

1 John 5:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

Analysis

And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. John summarizes God's testimony. "And this is the record" (kai autē estin hē martyria)—the definite article identifies the specific content of God's witness. "That God hath given to us eternal life" (hoti zōēn aiōnion edōken hēmin ho theos). The aorist tense indicates completed action—God gave eternal life decisively and definitively through Christ. This is gift, not achievement; grace, not merit. Aiōnios (eternal) means both unending duration and divine quality—the life of the age to come, God's own life shared with believers.

"And this life is in his Son" (kai autē hē zōē en tō huiō autou estin). Eternal life isn't independent commodity distributed by God but is inseparably located "in his Son." Christ Himself is eternal life (John 14:6, "I am the life"). Union with Christ by faith means possessing the life that is in Him. This makes Christianity Christ-centered, not merely ethics or philosophy. We don't receive life apart from Christ; we receive Christ who is life.

This verse provides both assurance and exclusivity. Assurance: eternal life is God's gift already given to believers, not uncertain future prospect. We possess it now through union with Christ (John 5:24). Exclusivity: since life is in God's Son alone, there's no other way to obtain it. Religious pluralism claiming multiple paths to God contradicts this truth—only in Christ is eternal life found. This makes evangelism urgent and Christ's uniqueness non-negotiable.

Historical Context

The gift of eternal life was central to Jesus's teaching (John 3:16, 36; 5:24; 6:40, 47). Unlike Jewish expectation of future resurrection and life in the age to come, Jesus offered present possession of eternal life through faith in Him. John's gospel emphasizes this realized eschatology—eternal life begins now, not merely at death or resurrection, though it continues eternally.

The exclusive claim that life is in God's Son alone challenged ancient religious pluralism. Greco-Roman culture accepted many paths to the divine. Jewish expectation anticipated Messiah but many Jews rejected Jesus. John's uncompromising assertion that eternal life is exclusively in Christ continues to offend pluralistic sensibilities. Yet biblical Christianity maintains this exclusivity not from arrogance but from God's revealed truth—Christ alone is Savior, the only way to the Father (John 14:6).

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does understanding eternal life as God's completed gift (not future achievement) affect your assurance and daily Christian life?
2. What does it mean practically that eternal life is 'in His Son' rather than being a separate commodity God distributes?
3. How do you respond to claims that there are multiple paths to eternal life besides Jesus Christ, given this verse's exclusive claim?

Interlinear Text

καὶ αὕτη ἐστιν ἡ μαρτυρία ὅτι ζωὴ αἰώνιον ἔδωκεν
And this is the record that life eternal hath given
G2532 G3778 G2076 G3588 G3141 G3754 G2222 G166 G1325

ἡμῖν ὁ Θεός, καὶ αὕτη ἡ ζωὴ ἐν τῷ υἱῷ αὐτοῦ
to us God And this life in Son his
G2254 G3588 G2316 G2532 G3778 G3588 G2222 G1722 G5207 G846

ἐστιν
is
G2076

Additional Cross-References

Romans 6:23 (Eternal Life): For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

1 John 2:25 (Eternal Life): And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.

John 3:36 (Eternal Life): He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

1 John 5:20 (Eternal Life): And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.

1 John 4:9 (References God): In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.

John 1:4 (Parallel theme): In him was life; and the life was the light of men.

1 John 5:10 (References God): He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.

John 6:68 (Eternal Life): Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.

John 10:28 (Eternal Life): And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.

John 5:26 (Parallel theme): For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself;