

WHERE WILL YOU SPEND ETERNITY?

By: Malcom Jones

“For thus saith the High and Lofty One that inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him who has a contrite and humble spirit, to receive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones, ” (Isaiah 57:15).

Pay particular attention to the word “ETERNITY.” There are many verses in the Bible that contains the word “Everlasting” and “Eternal”, but Isaiah 57:15 is the only verse in the Bible containing the word “Eternity”.

Friend, “Eternity” and “Despair” are two words which man may never comprehend in this life. I read where a certain statesman, who on his deathbed said to the physician who was attending him: “Sir, you have not the remotest conception of the meaning of the word “Despair”.

Just as it is very difficult to comprehend the meaning of the word “Despair”, it is also very difficult to comprehend the real meaning of “Eternity”.

So, this lesson will be centered on seven basic points:

1. Man will live again after his earthly existence.

In Ecclesiastes 12:1-7, we have these words recorded:

1. “Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, before the difficult days come, and the years draw near, when you say, ‘I have no pleasure in them’; 2. While the sun and the light, the moon, or the stars, are not darkened, and the clouds do not return after the rain; 3. In the days when the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men bow down; When the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look through the windows grow dim; 4. When the doors are shut in the streets, and the sound of grinding is low; When one rises up at the sounds of the bird, and all the daughters of music are brought low; 5. Also they are afraid of height, and are afraid of terrors in the way; when the almond tree blossoms, the grasshopper is a burden and desire fail: for man goes to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets. 6. Remember your creator before the silver cord is loosed, or the pitcher shattered at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the well. 7. Then the dust will return to the earth as it was and the spirit will return to God who gave it.”

Here in those verses we have all the essential elements in view: Youth—Old age—Death, and man’s responsibilities to God. But I want you to pay particular attention to what is said in verse 5. In that verse we have these words, “For man goes to his long home”. The writer is saying here that man’s course is finished and he is going into eternity. Earthly life as we know it will end and the body of man returns to dust and the spirit returns to the Creator.

In John 14:1-3, Jesus said, *“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.”*

These mansions that Jesus speaks of are in the "Father's house." This is the heavenly abode from which Christ came and to which he would return, and there He would prepare a home for all who love and serve Him.

Verse 3 has reference to the second coming of Christ. Christ will one day come to take His children home to Heaven. Dear friend our next destination is heavenly, not earthly. In 2 Timothy 4:6-8 the apostle Paul writes: *"For I am now ready to be offered and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that Day, (Now notice), and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing."*

Paul was ready to depart this life and go to be with the Lord. In the Army of the Lord, he had fought battles and won victories for Christ. He had finished his course and above all he had kept the faith. Paul knew that God had a crown of life for him and for all others who loved the appearing of Christ.

Let me ask you a question! "Are you as sure of that crown of life as Paul was?" "Have you fought battles and won victories for Christ?" "Are you keeping the faith?" (If one has confessed Christ, as the Son of God, been baptized for the remission of sins, thus being in Christ, Christ's Body, and lived a faithful life of service to Him, Christ will take you to the Heavenly Father when He returns again).

2. The journey to eternity is certain.

Do you remember what Ecclesiastes 12:7 said? *Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.* Man is composed of two parts: Body and spirit. And here we are told of what happens to each.

Let me give you something to think about. We, you and I, or anyone who reads this does not have the promise of tomorrow! We could live another day, or 10, 20 or more years before we pass into eternity. Well, there is no way to tell. To me, the most important thought or question is, "Are you prepared to meet God in eternity if you were to be one that death overtakes?"

Friend, man may fly into space, split the atom, find cures for various diseases and do many other marvelous things, but, (NOW READ, AND I BEG YOU TO BELIEVE), man can never change the law that says, *"Man goeth to his long (eternal) home."*

3. Physical death is the point at which one begins his journey into eternity.

In Hebrews 9:27, we have these words recorded, *"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment."* Death is a certainty. Remember what is said in Ecclesiastes 12:5? *"And the mourners go about the streets."*

We are reminded of death by the obituary notices, the passing funeral possessions, and the cemeteries on the right and on the left. We are born to die. Long before we begin to live, the sentence of death has been passed upon us. It is said in Romans 5:12, *"Wherefore, as by one-man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all has sinned.* The reference is to the sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, which caused death to enter into the world. Now, we are not guilty of the sin of Adam and Eve, but we do suffer the consequences of that sin.

Death is certain! Health, science and cautious living can only postpone it. It comes to the righteous as well as the unrighteous, to youth as well as the aged. Only one thing can prevent death...the coming of the Lord.

Let us look for a few minutes at the Christian's attitude toward death. Just what should our attitude be? Well, the Christian's attitude toward death involves several things: The Christian's attitude toward death involves facing its reality...that is cannot be averted. *"And as it is appointed for man to die once, but after this the judgment..."* (Hebrews 9:27).

The Christian's attitude toward death involves realizing that what we lose in Adam, we gain in Christ. In 1 Corinthians 15:21-22, Paul writes, *"For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."* (Adam is the man through whom death spread to the entire human race (see Rom. 5:12). But Jesus Christ is the greater Man who overcomes death by His resurrection. By faith in him we too will be made alive at the resurrection).

The Christian's attitude toward death involves understanding the fact that Christ has the victory over death. In 1 Corinthians 15:55-58 it is written. *"O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin and the strength of sin is the law. (NOW NOTICE)...But thanks be to God, which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, unmoved, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."*

The Christian's attitude toward death involves not sorrowing as unbelievers do in the death of their loved ones. Let us notice what Paul wrote in 1 Thess. 4:13, *"But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope."* Sorrow over the death of a loved one is natural, and right, as did Jesus when Lazarus died. It is said in John 11:35. "Jesus wept."

Jesus wept because of pure, genuine, human sympathy. His heart went out to Mary and Martha and He wept with them just as we weep with our loved ones today when they are in sorrow. There is a difference between the sorrows when it is for those who sleep in Jesus because they have a hope of a happy life after the resurrection. Those that are not Christians do not have that hope. Our sorrow for them is different.

When a Christian dies it is like leaving an old house and moving into a new one. In Revelation 14:14, we have these words recorded. Then I heard a voice from Heaven saying to me, *"Write: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.'"* "Yes," says the Spirit, *"that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them."*

This voice of authority comes from Heaven and declares that all who die in the Lord are blessed. Now, this blessing is not passed upon those who have not entered Christ. We enter Him by hearing, believing, confessing, and being baptized into Christ for the remission of sins. Such people who are then faithful to serve Him are rewarded at the end of the journey.

Take note also of what Paul writes in 1 Thess. 4:13-18, *"But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest your sorrow as*

others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words."

4. When we leave this earthly existence we will never return.

I want to make a few more comments on the phrase that we read in Eccles. 12:5, which says, "...Man goeth to his long, (eternal), home..." Friend it is true, when we leave this earthly existence we will never return. Man and wife may live for 50 or 60 years or even longer, but when death overtakes one of them, that spouse never returns.

A mother or a father may weep over the death of a child, but that child will never return. A mother or a father may say "goodbye" to a son or a daughter and never see that child alive again. We live in a world that when we leave to go somewhere, without a moments notice, we will never return. Death overtakes us and we pass into eternity.

How long is eternity? The late T. B. Larimore in illustrating the length of eternity had this to say, (and I am quoting Bro. Larimore):

"We may number the leaves of all the trees of all the earth through all the ages and multiply that number by the number of blades of grass that have grown on the earth since the earth was made, then multiply that by the grains of sand upon the earth and that by the number of drops of water in existence; then let each unit in that final, inexpressible product represent ten thousand ages and all the time represented by that wonderful combination of units, each unit representing ten thousand ages, is inexpressibly small in comparison with eternity and may be deducted from eternity millions and billions and trillions of times and eternity would still be the same, awful, boundless, limitless, fathomless, inexpressible thing it was before."

5. Judgment Day is the Announcement Time.

It is hard for some people to believe that the judgment is going to be real. Well, let us see what the Bible says. In Acts 17:30-31 we have these words recorded, "*Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent: (Why repent?), because He has appointed a day, (NOW NOTICE), on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom HE has ordained. HE has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.*"

Look also to Matthew 25:31-32, "*When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats.*"

Here Christ is pictured as sitting on the throne of His glory and conducting the final judgment at the end of the world. It is the last day, the resurrection day, and the judgment day. It is the day for which all other days have been made and to which all other days look forward. It is the time for separation of the righteous and the wicked.

Friend, the-judgment-is-going-to-be-real and Jesus will pronounce our final destines. But the question is, "ARE YOU READY FOR THE JUDGMENT DAY?" I do not know when judgment day will take place and nor does any one else. But the one thing I do know is that it will take place because God says that it will.

6. There are but two dwelling places in eternity. One of these places is HEAVEN.

Revelation 21:1-4 says, *"Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.'"*

In this glorious, heavenly home, God shall dwell with his children and we will enjoy His fatherly protection. This glorious new body will not suffer pain. No disease can make the heart cry out in anguish, for the "first things are passed away." No tears shall ever dim our eyes and death will be unknown. Death has reigned since Adam and Eve left the Garden of Eden but now in this new city of the redeemed, death is banished forever.

The other dwelling place in eternity is HELL. Revelation 21:8 says, *"But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."*

Then in Matthew 25:41-46, we have these words recorded, *"Then He, (Christ), will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison, and you did not visit Me. Then they also will answer Him, saying, 'Lord when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?' Then He will answer them, saying, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.' And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."*

Friend, those who turn away from Christ and His precious invitation will be banished from His presence. Men go to the eternal fires of hell because they choose to do so. They refuse the better way. And I want you to also notice in this reading that people are punished not only for what they do but also for what they fail to do. We need to understand that anytime we help a fellow human being we are serving Christ.

Notice in the last verse above, Matthew 25:46 that the punishment of the wicked is everlasting and the life of the righteous is eternal. The duration of these, two states are exactly the same...FOREVER. So, on the left the wicked are cast into the lake that burns with fire and brimstone and this eternal separation from God is the second death. But those

on the right enter into a beautiful city to live with God forever where there will be no death, no sorrow, no crying. (How Beautiful Heaven Must Be, Sweet Home of The Happy and Free)! Let us make a date to meet there!

7. If you are outside of Christ there is a way to be saved.

Dear friend, it is true, if you are outside of Christ there is a way to be saved. And it is true also; to be saved one must be in Christ. The sad thing is, "Not all mankind believes that."

In John 14:6 these words of Jesus, "*Jesus said unto him (Thomas, one of the disciples), 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.'*" Jesus had told His disciples that He was going, "*and where I go He said, you know, and the way you know,*" but Thomas said, they did not know. The truth is, no one can go to Heaven except through Jesus Christ.

But, to be saved one must obey Him. The Hebrew writer writes in Hebrews 5:8-9, "*Though He, (Jesus Christ), was a son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obeyed Him...*"

God will not save people who live in disobedience. If you want to go to Heaven, you must obey the commands of God. You must become a Christian, (child of God). The steps are simple:

Hear (John 6:44-45)

Believe (John 8:24)

Repent (Acts 17:30)

Confess (Romans 10:9-10)

Be baptized for the remission of sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 22:16)

When you become a Christian, you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Then remain faithful until death overtakes you. Paul describes the gift of the Holy Spirit as the guarantee of our redemption in heaven (Ephesians 1:13-14).

Please keep all of this in mind; Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people and Hell is a prepared place for unprepared people. The choice is yours. "*But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added to you*" (Matthew 6:33).

Here on earth our rewards are transitory. We strive for an earthly reward only to find that it quickly fades away. But in Heaven what we have gained we hold and no man can take it away.

Yes, Heaven is where I want to spend eternity and I believe that is where you want to spend eternity. I have never heard a person say, "I want to go to hell and be with Satan and his angels when I die."

But dear friend, the question is, "ARE YOU PREPARED FOR ETERNITY OR ARE YOU UNPREPARED?"

This lesson was prepared to create that question in the mind of all who hear or read it. It answers the questions if you will permit the Biblical truths presented to have place in your heart. Please permit that, and choose all needed obligations, which are your responsibility. God will do His part and you must do your part. And if you do you will be prepared and your place in eternity will be in Heaven with God and all the Saints. God bless you now!

Your servant and I love you!

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PS: I am using this edited copy (by permission) of a Sermon, a great truth presentation, by Malcomb Jones an Elder at Austinville Church of Christ, Decatur, AL. I express my thanks and appreciation to Brother Malcom Jones, for a great lesson. I have more of his sermons, and believe me, they are good lessons too. I will print and issue from time to time.