

# One More Word About Eternity

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[ 0 : 01 ] It's been alarming. It's been exhilarating. At times it's been heavy the last three months as we have been studying the reality of eternity. I've looked at these things before in great detail over the last few weeks and so I just want to kind of wrap it up and summarize some, give you a summary of some final thoughts about the reality of eternity. Acts chapter 1 beginning in verse 6 and Luke wrote the book of Acts, Luke number 2 if you will because he wrote the gospel of Luke and he's talking about the last days and the ascension of the last moments and the ascension of Christ.

He says this in Acts chapter 1 verse 6 through 11. So when they had come together they asked him, Lord will you at this time restore the kingdom of Israel? And he said to them, it is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority but you'll receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth. When he had said these things as they were looking on he was lifted up and a cloud took him out of their sight and while they were gazing into heaven as he went behold two men stood by them in white robes and said, men of Galilee why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus who has taken up from you into heaven will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven. Let's pray together.

Lord Jesus I am thankful that you give us insight for this life in what the next life will be. Help us prepare ourselves today for all of eternity Father. In Jesus name. Amen. The imminent return of the Lord, the finality of judgment, the length of eternity, our definites, their non-negotiables, and their realities. So to keep those things in mind I want to give you four summary thoughts today. One is this, heaven is better than we think it is. Heaven is better than we think it is. A few years ago I was at my mom's house and mom and dad's house and we were looking through some pictures and found one rolled up and that picture was a rolled up picture of the spinning department of Brandon Textile Mill from January of 1931 and my grandfather was pictured on the fourth row of that picture. Since then I've researched some on that mill and it was a 400,000 square foot building filled with workers that were were about to hit hard times and the Great Depression hit after that and it would cause a downspin until the second war came and there was an uptick in that mill at that point because they began making duck fabric for military uniforms. I thought about the hard life my grandfather lived and the joy that he carried in his latter days. He was going to heaven and he spent the rest of his days wanting as many people to go with him as possible and he abundantly shared his faith. He helped a man sell tools at the Anderson jockey lot and sometimes we'd go by and see him at the jockey lot. Might even went with him. I was young at times. I remember him getting up and making fried egg sandwiches to eat at the jockey lot when he went.

But what stands out in my mind the most is no matter whether it was at the jockey lot or no matter whether when he walked me down to the end of the street and we went to the little store and picked up something to eat or drink. The man was abundantly always sharing the gospel with other people.

It was one of those kind of guys that we all have a responsibility of evangelism if Christ has just has changed you and saved you. But he had that gift of evangelism that that way it just rolled in every conversation rolled back into Christ and man when he committed his life to Christ when he got saved he was radically changed. He's been in heaven for for over 44 years but he still hadn't gotten over it and still gotten I hadn't got over the excitement of it. R.G. Lee was the is the former pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis. It's where Adrian Rogers served so long and Steve Gaines is pastor there now.

[ 5 : 15 ] R.G. Lee was a brilliant man and he was a brilliant preacher. He pastored there for 33 years and in his latter days Adrian Rogers was his pastor and R.G. Lee was on his deathbed and Adrian came by to see him and on his deathbed Adrian said Dr. Lee before you go to heaven I wish there was a way that we could put your brain in my head. And Dr. Lee looked at him and said my boy that would be like putting a grand piano in a closet. But as the time drew near Billy Graham was in a crusade in Memphis and Adrian called Billy Graham and Billy Graham and Cliff Burrs, Billy's music man met him and the music man at Bellevue and they met by Lee's side. Tommy Lane led the music at Bellevue and he said let's sing him into heaven. And they sing one of Lee's favorite hymns and then Cliff sang one. Can you imagine?

Roger said when he told the story I heard him tell the story he said I was ready to go to heaven myself when I heard that. And shortly after they started singing Lee revived. He opened his eyes and he said I saw heaven. I saw heaven. I saw Jesus. I saw my mother. I have preached on heaven many times but I've never had the vocabulary to adequately describe it. I never did justice to heaven in my sermons.

And shortly thereafter he died. I assure you today heaven is better than you think it is.

The words of scripture is attempting to to to dumb down to view and for us in order to view and get a vision that is too grand for this finite mind to consider. We have nothing to compare it to.

Bob Benson, a Christian devotional and spiritual formation writer said this. He said I used to think that loving life so greatly that dying would be like leaving the party before it ends.

[ 7 : 45 ] But now I know that the party is really happening somewhere else. And the light and the music escaping and snatches that make the pulse beat faster and the tempo quicken comes from another place.

And I know too when I get there the music and the love and the praise will belong to him. And the music will never end. Heaven's real. And I want you to go there.

But only those that come to their faith in Christ and surrender their life to the Lord Jesus Christ will go to heaven. The great evangelist D.L. Moody said this. He said one day you'll read in the papers that D.L. Moody is dead. Don't you believe a word of it? I shall be more alive in that day than ever before. And on his deathbed. They said he opened his eyes and said earth recedes. Heaven opens for me.

If this is death. If this is death. It is sweet. There is no valley here. God is calling. And I must go. This is my coronation day. Heaven's better than you think it is.

Second thing that stands out to me about these weeks that we spent together is this. Hell is worse than you think it is. We talked about the man suffering in hell that Christ gave us a glimpse of in Luke chapter 16.

[ 9 : 27 ] It's an account of a man in hell begging for relief and begging for the message of salvation to be personally given to his brothers. In addition to that Christ told us that hell is eternal.

He described it as a place of physical agony. He described it as a place of spiritual agony. And that we do not have to go. He explained in Matthew 25 the parable of the bridesmaids that if we're not ready when the Lord comes back we shall be left out.

And the door of opportunity will be shut. But Jesus Christ has been described as the theologian of hell.

And the reason why is because he says more about hell in scripture than anyone else. And only by the grace of God the one that tells us the most about hell is the only one that can save us from hell.

Now maybe that thought, the thought of God disturbs you. Maybe you're here and if you're honest today, you don't really want God's interference in your life.

[ 10 : 34 ] It's not really welcome in your life. And you wish quite honestly, whether you're here of your own motives or not, you wish that you would not be bothered with the things of God. That somehow you could be somehow separated from the things of God.

Let me be clear today. You die without Christ, you'll be separated from him forever. You'll get your wish. But instead, come to Jesus.

Admit that you have done wrong in your life and that the sin in your life has separated you from God and you have no help outside of Christ. Admit your need for a Savior.

Accept his offer of salvation if you never have. Because I promise you, hell is worse than we think it is.

Third thing is this. There's still time. I thank God today that there's still time. I'm not sure how long.

[ 11 : 40 ] Jesus emphasized the imminence of his return. He can come back at any time. People love to talk about prophecy, especially these days when Israel is at war. Let me just say my piece about it.

I want you to listen to the words of Christ. Matthew 24, verse 4 and 6 through 8 says this. All these are but the beginning of birth pains.

Thank God this morning that if you're here and you've never surrendered your life to Christ, there's still time. There's still time to come to Christ.

There's also time, thank God, for those of us who have given our heart and life to God, to share Christ. And so I ask you this morning and I ask you to make it a personal prayer. God, who is it in my life that you put in place for me to pray for?

Who is it in my life that you'd like for me to invite? Who is it in my life that you've placed in my path that you want me to share my faith with? Why did you put that person in my path, Lord?

[ 13 : 14 ] And what would you have me do? Will you commit today? That if God will show you somebody to invite, to share your faith with, to pray for that you'll do that?

And watch God work and move in that? Acts chapter 1, verse 8 tells us that he has given us the power to share him.

That he has called us to be his witnesses and to share him. And he tells them to start in Jerusalem. Do you know what our Jerusalem is?

It's Pickens. You know what our Jerusalem is? It's easily for those who live there. It's liberty for those who live there. It's six mile for those who live there.

It's sunset for those who live there. It's central for those who live there. It's bevard for those who live there. And wherever else that I've missed, I apologize.

[ 14 : 17 ] Don't be mad at me. Because God has scattered us around. So that those in those places will have the opportunity to personally hear somebody.

Invite them to know the truth of the Lord Jesus Christ. He says not only in Jerusalem, but in Judea. That's South Carolina. In Samaria, that's those close to us that we don't think much of, quite honestly.

They didn't think much of Samaria. But God called them to go to Samaria. So those people that in the outer skirts of your life that you don't think much of, that God's called you to reach out to. And then the uttermost parts of the earth.

Thank God he's given us the charge and the ability and the responsibility to go throughout our world and share Christ. We pray that God will open doors for us to do that. If God is still giving us breath.

If he is still giving breath to the one that needs Christ. Thank God there's still time. But please understand we must take advantage of that.

[ 15 : 18 ] We must hurry. Because Jesus also said in Matthew 24. Verse 36 and 44. He said this. Listen to verse 44.

Therefore you also must be ready. For the Son of Man is coming at a time, an hour you do not expect. Let us be so dedicated to praying and sharing Christ that our prayers and our sharing usher people into the kingdom.

While God has still given us time. Lorna Harris was probably my favorite voice in Christian music in the 80s and early 90s. What a wonderful instrument God gave him in his voice.

And he was a premier singer in Christian music. He's the son of a bootlegger. Who needed Jesus. And Lorna says that his mother's prayers lifted the cot of the spiritually lame daddy to the roof.

And each individual prayer tore off the individual pieces of the roof over the head of the Lord and brought that man to Jesus. God has empowered us.

[ 16 : 38 ] He has commissioned us. We have a responsibility. There's still time. May we be steadfast until the Lord comes. May he look at us and say well done.

You were faithful to the end. There's still time. Lastly, there's not as much time as you think. There's not as much time as we think.

There's a legend about Satan and his imps. Strategizing about how to attack the message of the gospel on the earth. And what I'm piped up and said when I get to the earth and take charge of people's thinking.

I'm going to tell them there's no heaven. And the devil said, ah, don't ever believe that. This book of truth is full of messages about the hope of heaven.

When their sins are forgiven, they won't believe that. They know there's a glory in the future. Another one piped up and said, I've got a plan. I'll tell them there's no hell.

[ 17 : 46 ] And the devil responded and said, no good. Jesus talks more about hell than heaven. They know in their hearts that their wrong will have to be dealt with. They deserve nothing more than hell.

And then another one piped up and said, then I know the answer. I'll tell them there's no hurry. They have plenty of time.

And that's the lie the devil chose. In Acts chapter 1, our passage for the day.

The angels told them not to stand there gazing in the sky. That he's coming back. Just like he went. And I thank God he is.

We've been given the responsibility to prepare ourselves for his return. And to help others prepare themselves for his return at the same time. We don't have time for stargazing.

[ 18 : 46 ] We don't have time for daydreaming. We don't have time for mulligreving. We need to get about the work of the Lord.

Until we see him face to face. We've got work to do. And there's people that need to see Jesus. In us.

Let's allow the reality of eternity to change our lives. And therefore God through us change other lives. With every head bowed and every eye closed this morning, I ask you.

Have you ever given your heart and life to the Lord Jesus Christ? Do you have that nailed down in your life? If you don't, I want you to know in just a moment we're going to stand and sing. And it's your opportunity to respond to him as he speaks to your heart and life.

I'd love to guide you in that. You don't have to know what to do. I'll take care of all that. You just come. Maybe you're here this morning and you have done that. But you've never made that public.

[ 19 : 51 ] You've never acknowledged that. Jesus says, if you're ashamed of me before others, I'll be ashamed of you before my Father. It means your relationship is not real if it's not public.

You never see in Scripture somebody privately come to the Lord with any success. Instead, they did it and went out and shared it. And if you've never acknowledged Christ publicly, I encourage you to do that today.

Jesus, by his example and by his commission, tells us to follow that with baptism. It's a first step of obedience. And if that's never happened to you, we'd love for you to join this church by baptism. Maybe you're here this morning and God's leading you to be a part of this fellowship.

God's stirring and moving in a mighty way in First Baptist Church, and I'm so thankful for that. God's leading you to be a part of that. I want you to come. I'll guide you in that process. Maybe God's just giving you a burden.

These stairs up here is a makeshift offer. You can lay that burden down before the Lord. Maybe you want somebody to pray for you. I'll be happy to do that. I have no idea what God's telling you to do, but I know you'll never be satisfied unless you follow exactly what he'd have you.

[ 20 : 53 ] So I encourage you just to be obedient this morning as he speaks to your heart and life. Lord Jesus, I love you, and I thank you, dear God, for your love for us. Lead us today to simply be obedient, work and move in our lives.

Oh, God, I pray in Jesus' precious name. Amen.