

Eternal Life

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Most of us are a little vague when it comes to understanding the term "Eternal Life."

What is "Eternal Life?" The answer which is often given is, Eternal Life is life like our Father in Heaven possessed. This is true. However, it does not say very much. We seem to be satisfied with it, but without further explanation the answer has little specific meaning.

Let me illustrate. Suppose a person came to earth from outer space and asked, "What is a car?"

And suppose he were to be told, "A car is an automobile."

His question has been answered correctly. Yet, has he been given a meaningful answer?

Similarly, one may say, "Eternal life is life like our Father in Heaven possesses." This is true, but does this answer the question or does it merely transfer attention to another point which must be explained before the answer to the question is clearly understood?

What is eternal life? To get to the answer we must study the report of prophets who have communed openly with God and have been given a foretaste of the life which God possesses.

We can begin with the Prophet Joseph Smith. In his First Vision in the Sacred Grove, in the spring of 1820, he saw two celestial Personages, the Father and the Son, who possess Eternal Life. Were they tangible beings with bodies of flesh and bone in a resurrected state? They were. But to be a resurrected being is not necessarily to possess Eternal Life. In a revelation to Joseph Smith the Lord said, "I, the Lord God, appointed unto man the days of his probation--that by his natural death he might be raised *in immortality unto eternal life*, even as many as would believe." The term "immortality" describes a state in which one lives forever. But the purpose of the Gospel is to raise true believers "*in immortality unto eternal life.*"¹

Besides the fact that they were resurrected beings, what was different about the Father and the Son?

They were beings of great glory. The Prophet wrote: "I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me.... When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other--This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!"²

Scriptures equate eternal life with glory. They are one and the same. To have Eternal Life is to be endowed with celestial glory in the resurrection; and to be endowed with celestial glory in the resurrection is to possess Eternal Life.

In a revelation given through the Prophet Joseph Smith to him and other brethren, the Lord stated: "I now send upon you another Comforter, even upon you my friends, that it may abide in your hearts, even the Holy Spirit of promise."

This promise is a subject of great importance, which I will pass by at the present time. The Lord continued: "This Comforter is the promise which I give unto you of eternal life, *even the glory of the celestial kingdom.*"

What, according to the Lord's statement, is Eternal Life? It is "the glory of the celestial kingdom."³

Let's go to another Scripture. To Adam, as recorded in Moses 6, the Lord explained the new birth into the kingdom of heaven, stating that thereby he and his posterity could enjoy "eternal life in the world to come, *even immortal glory.*"⁴ Here again Eternal Life is equated with the endowment of glory; and this fact is in full harmony with the statement that true believers, who are "raised in immortality *unto eternal life,*" are those who are "redeemed from their spiritual fall."⁵ In the resurrection they are brought back into the presence of God and enjoy the endowments of celestial glory, which are the endowments and powers of celestial life.

Celestial beings are literally dynamos of life and power; and this life and power is centered into them. Their glory is not a lantern which they carry along with them to light their way. It is literally part of their organized beings as celestial personages. It is that which the Apostle Peter calls "the Divine Nature."⁶ A celestial being has a perfect

corporeal, or physical, nature; and they have a divine nature, which is the glory and power of eternal life.

The Lord has told us that his glory "is intelligence, or, in other words, light and truth."⁷ Can you imagine a person, physically in the form and stature of man, who is so filled with divine intelligence that the radiance of it would eclipse the light of the sun at noon day? Eternal life is to be endowed with this glory, or intelligence, and to be able to use it in eternity in all the ways of truth which are possible.

God's glory is life. It is composed of living truth and attributes. As it emanates from his person and presence, it gives "life to all things."⁸ To possess glory is therefore to possess the life which God possesses, and to be able to do the things which he can do.

The question is, What powers of life, or glory,--or what powers of glory, or life--do God and celestial beings possess? If I am a glorified being like the Father and the Son in the Sacred Grove, how do I have *life* which I do not possess at present?

First, the Father and the Son have a power of locomotion which we do not have. They did not come to the Sacred Grove in a helicopter. By the life, or glory, or power within them, they descend from heaven to commune with the Prophet.

Moroni is another example of a resurrected celestial being.⁹ Of his appearance in September, 1823, the Prophet wrote: "A light like that of day, only of a far purer and more glorious appearance and brightness, burst into the room, indeed the first sight was as though the house was filled with consuming fire."¹⁰ Oliver Cowdery, who was intimate with the Prophet in the translation of the Book of Mormon, stated that "the first sight was as though the house was filled with consuming and unquenchable fire."¹¹

When Moroni had delivered his message and was ready to leave, Joseph wrote: "I saw the light in the room begin to gather immediately around the person of him who had been speaking to me, and it continued to do so until the room was again left dark, except just around him; when, instantly I saw, as it were, a conduit open right up into heaven, and he ascended till he entirely disappeared, and the room was left as it had been before this heavenly light had made its appearance."¹² A person who has Eternal Life is this kind of being, and he has this kind of life and power to move or travel in space.

God, as a being possessing Eternal Life, has a much different

relationship with the world and the universe than a mere physical being. He is an immanent, or indwelling, being. His glory, which is his divine nature and therefore part of him, extends from his physical person to fill the immensity of space, so that God is in and through all things. A revelation states that Christ "is in the sun, and the light of the sun, and the power thereof by which it was made; as also the light of the stars, and the power thereof by which they were made; and the earth also, and the power thereof." The revelation adds: "Which light proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space--the light which is in all things, which giveth life to all things, which is the law by which all things are governed, even the power of God who sitteth upon his throne, who is in the bosom of eternity, who is in the midst of all things.... He comprehendeth all things, and all things are before him, and all things are round about him; and he is above all things, and in all things, and is through all things; and all things are by him, and of him, even God, forever and ever."

The Lord therefore said of the many kingdoms of organized life in the world and in space: "Any man who hath seen any or the least of these hath seen God moving in his majesty and power."¹³

When Enoch was brought into such union with God that he shared for a time this state of immanence, or indwelling life, with the creations of God, the record states that Enoch "stretched forth his arms and his heart swelled wide as eternity; and his bowels yearned; and all eternity shook."¹⁴

Possessing the divine nature or glory of God, a person who has Eternal Life, being in and through all things, can see and discern all things within his celestial domain. In a revelation to the Prophet Joseph, Christ identified himself as "Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the same which looked upon the wide expanse of eternity, and all the seraphic hosts of heaven, before he world was made; the same which knoweth all things, for *all things are present before mine eyes*."¹⁵ To Moses, God said: "All things are present with me, for I know them all."¹⁶ And to Enoch he declared: "I can stretch forth mine hands and hold all the creations which I have made; and *mine eye can pierce them also*."¹⁷

Moses was given a small, brief, taste of the visual power which one possesses who has Eternal Life.¹⁸ The record states that "Moses cast his eyes and beheld the earth, yea, even all of it, and there was not a particle of it which he did not behold, *discerning it by the Spirit*

of God. And he beheld also the inhabitants thereof, and there was not a soul which he beheld not; and *he discerned them by the Spirit of God;* and their numbers were great even numberless as the sand upon the sea shore."¹⁹

Eternal Life is to be endowed with the glory of God and thereby to be in and through all things within one's eternal domain. It is the power to see and perceive things as God does, to move in space as he moves, and to act by and through the Spirit or glory of God as he acts.

Eternal life is life like our Father, yes, but it's the kind of life that he manifested in the Sacred Grove and that Moroni manifested. And to have that in its fulness and to be able to use that--that glory emanates from his presence and fills the immensity of space and reveals back to him a knowledge of all things. I can't see what's on the other side of the mountain, but God can sit there and see what's on the other side of the mountain. He can see that. I don't know what's going on in New York City--I think it's there still, I've wondered at times what's going on there, whether the Lord ought to preserve it. But God knows what's going on there, and he can be right here and know what's going on there, and he can see it. It's like Moses. Moses looked at the earth and saw every particle of it. Well, he's operating on the realm of glory with the powers of eternal life and "seeing" as God sees.

Now, there is a kind of life that's called eternal life. We come here into mortality in a fallen spiritual state with our physical bodies, and we are the sons and daughters of men. The great challenge is to enter into a newness of life, and that's what Paul was always yapping about! You have to get into a newness of life! And that newness of life is in Christ and comes from Christ. You have to be transformed, it's a mighty change. You become born again, you are quickened in the inner man, as Moses 6 says of Adam. He was quickened in the inner man, and it's like the Lord said to Alma, you have to undergo this mighty change and you have to put off the natural man and become a Saint. It's not just learning that there are 3 degrees of glory and you have to be married in the temple. There is a transformation that has to take place. You have to be made into a new person, a new kind of person through spiritual truth and power. It's like a woman--every woman knows you can't just mix up batter and then serve it. If you're going to have a cake, she has to put it in

that oven. That oven has to have its temperature the right way, and it has to raise and then you have a cake. Well, we have to be put into the oven, there has to be a baking, a transformation, there has to be a new creature. That new creature, then, transforms the physical and brings it up to the spiritual. You become instead of just sons and daughters of men, you become sons and daughters of God.

Q: People who have been born again now on the earth, do they radiate a light that we can see, or is it that we can't see it unless we've been born again?

A: There are times when the Prophet taught in a home in the evening and had the candles on the hearth, and the powers of the Spirit radiated from him with more brilliance than the light of the candle.

Q: People could see that?

A: They could see it. Now, I have a hard time doing that, but he did!

When Zion is endowed with glory--Orson Pratt talks about it like it being the Northern lights, there will be the cloud and smoke by day and the pillar of fire by night. And people will see it from miles away, they'll see a light in the heavens over the City of Zion. That will be very, very real. We talk about an atomic age and a space age and a computer age, but we've got, through developing this program, to get a glory age. And that's what Zion is all about. That's the way you finally cope with the problems of life. You can't do it as the natural man. The natural man is an enemy to God, and the natural man is a bundle of contradictions. It's only when you begin to get born again and this infusion of this life, this glory, this truth, this power within you, and it opens up as a revelatory spirit, and the Lord begins to communicate to you in various ways. You begin to feel that flow, and then you put off the natural man, and then you begin to be a Saint and begin to act like one.

Endnotes

¹D&C 29:43 (italics added).

²JSH, 16-7.

³D&C 88:3-4.

⁴Moses 6:59; italics added.

⁵D&C 29:43, 44; italics added.

⁶2 Pet. 1:4.

⁷D&C 93:36.

⁸D&C 88:13.

⁹Cf. TPJS, 119.

¹⁰HC, IV, 536.

¹¹MA, I, (Feb. 1835), 79.

¹²JSH, 43.

¹³D&C 88:7-13, 41, 47.

¹⁴Moses 7:41.

¹⁵D&C 38:1-2; italics added.

¹⁶Moses 1:6.

¹⁷Moses 7:36; italics added.

¹⁸In Moses 1:5, the Lord states: "No man can behold all my works, except he behold all my glory; and no man can behold all my glory, and afterwards remain in the flesh on the earth." Moses, therefore, did not behold all the glory of God.

¹⁹Moses 1:27-8; italics added.