



Eternity

This ring shape represents eternity because it has no beginning and no end. It is infinite.

Paul David Tripp

Do You Believe?

What We Believe: Solid Doctrine for Everyday Life

The Doctrines of Eternity

God has appointed a day when he will judge the world. This will be a righteous judgment by Jesus Christ, who has been given the power to judge by God the Father. On that day, not only will the fallen angels be judged, but also all persons who have ever lived on the earth. Everyone will stand before the throne of Christ the Judge, to give an account with their thoughts, words, and

actions, to be judged according to what they have done, whether good or evil.

The reason God appointed this judgment day is to show the glory of his mercy by the eternal salvation of those he has chosen and to show the glory of his justice by condemning those he rejected, who are wicked and disobedient. After his judgment, the righteous will be given everlasting life and will receive the full and refreshing joy that comes from the presence of the Lord. The wicked, who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of Jesus Christ, will be thrown into eternal torment. They will be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power.

Christ wants us to be fully persuaded that there shall be a day of judgment, both to deter everyone from sin and to comfort the godly in adversity. He has kept that day unknown to us, so that we would shake off worldly security and always be watchful. We don't know what hour the Lord will come but we should always be prepared to say, "Come Lord Jesus, come quickly, Amen."^{1 2}

Read Matthew 25:31-46

In the end, Heaven comes down to earth (New Heavens & New Earth — Revelation 21) Hell is created and sustained by God, not Satan. Two primary purposes: Hell is for *punishment* (justice) and for *containment* (protection).

Hell is not underground, but "outside the city." (see Rev. 21:17; Zech. 2:4-5; Is. 11:9)

There's a sense in which: We don't choose God (He chooses us); but Hell is chosen. As the Eagles sang in "Hotel California" — "we are all just prisoners here, of our own device."

C. S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce*, "There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, 'Thy will be done,' and those to whom God says, in the end, 'THY will be done.' All that are in Hell choose it.... The doors of hell are locked on the inside."

- God reveals his perfect justice by punishing rebellion against him. God is not passive in hell's eternal punishment. However, I think we can hold that biblical notion, while also noticing something else about hell. In a significant way, all who go there do so because they choose it.

C.S. Lewis:

"It is not a question of God "sending us" to hell.... All that are in hell choose it. Without that self choice it wouldn't be hell.... Hell begins with a grumbling mood, always complaining, always blaming others.... but you are still distinct from it. You may even criticize it in yourself and wish you could stop it. But there may come a day when you can no longer. Then there will be no *you* left to criticize the mood or even to enjoy it, but just the grumble itself, going on forever like a machine.... In each of us there is something growing, which will BE hell unless it is nipped in the bud."

Tim Keller (Reason for God):

"Hell, then, is the trajectory of a soul, living a self-absorbed, self-centered life, going on and on forever... In short, hell is simply one's freely chosen identity apart from God on a trajectory into infinity."

The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus — Luke 16:19-31

Notice the rich man is still trying to order Lazarus around. And although he is in miserable torment, he never asks to be released from hell. Instead he implicitly accuses God of not giving him enough information, and of not getting his attention with miraculous displays.

- Living with Eternity in View: don't get comfortable with "eternity amnesia."

Discuss

What are some areas of life where a renewed vision of eternity can help us put things in perspective now? What might "delayed gratification" look like in these areas?

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On Jordan's Stormy Banks I Stand

Recommended Resources

- The artwork comes from, *Do You Believe?: 12 Historic Doctrines to Change Your Everyday Life*, by Paul Tripp (Crossway, 2021), on which this class is loosely based.

¹ Paul Tripp's paraphrase of the doctrine of eternity as found in the Westminster Confession of Faith, chap. 33.

² Ecclesiastes 12:14; Matthew 12:36; 25:21, 32-46; Mark 9:48; 13:35-37; Luke 12:35-40; John 5:22-27; Acts 17:31; Romans 9:22-23; 14:10-12; 1 Corinthians 5:3; 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10; 2 Timothy 4:8; Jude 6; Revelation 22:20.