

## Lesson 10: Eternity—Heaven and Hell

**Introduction:** Randy Alcorn – Eternal Perspective Ministries and his book *Heaven*

Thesis: *If heaven is more real to believers, then they will invest more in eternity.* Our goal today!

### Eternity

Amidst the *vanity* of life, God has put *eternity* in our hearts (Eccl. 3:11). We long for more than this life.

*What is eternity?*

Not less than *everlasting*, as God and His love are “from everlasting to everlasting” (Ps. 90:2; 103:17).

If this were all “eternity” was, that would be enough to motivate us.

Illus. Dot vs. Line – cf. 2 Cor. 3:10 – compared to everything, anything is nothing

But eternity is more than just endless time, whether behind us or ahead of us.

God “dwells in eternity” (Isa. 57:15). Time is elastic to God (Ps. 90:4; cf. 2 Pt. 3:8).

As the Creator, who made time-and-space (Gen. 1:1), God dwells outside of time, properly speaking.

As the Sustainer and Savior, God also dwells within time, both providentially and incarnationally.

*We are incredibly limited beings.*

We dwell within the space-time continuum at a *point* in space and a *moment* in time—no more, no less.

Even our physical realm is bounded below, by absolute zero, and above, by the speed of light.

Although Lewis speculated *thickness* of time, this idea resembles special relativity near the speed of light.

Even distance is bounded—forces at the closest distances would produce miniature black holes!

*What would happen if we could break out of our present existence?*

Martin Luther challenged others from the wonders of nature to wonder more about “the right hand of God.”

Christians often lack imagination in interpreting the statements of Scripture too literally—e.g. location.

C. S. Lewis, “Transpositions” – language in a lower realm is limited when referring to an upper realm

How would those in two-dimensional space imagine three dimensions using only lines in a plane?

By necessity, Scripture must use present symbols – e.g. horses and chariots (2 Kgs. 6:15-17).

Illus. Baby in the Womb – how could the outside world be imagined? (cf. 1 Cor. 2:9ff)

*The key difference is not location (“heaven”) or time (“future”) but **seen** versus **unseen** (cf. 2 Cor. 4:16-18).*

Jesus has “passed through the skies” as a veil (Heb. 4:14; cf. 6:19)—into the unseen realm, veiled to us.

Veiled by necessity—no one is *able* to see God directly (Ex. 33:20; 1 Tim. 6:16; cf. 1 Cor. 15:50).

Even His “return” is more of an *appearance* and *revealing*, than a change of location (Gr. *parousia*).

Francis Schaeffer, *True Spirituality* – we must see these realms as real and simultaneous

Illus. The Transfiguration – glory transposed on the mountain, life as normal in the valley

### Hell – Jesus said the most...

“outer darkness” – isolated, devoid of all common grace (cf. *Moody Magazine* article)

“weeping and gnashing of teeth” – pain and anger toward God (their sinning and punishment do not cease)

“worm does not die,...fire is not quenched” – unending internal and external destruction (cf. 2 Th. 1:9)

All are resurrected (Jn. 5:28-29; Acts 24:15)—both soul and body are destroyed endlessly (Mt. 10:28).

*What is the nature of this punishment?*

C. S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce* – to live with the character you developed (cf. “thy will be done”)

Certainly, with conscience gnawing, but there is also “wrath” and torment they do not want (Rev. 14:9-11):

Hades (jail) → court → Hell (prison) – drowning in the “lake of fire” (Rev. 20:11-15; cf. Gehenna)

Athanasius, *On the Incarnation* – dying and decaying endlessly toward non-existence (cf. asymptote)

*Do we not appreciate Jesus’ warnings about our right hand or right eye causing us to stumble?*

Will you hold onto Mammon, when the Kingdom is at hand? Believers will repent (Mk. 1:14-15)!

### Heaven – the good news of being with Christ...

Believers get a *spiritual* body like Christ—glorified, immortal and incorruptible (1 Cor. 15:42-49; Ph. 3:20-21).

Believers will be like the angels (Mt. 22:30) and judge angels (1 Cor. 6:3)—citizens of the spiritual realm.

As those reigning with Christ, we will receive new responsibilities—to “repair the ruins” (Isa. 58:12). How?

Christopher Wright, *The God I Don’t Understand* – how is there work on the New Earth? Destroyed?

Illus. Noah after the Flood – earth destroyed, knowledge and skills retained—new Beginning (cf. Gen. 1, 9)

Better: The City of Eden—perfect community, uncursed work, the union of God and man (heaven on earth).

*Who would not invest **now** in that endless community? There’s no comparison (Rom. 8:18; 2 Cor. 4:16-18)!*

Illus. C. S. Lewis, “The Weight of Glory” – “he cannot imagine...” (cf. Titus 2:11-14).