*, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation *ready to be revealed in the last time*,” and again in verse nine, “Receiving the *end* of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.” Is heaven something that we possess now? Do we have our inheritance yet? No. Rather, the Bible says that it is reserved in heaven for us. Eternal life is not given at the beginning of our faith in Christ, but at the end of our faith; it is something we look forward to. After all, eternal life is not something we can actually possess in a temporary world. Consider also Romans 13:11; Philippians 3:12-14; 2 Timothy 1:1 and Hebrews 9:28.

As you can see, these passages are not difficult to understand. The point is easily made that we do not actually possess eternal life yet, but will when we reach heaven. At the same time, please understand that God keeps his promises. The Bible says in 2 Peter 3:9, “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise.” When God makes a promise, He keeps it. This tells us that in a certain sense, we do possess eternal life now. How? Not literally and actually, but rather *in promise!* God’s not going to renege on His end, but we can renege on our end if we cease to be faithful. Let us illustrate the concept of “promise as possession.”

In Joshua 6, we read of the famous battle of Jericho. The Israelites didn’t actually begin their siege of Jericho until verse eight, and it wasn’t until verse twenty that they overtook the city. Just prior to God’s deliverance of instructions to Joshua, He said to the leader of Israel in verse two, “See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valor.” God told Joshua that He had already given the mighty city to Israel. It was theirs. But at that point, they hadn’t actually taken possession of it. This perfectly illustrates the “promise as possession” concept. In a sense, Jericho was already overtaken, but in another sense, they still had to march around the city for seven days before they could actually receive it. Likewise, in one sense we do possess eternal life (in promise), but in another sense, we still have to live a faithful life before actually obtaining it in our heavenly home.

Hopefully, this short article has aided you in your understanding of eternal life. Many verses were presented to prove the point that while we are promised eternal life, we do not actually possess it in this physical life. Let us remain faithful and continue to meet the conditions set forth by God so that one day, we might “receive the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls.”