

# The Prize of Eternal Life

PROFESSIONAL athletes train and compete with one clear goal in mind – to achieve first place. Just as Olympians compete for the prize of a gold medal, so too followers of Christ are striving for a reward. This is not made of physical materials such as gold, silver or bronze, which have no enduring value. God's prize is eternal and incorruptible: everlasting life in God's Kingdom on earth.

*Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. Everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown (1 Corinthians 9:24–25).*

The Bible makes it clear that those who have been obedient to God and His Son and have run the race will be granted eternal life:

*This is the promise that He [God] has promised us – eternal life (1 John 2:25).*

*The gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 6:23).*

## God's Kingdom on Earth

Where will recipients of eternal life spend their days? The Bible makes it clear that they will live on the earth in God's Kingdom. Here is an example of an Old Testament prophecy, a passage speaking of the future establishment of God's Kingdom and its expansion to fill the whole earth:

*For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea (Habakkuk 2:14).*

The Book of Revelation is a New Testament prophecy. Depicting the people in God's Kingdom speaking about Jesus, it says:

*For you were slain, and have redeemed us to God by your blood out of every tribe and tongue and*



people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth (Revelation 5:9–10).

Daniel, writer of one of the books of the Bible, speaks of the kingdoms of mankind making way for the Kingdom of God:

*In the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever (Daniel 2:44).*

The present world order will be swept aside to make way for God's righteous Kingdom.

## What Will It Be Like?

The world as we currently know it is plagued with problems such as wars, famines, natural disasters and disease. As such it is perhaps not the most appealing place to spend eternity. The Bible gives a picture of a world free from these problems in God's Kingdom.

We read of a world without war, where people no longer have weapons or learn to fight:

*They shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore (Isaiah 2:4).*

The prophet Isaiah has much to say about the Kingdom of God. It will be ruled by Jesus, and will be a place of justice and fairness for all:

*His delight is in the fear of the LORD, and he shall not judge by the sight of his eyes, nor decide by the hearing of his ears; but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall slay the wicked (Isaiah 11:3–4).*

Later in his prophecy, Isaiah talks about conditions of security, safety and prosperity:

*They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for as the days of a tree, so shall be the days of My people, and My elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth children for trouble; for they shall be the descendants of the blessed of the LORD, and their offspring with them... They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain (Isaiah 65:21–23, 25).*

We read too of God having a direct relationship with His people, and the marvellous effect this will have:

*Behold, the tabernacle [dwelling place] of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away (Revelation 21:3–4).*

Eternal life spent with God, and His Son, on a perfect earth free from its current problems, as described in these Bible passages, is surely a prospect not to be missed!

## The Return of Jesus

The world to come is very different from what we see today. How and when will it be changed? The Bible tells us that Jesus will return from heaven to set up God's Kingdom, beginning in Jerusalem. Jesus himself said:

*The sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds*



However, that does not mean that God and His Son do not require anything from us. Jesus told his disciples:

*He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned (Mark 16:16).*

Immediately from this verse we have two simple requirements. The

*of heaven with power and great glory (Matthew 24:30).*

When Jesus ascended to heaven, two angels made the same declaration:

*This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw him go into heaven (Acts 1:11).*

While we know from Bible prophecy that God's Kingdom will be established at the return of Jesus to the earth – and that time appears to be near – no one knows exactly when it will be. Even Jesus did not know:

*But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father (Mark 13:32).*

## How Can We Obtain the Prize?

Thus, the idea of eternal life and a place in this Kingdom being a prize is not a perfect analogy. It is ultimately something given by God, because of His love and the work of Jesus. Romans 6:23 tells us that it is a “gift of God”.

man or woman who wishes to be saved and receive eternal life firstly must believe in God and Jesus. Then they must be baptised to demonstrate that belief, and to figuratively wash away their sins.

Having obeyed these commands, the followers of Christ must put their belief into action in the way they live, putting behind them their old life away from God.

*Therefore we were buried with him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life (Romans 6:4).*

Only by doing these things can followers of Christ hope to receive the ultimate prize.

