

Tommy Meador / General

Conversations that Connect / 2 Thessalonians 1:5–9; Revelation 21:1–4

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## Introduction

- Deathclock.org - answer some simple questions and it will tell the age and when you will die - me - 88 years, 1 month, and 2 days... Sunday, October 3rd, 2066... I thought I'd live to be a hundred.
- I do not know the day I will breathe my last breath on this earth, but my days are numbered.
- “And just as it is appointed for people to die once—and after this, judgment” ([Hebrews 9:27](#)).
- Time is limited. On your last death, you will breathe your last time, and you will step into eternity.
- Reality: most people believe in afterlife. 2021 Pew research report: 73% of ALL US adults believe in heaven. That doesn't mean that 73% of all US adults believe faith in Christ is the only way to heaven, but most people want to believe there is something better after this life.
- [Ecclesiastes 3:11](#): “God has also put eternity in their hearts.”
- According to Scripture, there are two eternal destinies - heaven and hell. Your eternal destiny hinges on your response to Jesus.
- Reject Jesus and you get what you deserve: eternal punishment. Embrace Jesus and get what you do not deserve: the gift of heaven. The issue of eternity is an urgent issue because daily people are choosing to step into hell because of their willful rejection of God not knowing there is a glorious alternative!
- When sharing the Gospel, we need to have conversations about eternity. People need to know that God offers an eternal home with Him

that is far better than anything this world offers. People also need to know that eternal punishment awaits all who reject Jesus.

This morning: truth about about hell and truth about heaven and some suggestions about talking about eternity.

## **Hell isn't comparable to any human experience. Hell is a torturous reality.**

- Paul writing to encourage believers who are suffering persecution. God will vindicate His people. (Also, a similar theme in Revelation.)
- God will take vengeance with flaming fire (vs. 8). Bible is clear: The full wrath of God is coming for people who reject Jesus.
- The Bible does not give us all the details of hell, but often fire used to describe the reality of hell. ([Matt. 25:41](#), [Rev. 20:15](#)) Hell described in Bible as the worst possible fate imaginable. Teaching of Jesus: Gehenna - valley of Hinnon - Jesus uses as an analogy of hell: "Where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched" ([Mark 9:48](#)).
- **Hell isn't comparable to any human experience.** We say things like: "I went through hell today." Or, "War is hell." Nor, is hell something to be taken lightly. Mentality of some: Hell is a party for rebels – we're going to party with the devil. We had a hell of a time. Or, what a hell of a game. Or, a casual curse word. Every time we as believers casually talk of hell we are demonstrating that we do not understand the serious nature of God's wrath and justice.
- We want to believe that how the Bible describes hell is metaphorical while how the Bible describes heaven is literal because we don't to accept the reality of how tortuous hell really is.

*"If Jesus, the Lord of Love and Author of Grace spoke about hell more often, and in a more vivid, blood-curdling manner than anyone else, it must be a crucial truth." (Tim Keller)*

- Hell is:
  - **Eternal** – vs. 9 - Not annihilationism.

- **Conscious**– Those who suffer eternal punishment are fully aware of their punishment. (Rich man and Lazarus, weeping and gnashing of teeth - [Matt. 8:12](#).)
- **Suffering**- Hell is a place of suffering for those who have rejected Christ.

*9 And another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, 10 he also will drink the wine of God’s wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger, and he will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. 11 And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest, day or night, these worshipers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name.” [Revelation 14:9-11](#)*

- The hell of hell: Hell is you ultimately getting what you want. To reject Christ is to live a life where you say, “God, not your will be done, my will be done.” To reject God is to say, “I don’t need you.” Hell is ultimately God giving you what you want – an eternity without him.
- Every person on the planet enjoys common grace – mercy, etc. The sun rising, pleasures of life, etc. Hell is God removing all of that. Hell is an absence of God’s grace and mercy. That’s torment! Cry out and receive mercy because today is the day of salvation.
- **Hell is an appropriate punishment for people who reject God.**
- Hell is a display of God’s justice.
- **Objection:** “It’s not fair...” It’s absolutely fair. It’s what you wanted. You didn’t want God’s grace. You wanted your way. Think [Romans 1](#). God has revealed Himself and everyone has rejected Him.
- Think sin: not a mistake or a failure but an assault on God’s character. For the person who rejects Christ, he has spent every day of his life assaulting the character of God. The person who rejects Christ has spent every day of his life saying to God, “I will not have you rule over me!”

## Heaven is an undeserved reward for

# repentant people.

- The Bible's depiction of heaven and hell are not complete. Words on a page cannot adequately describe the realities that await all people. (Try describing the most beautiful sight you have ever seen – words don't do it justice.) We are given partial pictures, but heaven a stark contrast to hell.
- Intermediate state - In the presence of God waiting the future resurrection. (To be absent from body is to be present with the Lord - [2 Cor. 5:8](#).) At the resurrection - New heaven/new earth. The goal: God taking us back to life as it was in the garden - enjoying His good creation with Him forever.
- **Heaven is a reward.** How do you get a reward? You earn it. (writing a piano piece in algebra class...) **But, heaven is NOT a reward that you earned. It is a reward that Jesus earned for you through His death and resurrection.** This is the Gospel. Jesus paid the penalty for your sin. On the cross, He experienced hell. He experienced the punishment for your sin. On the cross He experienced no mercy. He cried out and the Father did not answer. He experienced the full wrath of God in our place. He took what we deserve so we could get what He deserved. He lived a sinless life – so we could have His righteousness and so that He could suffer in our place. He rose from the dead defeating death so we escape eternal suffering and instead get eternal life. Have you trusted Him?
- Jesus earned what you could not earn, and He chooses to share His inheritance with you.
- **Heaven is a place of “no mores.”** Your sin affects everything about your life. Your life is full of brokenness because of sin. Guilt, shame, fear, sickness, broken relationships, hopelessness, struggles, heartache, etc. all the result of sin. No more physical frailness. Our bodies wearing out because of sin, but that will not be the case forever. **The joy of heaven is that sin no longer has any affect on your life.** Heaven will be a place of “no mores.”
- **Heaven is a place of unhindered fellowship.**

- The ultimate joy of heaven is complete restoration with our God. New heaven/new earth will be great; perfected world to live in, no sin, complete satisfaction, but all those things are great because God is present. He will dwell with us in unhindered fellowship. ([Rev. 21:3](#); [Rev. 22:3-5](#))
- Nothing broken! All of our relationships will be restored. Everything will be right. Notice [Rev. 22:1-2](#). We're going back to the beginning! Like the garden of Eden – everything perfect.
- The joy of heaven will go on forever – When we've been there ten thousand years...

### **How can we point people to the reality of eternity?**

**1. Don't rejoice as much in the temporal as you do in the eternal.** What gives you the most joy in life? Your relationship with God or the pleasures of this world? Seeing God's work in the lives of other people or getting what you want? What would those closest to you say that you rejoice in most often? Your favorite sport? The latest sale? What you rejoice in says much about what you put your hope in. People need to see us rejoicing in those things that last forever – relationships, God's work in the body of Christ, etc.

**2. Talk about your hope and anticipation of being with Christ.** – You have so many opportunities to point your conversations to eternity. Every time you see brokenness, you can say something like, "There's coming a day that God is going to make everything right." Or, "Isn't it good to know that this world isn't all that there is?" As soon as you make those kinds of comments you tune people in to the reality of eternity.

**3. Talk with urgency** – My problem – I'm much more urgent in foreign contexts, but the reality is that I don't know if I will ever have another opportunity to speak with those around me. My thinking... "Next time..." What if you don't get a next time? What if you approached every conversation as if it could be your last conversation with that person? **I'm not saying push the Gospel down people's throat, but in every conversation pray for an open door to share the Gospel.**

**4. Talk about the eternal longing in everyone's heart.** Most people are curious about the afterlife and everyone has an opinion. Why? Because

God has placed eternity in our hearts. *“He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into man’s heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.”* ([Eccl. 3:11](#))

Every person desires to know that there is something more than this life. Ask probing questions about eternity that will open a door to share the Gospel. “What do you think it takes for a person to get to heaven?” “Do you think you’ll be in heaven? Why?” These kinds of questions open the door for a Gospel conversation.

Invitation: Eternity is before you, and you can either choose eternal life or eternal punishment. Which will it be for you? Your only hope for an eternity with God is to accept the free gift of salvation given through His Son.

Believer: pray for your oikos. Pray for an opportunity to share the Gospel. Ask God to give you a heart for the eternal rather than for the temporal.