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Eternal Life - Is Jesus the Only Way?

*"Anyone who believes in the Son has eternal life,
but anyone who refuses to believe in the Son will never see life;
the anger of God stays on him."
John 3:36*

Jesus is the first person on earth to offer life after death. Before Christ appeared, no one else had ever made such an offer. Who else even has the credentials to do so?

Not only is Jesus the first person to offer everlasting life, He is the very one who told us that it is in a place called "heaven". He explained that God is building a new kingdom there. The term "heaven" as a place of life after death would not exist without Jesus.

Eternal life means life after death. Even today, not many religions actually offer it outside of Jesus. The few that do show that eternal life is not a right. It is an option.

Jesus saved us from death by dying in our place on the cross. But His offer is only open to those who accept it. If we accept somebody else's plan instead, then we are dependent on their way into eternal life, whatever it is. In many cases, that other way is simply, "I think...".

The reality of the end of life before Jesus appeared was the mortuary and the graveyard. A person outside of Christ still has all that. Jesus brought a way

to bypass the grave. He brought a way to live forever. But not as a right. As an option. He gave us the choice.

Until Christ appeared, no one in the world had ever suggested the opportunity to knowingly live forever. The Jews didn't believe in eternal life. Moses didn't teach it. The Romans didn't either. Neither did the Greeks. Certainly all those pagan tribes slaughtering their children at altars across the ancient world to appease various gods didn't expect it. Confucius didn't offer it. Buddhists and Hindu's saw life recycled, but not in heaven and not knowingly or eternally.

Jesus changed all that. He pledged something never before offered on earth.

How do we know His offer is real? We don't. Not for sure. That is where faith comes in. Credibility is such a key issue here it cannot be overstated. In which plan do you have such confidence that you would be willing to sell everything you own to buy it?

Six hundred years after Jesus guaranteed eternal life to Christians, Mohammed came saying he was a servant of Allah. He claimed that Allah would give eternal life to those who followed the Koran.

After that, eternal life became an issue to be debated by other religious teachers. Not by Hindu's or Confucionists or Jews, generally, but by splinter groups within the Christian and Muslim communities. They began to ponder whether there might be a way to live forever by following rules that differed from those set forth in the sacred documents of the two religions which offered it.

Al Queda, for instance, teaches that eternal life can only be achieved at the end of scimitar stained crimson by the blood of infidels. Various religious institutes promise eternal life to all who are willing to memorize their lessons and send in the appropriate monthly cash. A supermarket checker I know claims eternal life is given to everybody on earth, period. No matter what.

It all comes down to credibility. Who has the credentials to make the offer.

Remember, what's being offered here is very bizarre! It is the ability to get up out of the grave. It is the ability to survive an airliner crash in which there are no survivors, or to live through an atomic blast that explodes a foot over our heads. This is an offer so fantastic it demands credentials.

What are Al Queda's credentials? What credentials does the super-market checker have? What are the credentials of a Maharishi from New Delhi? It all boils down to what a person wants to believe. But that is not an equation that squares with credibility. In terms of credibility, if we want eternal life or heaven, there are basically only two options. The first is the original offer of Jesus Christ and the other is the one that came 600 years later by Mohammed.

Mohammed came out of the blue. There was no expectation of his coming. He started out an ordinary person in an ordinary life and then one day, he said Allah just appeared to him. That is not much different than the way Joseph Smith was introduced to God more than a thousand years later.

Jesus was different. He was predicted in advance. He came at the end of a thousand years of prophecy. An entire Bible was produced entirely to explain the details of His coming appearance. A major world religion was formed specifically to prepare the way for Him-an entire religion just to prophesy God's true religion to come.

The core of the Jewish religion is based completely on Moses' prediction of a "son of David", a Messiah who was to bring God's personal Word to the people. The prophets, whose writings fill the scriptures, elevated the Messiah's status to the realm of divinity. He would tread the earth, they wrote, yet touch the heavens. He would be the Christ.

Those are pretty heady credentials, and a three-thousand year old scripture is the credential that verifies them. So is the Hebrew religion, and so is the life He lived in fulfillment of those predictions. So is the fact that He came as Righteousness personified. He championed love, forgiveness, mercy, compassion, justice, peace, gentleness, honesty and virtue. He has towered for 2000 years, the world's incandescent symbol of righteousness.

Adding to it, the Messiah said He and God were one (Jn. 10:30), and He rose from the dead to prove it.

Jesus told the world that God intended to save, not just the Jews and the other eleven tribes of Israel, but every person on earth willing to abandon their current sinful lives and turn to the commandments which He had brought down to us from heaven. He also gave credible reasons for death and sin and the colossal measures God had to institute to overcome them.

The Law demanded our deaths, so He paid the required penalty in our place. That payment ended our contract with the graveyard, provided we accept the terms of His offer. And if we don't? Jesus said: *"You will die in your sins. Yes, if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins."* (Jn 8:24). That's very plain.

God put Jesus into a real body which He had to take knowingly into a real death, beaten to a pulp like a criminal, with nails hammered into Him in a grievous payment for our sins, Not His sins, OURS. Add to His credentials, then, proof of His willingness to lay down His life for us.

Sin, Jesus said, has made it impossible for this world to survive. He warned that its end is very near. For that reason, He explained, God has constructed a new heaven and a new earth to replace it, crafting it far away in a safe location where contamination cannot touch it. He said God had given Him authority to transport all who choose to follow Him to that new kingdom. It is a world, He said, in which evil cannot exist and that is the reason we have to change the way we live so that we can be acceptable for admittance. Whatever comes from Satan has to be left behind.

Those who persist in the rebellion will die.

Jesus taught that, as captives to what is evil, all people are separated from God. That's why we die. That is why flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. It is also why eternal life is not a right. This world's body has to die. If we want our soul to live, we must put on a new body, and the only new body offered is the one Jesus has designed for the new kingdom. He said we have to be "born" again into a body of righteousness.

A key to Jesus' authority is His ability to permanently wash away the sins of those who come to Him. The Law dictated the rules for the remission of sin and Jesus followed those rules to the letter. Because of His unique relationship with God, His Passion on the cross was a sacrifice more perfect than any human being has power to duplicate. That preeminence gave Him the power to pay the penalty of the Law in our place.

When that power is added to the mountain of predictions that foresaw His coming, and the perfection of His life, His credibility far surpasses all who say they can do it too. The reality is, the others just WISH they could do it. They wish it would happen the way they want it to be. But they have absolutely no way and no power to make that wish come true.

Jesus, with enormous power, and overwhelming credentials has offered complete forgiveness and eternal life to everyone willing to confess their sins in His name and accept the Sacred Way He designed. That is the pathway by which God has chosen to reconcile man with Himself and rescue us from death.

Only those who accept His offer and are baptized into it are eligible to be saved. Scripture says the covenant has to be marked on our bodies.

We can see the End Jesus warned about coming now catastrophe by catastrophe. Soon, all those piecemeal annihilation's will merge into a single giant apocalypse. That event, said Jesus, is going to happen suddenly, like the two walls of water which abruptly crashed back together on Pharaoh's army in Moses' time. Christ's offer is about to run out. Those who are undecided about it need to act fast.

The prophets wrote that the captains of the Church are required to "pitch their tents close to the Tabernacle of the Testimony". That means they have to closely follow the rules of scripture. That is why there is such turbulence in the ranks when they don't. Eternal life is what is at stake. The gate in, said Jesus, is narrow, and so it has to be closely guarded by the stewards of the Church.

That is because the offer is all about credentials. And in that department, it is only about Jesus.

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