



## “A Gift That Must Be Received” (Selected Scriptures)

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In his twilight years, American author Mark Twain said, “Life would be infinitely happier if we could only be born at the age of eighty and gradually approach 18.” The ancient Greek poet Homer called old age “loathsome,” and William Shakespeare termed it “hideous winter.” So it’s not hard to understand why there have always been hopes and even rumors that something will soon be discovered that will do away with old age...and death. Some today put their hope in stem cell research. But for much of history people have dreamed and searched for some magic waters, the fountain of youth.

They say that Alexander the Great, who conquered the known world of his day, before his death in 323 BC, may have been searching for a river that healed the ravages of age. During the 12<sup>th</sup> century, a king known to Europeans as Prester John, was said to rule a land that had a river of gold and a fountain of youth. But the name most closely linked to the search for a fountain of youth is Spanish explorer Juan Ponce de Leon. He allegedly thought he would find this fountain in Florida. There is a tourist attraction in St. Augustine Florida dating back over 100 years that purports to be the fountain that Ponce de Leon discovered. The only problem is that elderly visitors who drink from this sulfur smelling natural spring do not turn into teenagers!

But we are still today fascinated by the idea of a fountain of youth. In 1953 the Walt Disney Company created a cartoon entitled “Don’s Fountain of Youth,” in which Donald Duck had supposedly discovered the famous fountain. In 1974 Marvel Comics featured the fountain (it only worked if bathed in, it crippled if you drank from it). In 1976 there was a comedy series called “Big John, Little John” in which a middle-aged man drank from the fountain and then switched back and forth from 12 years old to 43 years old throughout the series. The novel turned into film, “Tuck Everlasting,” tells of a family that stopped ageing after drinking from a spring deep in the woods where they lived. And the fourth installment of the film Pirates of the Caribbean (On Stranger Tides) is based on a journey in search of the fountain of youth.

### THERE REALLY IS A FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH

Romans 6:23; Sin is why we die, because it dwells in the members of our bodies.

Matthew 1:21...you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.

Psalm 16:11 You have made know to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with *eternal pleasures* at your right hand.

Jesus said in Matthew 25 that in the judgment some will go away to eternal punishment and others to eternal life (Matthew 25).

Jesus said to his disciples that whatever sacrifice they made for him would be worth it, not only in this life, but after this life is over they would inherit eternal life (Matthew 19, Mark 10, Luke 18).

Jesus said this to a Samaritan woman he met coming to draw water at a well: "...whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

In John 5 Jesus said "Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life."

In John 6 Jesus said: Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. A little while later he said, "...my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life." Right after that he said: "Very truly I tell you, the one who believes has eternal life."

John 10:27-28 My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish...

I John 2:25 says, "And this is what he promised us— eternal life."

The promise includes one day living in a world where there is no more death, mourning, crying or pain. It includes a new body that is immortal. And, as David said in Psalm 16, it is a world of "eternal pleasures."

This is the gift God offers to the world through His one and only Son, Jesus Christ. This is what Christmas is all about. John 3:16. The Bible ends with an invitation for anyone who wishes to "take the free gift of the water of life."

So here is my question: Why would anyone not take this gift?

THEY DO NOT THINK THEY NEED IT

- I got into a conversation recently with a couple in a local restaurant. I invited them to our church. They said they lived by Christian principles, and they did not believe they needed church. They were nice people, religious people, but the more we talked the more it became evident that they really did not understand Christianity at all. As I asked them what they thought the main theme of the Bible was, they quickly became defensive and soon retreated from the restaurant. I have prayed for them almost every day since.

- See John 3:1-21; For Nicodemus to have eternal life would mean that he to be exposed by the truth that his belief in God, his religious attainments, nor any of his good works were adequate for salvation.
- See Romans 10:1-4; 3:23.

### THEY LOVE THIS PRESENT WORLD

- Possessions (rich young ruler; Matthew tells us he was young, Mark tells us he was rich, Luke says he was a ruler). He not only had to realize his sinfulness, but realize that the sin that stood between him and eternal life was his love of money and the things money could buy.
- Pleasures (Moses, Heb.11:25)
- Jesus said, "What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and yet loses his soul?"
- He is no fool to give up what he cannot keep in order to gain what he cannot lose.

### PEER PRESSURE/FEAR

- Nicodemus no doubt came to Jesus at night because he did not want his peers to know; See John 7:50-52; 19:38-39.
- I Peter 4:1-6 says that your former friends will think it strange that you don't do the things you used to do, and they will heap abuse on you.

### PUT IT OFF 'TIL IT'S TOO LATE

- Death
- God's call; John 6:44
- Callousness (Heb.3:7, 15; 4:7)

### HAVE YOU EVER RECEIVED THIS GIFT?

- John 1:1-14; I John 5:13
- Witness of the Holy Spirit (Rom.8:16)
- Desire for purity, righteousness (I John 3:3, 9)
- Public confession of Jesus Christ (Rom.10:9)

### INVITATION

The fountain of youth is described very well in a hymn written years ago by a man named William Cowper:

*There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel's veins; and sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains. Lose all their guilty stains, lose all their guilty stains; and sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains. The dying thief rejoiced to see that fountain in his day; and there may I, though vile as he, wash all my sins away. Wash all my sins away, wash all my sins away; and there may I, though vile as he, wash all my sins away.*