

Considering Eternity

Adapted from O.J. Gibson's notes in Survey in Biblical Christianity

We can't imagine eternity.

It's hard even just to get our head around big numbers

A Billion (American one thousand million)

one advertising agency put it like this

- A billion seconds ago it was 1959.
- A billion minutes ago Jesus was alive.
- A billion hours ago our ancestors were living in the Beginning of Biblical Time.
- A billion days ago no-one walked on earth if it was here.
- A billion dollars ago was only 8 hours and 20 minutes, at the rate the US government spends it.

A billion (or even just 100) years from now, where will you be?

- If you trust in Jesus, you will be in heaven enjoying God's presence, not for a billion years but, **forever and ever**.
- If you don't, you'll be in **everlasting** torment in Hell.

"What happens after death?" There are **many theories..**

1. **Annihilationism**

Says.. We cease to exist. **"When you're dead, you're dead."**

2. **The Teaching of Reincarnation**

(Eastern religions but now popular in the West)

Says.. We **come back** to earth as a **different form of life** or in the body of another person.

3. **Occultism** (Part of the folklore in Ireland)

Says.. **The dead live in a mysterious spirit world** and may try to keep in contact with those still living on earth.

God's people are strongly warned about this

¹⁰Let no-one be found among you who.. practises divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, ¹¹or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist **or who consults the dead**. ¹²Anyone who does these things is detestable to the LORD, Deuteronomy 18v10-12

4. **Agnosticism [Impossible to Know]**

Says.. Our state after death is **beyond what we can know**. It is questionable whether there is life after death or not. We must **wait and see**, trusting in either fate or our good life if there is an afterlife.

The Bible says the dead are conscious and aware, **in one of two places: in the presence of God** (2 Corinthians 5:8) in a state of blessedness (Revelation 14:13), **or separated from God** in a place of great torment (Revelation 20:10, 15).

As Christians we believe in the Resurrection of the Dead

Jesus said our God is **the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob** “He is not a God of the dead, but of the living” (Luke 20:37-38).
Proclaiming the resurrection was **foundational to apostolic preaching** (Acts 1:22; Acts 4:2; Acts 17:18; Acts 23:6). The Apostle Paul said there were more than **500 witnesses** to the resurrection of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:4-8) and that **if it wasn’t true their faith was in vain** (15:12-17).

The striking truth of Scripture, however, is that there are **2 classes** in the resurrection, **carefully divided from one another**.

“Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.”
(Daniel 12:2).

Jesus said “all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.” **(John 5:28-29)**.

“and I have the same hope in God as these men, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.” **(Acts 24:15)**.

Two eventualities face us.

- **Eternal judgment** is one terrible possibility (Hebrews 6:2; 9:27). let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ.. the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. Hebrews 6v2
- The other is **eternal life (John 3:16)** which frees us from that judgment of condemnation (John 5:24; **Romans 8:1**).

What’s the Length of Eternity

The Bible uses the words

“eternity,” “everlasting,” “forever and ever”

How long is that?

1. It’s Applied to God.

God is the author of the **Book of Time** he is outside of it and not bound by it. The past present and future all lie before Him.

So the Bible talks of “The everlasting God” (Romans 16:26), “the eternal Spirit” (Hebrews 9:14), “His eternal glory” (1 Peter 5:10), “To him be honour and might for ever.” (1 Timothy 6:16), “everlasting kingdom” (2 Peter 1:11).

2. It’s Applied to the Believer’s Future.

“Eternal redemption” (Hebrews 9:12), “eternal salvation” (Hebrews 5:9), “everlasting life” (John 3:16, 36), “eternal life” (Luke 18:30), “eternal life” (John 3:15).

3. It’s Applied to the Unbeliever’s Future.

“Everlasting fire” (Matthew 18:8), “everlasting punishment” (Matthew 25:46), “everlasting destruction” (2 Thessalonians 1:9), “eternal fire” (Jude7).

The Condition of the Lost

1. As Described by Jesus

The Lord Jesus told a story called The Rich Man in Hell, which some describe as a parable (**READ Luke 16:19-31**). Yet it is **not called a parable** in the Bible. Jesus speaks about the reality of those who have not repented and turned to God.

- a. There's **no end of existence** after death.
- b. There's **no unconsciousness** or sleep of their souls.
- c. There's **no universal salvation** of everyone.
- d. There's **no second chance** offered.
- e. There's **no reincarnation** or coming back to earth.
- f. There's **no end of torment** for the unsaved and **no hope of change** for them.
- g. There's **no purpose of purification**, only of eternal punishment.

2. As Further Taught by Jesus

Listen to these **terrifying descriptions** given **by the One who loves us most** and gave Himself to save us. He simply described the truth about those who leave this world neglecting or refusing Him.

- a. **Fire that is unquenchable** (Matthew 3:12; Matthew 18:8; Mark 9:44, 48)
- b. **Torment forever** (Revelation 14:11)
- c. **Outer darkness** (Matthew 22:13; Matthew 25:30)

d. **Wailing and gnashing of teeth** (Matthew 13:42, 50; Matthew 24:51; Luke 13:28)

e. **Lake of fire** (Revelation 20:15)

The Condition of the Redeemed

The final state of the righteous is in vivid contrast to that of the lost. "**Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord**" (Revelation 14:13). As believers we're "**looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.**" (Hebrews 11:10). This place is **better than anything in this world**. It's literally 'out of this world'.

1. It is With Christ.

"And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am." (John 14:3; cf. John 17:24). To be absent from the body is to "be present with the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5:8).

2. It is in a Changed Body.

It will be like His body (Philippians 3:21) and therefore incorruptible (1 Corinthians 15:35-44). We will be recognizable just like Jesus was (Matthew 28:9, 17; Luke 24:31, 39-40). The resurrection of the body for those in Christ will take place at the Second Coming of Christ (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17).

3. It is in a Place of "No Moans."

There is no more death, sorrow, crying, pain – the end of all that makes life difficult and unhappy (Revelation 21:4).

4. It is in a Place of Infinite Beauty.

“The city of pure gold, as clear as glass” (Revelation 21:18-21). It is pictured as decorated with all kinds of precious stones.

5. It is in a Place Where Nothing Unholy or Defiling Enters (Revelation 21:27).

The place of the redeemed is sometimes termed the “**New Jerusalem.**” We call it **Heaven.** The Jewish believer called it “**Paradise**” or “**Abraham’s Bosom**” before Jesus came and died. By whatever term, it should be the subject of yearning for every believer. As Paul said, “**to die is gain**” (Philippians 1:21).

[The Trip Was Worth It By C. L. Paddock]

A boy, just about to enter his teens, sat contentedly in the coach of a train traveling through the dry belt in the West. It was a miserably hot day but always he showed a smiling countenance.

Others complained of the heat and the dust. Some found fault with the equipment of the railroad. Most of the passengers seemed out of sorts. It surely was not very comfortable, and traveling was most tiresome and uninteresting.

The boy, however, with a contentment which, it could be seen, had its source far beneath the surface, seemed to be enjoying the dried-out country, which to others had become most monotonous.

An inquisitive motherly soul in the seat behind the boy was wondering what made the little fellow so cheerful. When she could curb her curiosity no longer, she leaned forward and asked, "Sonny, aren't you tired of this heat?"

"Yes, ma'am, I am a little tired. But I don't mind it much." The little lady was about to ask why, when he finished his sentence, "**Because, my daddy is going to meet me when we get there.**"

Our Father will be waiting for us also at the end of the journey. The road is rough at times; sometimes life seems almost unbearable. There are trials, troubles, heartaches, burdens, disappointments. But what about it! Our Daddy is at the journey's end, waiting to welcome us home!

Considering Eternity.. Let me ask you..

- **Are you absolutely sure that you're going to heaven?**

How wonderful it was when the Lord Jesus said to the thief on the cross who repented of his sins and believed on Him, “Today you will be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:43). Will **you** be there with Him?

- If you're not sure, talk to someone who can help you.
- I'd be happy to talk to you and explain how you can be sure

- **As believer's - How should we live in light of eternity?**

What is your life – a vapour the Bible says

Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. James4v14

Like firing a rifle - Line up your life with Eternity

The Bible describes different Levels of Rewards

13his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. 14If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. 15If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames
1 Corinthians 3v13-15

Are you aiming for an abundant entrance or just by the skin of your teeth?

58Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain. 1 Cor 15v58

Considering Eternity..

- **How important is it to share the good news of Jesus?**

The Worst Case Scenario - John Ortberg tells this story

"There's a book that came out several years ago that gives you instructions on what to do in the direst circumstances that you can imagine. It's called **The Worst Case Scenario Survival Handbook**. . .

. This Worst Case Handbook has sold millions of copies and it covers every kind of situation you can imagine:

-How to Perform an Emergency Tracheotomy.

-What to Do If You Run Into a Mountain Lion.

-How to Respond If You Jump Out of a Plane and the Parachute Doesn't Open.

"Now it's written straight. It actually is advice from experts in their fields * the best advice on what to do in these types of situations. But nobody buys the book for the actual advice. It is sold in humour sections of bookstores as kind of a joke.

"I was reading this Handbook a couple of weeks ago, when I turned a page and came to a section that was called, "How to Survive a Tsunami."

"All of a sudden, it wasn't funny anymore. It was so strange. I sat there reading, and all I could think of was how a few months ago how many lives might have been spared * how many hundreds of thousands of hearts might not be broken now if people had just known what is in this book. It is meant to be humorous, and it is until the scenario described actually happens. Then it's not funny. Then you'd give anything. It's life or death."

Calvin Coolidge was **vice president of the United States** between 1921-1923, under President Warren Harding. He was not a very active vice president, but he took great pleasure in **presiding over the Senate**. One day as he was presiding, a

senator angrily told another to go "straight to hell." The offended Senator openly complained to Coolidge as the presiding officer. Coolidge was leafing through the book of rules as he made his complaint. Coolidge looked up from the book and replied: "I've looked through the rule book. You don't have to go."

That is the good news that we have to share with the world. We have looked it up in God's book. **No one has to go to hell**, for the Bible says that He, "wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4).

(Rodney Buchanan, "Sharing Christ," SermonCentral)

**May God help us to be the people
he has called us to be.**