

13. Into Eternity (2Q 2026 Growing in a Relationship with God)

Biblical material: Psalm 80, 1 Thess. 4:17, Rev. 21:9–27, Isa. 25:8, Rev. 7:17, Rev. 21:4, John 6:44; 1 John 3:2.

Quotes

- The longer I live, the more I am enabled to realize that I have but one life to live on Earth, and that this one life is but a brief life, for sowing, in comparison with eternity, for reaping. *George Muller*
- The awful importance of this life is that it determines eternity. *William Barclay*
- As a Christian, Christ died so that we will have eternal life in Him in Heaven. What it looks like doesn't matter, what it smells like doesn't matter, as long as Christ is there it will be Heaven to me. *T. D. Jakes*
- Existence came from God; death came by Adam; and immortality and eternal life come through Christ. *Bruce R. McConkie*
- You know, eternal life does not start when we go to heaven. It starts the moment you reach out to Jesus. He never turns His back on anyone. And He is waiting for you. *Corrie Ten Boom*
- Eternity's a terrible thought. I mean, where's it all going to end? *Tom Stoppard*

Questions

Why is your picture of God so important when you consider eternity? Why are our ideas about what heaven will be like so trite? What is the most important aspect about eternity? How do we best speak to those who think that we won't remember anything of our lives here because God wipes our memories of all that's sinful? What of the issues of the great controversy in eternity?

Bible summary

Psalm 80 is a plea for God to return to save his people. 1 Thessalonians 4:17 states that we will meet the Lord in the air and be with him forever. Revelation 21:9–27 describes the New Jerusalem. Isaiah 25:8 says that the Lord will wipe away our tears, similarly Revelation 7:17 and Revelation 21:4. Jesus is the resurrection (see John 6:44). “When he appears, we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he really is.” 1 John 3:2.

Comment

God promises a new heaven and a new earth. Much of the New Testament imagery of the future comes from the Old Testament, an expression of what was wonderful for those of that time. No doubt the Bible writers would have used modern metaphors if they had been aware of them. The most important assurance is however the presence in eternity of our loving Lord.

But what will this experience be like? Is it a time of endless harp-playing? And what of our memories? If it is true that the former things will not come to mind, how will we know who we are, and know each other? More importantly even than this self-awareness is the awareness of sin and its consequences, gained at such dreadful cost. Is such evidence to be so quickly erased?

The significance of these words surely points to the experience of unqualified happiness, rather than divinely-engineered amnesia. We will *know* what sin has done, and will continue to *choose* God's way of truth and right. That is what makes God's government secure for all eternity. The alternatives are either continual sin, or the destruction of freedom and choice.

The images of tranquillity and bliss are very much from a pastoral background. Even the savage animals that were feared are now docile and tame. The fear that someone else would benefit from your house and crops is ended. In so many ways the future life is simply described as the opposite of life here—no wrong, no pain, no death etc. But God's eternity is to be seen as the extension of all that is positive, and unlimited in time and scope.

In Isaiah 66, the last chapter, what God truly wants is spelled out. It is not a question of formal obedience, or of rituals and sacrifices. On the contrary, God speaks strongly against those who rely on such mechanical aspects of religious observance. Ending as he began, Isaiah points out the futility of sacrifices to achieve a saving relationship with God. God's "requirement" is spelled out simply and briefly: "Those I look favorably on are humble and repentant." Isaiah 66:2. This contrasted with the one who sacrifices, who is likened to a murderer and an offerer of pig's blood!

Once again God is pleading for a true and honest and open relationship that is not confined by meaningless rituals and false ideas of worship. God seeks an intimate relationship of love, trust and confidence in the present that will continue throughout the ceaseless ages of eternity.

The truth is that whatever may come, we can trust in our trustworthy God. Even if things do not work out as we wish in this life, he promises he will be with us until the end, and then he welcomes us with open arms into his eternity. What a wonderful promise from our loving Lord.

Paul writes that "we don't have a permanent city to live in here; we're looking for the home that is still to come. Hebrews 13:14. The essential aspect of our ongoing relationship with our loving Lord is that it will not come to an end, even with death. The guarantee—the promise—is that we have an eternity to look forward to, an eternity not marred by sin and rebellion, but in an expanding understanding of truth and a deepening love. For what would life be if this was all? Our hope is in God himself, and in his desire to restore harmony and peace throughout his universe.

The reason we can have total confidence in God is because he is not power-hungry, position-loving, self-pleasing. All he does is for the best, not of himself, but of others. So as we think of an eternity in God's presence, we can be sure that God will never change his loving, self-giving character, always looking for the best for his created children.

Ellen White Comments

The hope of eternal life is not to be taken up upon slight grounds. It is a subject to be settled between God and your own soul; settled for eternity. A supposed hope, and nothing more, will prove your ruin. {2SG 264}

In receiving and believing the words of God, the understanding is enlightened and strengthened. These truths are of vital, soul-stirring interest, and are designed to engage the attention of all for whom Christ has died. They are truths that reach into eternity, and their greatness and importance correspond to their duration. {RH February 1, 1898}

There are practical lessons in the Word of God, lessons that Christ would have teachers and parents present to their children in the home and in the school. That Word teaches living, holy principles, which prompt men to do unto others as they would have others do unto them, principles which they are to bring into the daily life here, and carry with them into the school above. This is the higher education. No learning of human origin can reach these heights, for they reach into eternity, and are immortalized. The altar and the plough are the experiences for all who seek eternal life. {13MR 262-3 }

The Bible is like a fountain. The more you look into it, the deeper it appears. The grand truths of sacred history possess amazing strength and beauty, and are as far-reaching as eternity. No science is equal to the science that reveals the character of God. {FE 393}

And the years of eternity, as they roll, will bring richer and still more glorious revelations of God and of Christ. As knowledge is progressive, so will love, reverence, and happiness increase. The more men learn of God, the greater will be their admiration of His character. As Jesus opens before them the riches of redemption and the amazing achievements in the great controversy with Satan, the hearts of the ransomed thrill with more fervent devotion, and with more rapturous joy they sweep the harps of gold; and ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands of voices unite to swell the mighty chorus of praise. {GC 678}