

Series: **God is...So What?**
Today's Title: **"God is Eternal"**

September 11, 2022 – *Select Passages* – Sermon 4 of 16

Objective: To help people know God is eternal, and how His eternity impacts our life.

Opening Prayer – 9/11

I hope you had a good Labor Day weekend last week. For years, our Labor Day tradition is to celebrate the Van Kley birthdays – of which there are 5 of us who have September birthdays.

We also have a 'tradition' of booing – or making loud snoring noises when someone gives a sweet, nice, sweetly worded birthday card – with a poem.

We love to give funny cards – and the edgier the better! I love my wife.

Kim – being from the family she is from – fit right into this tradition – even excels at it!

She is ruthless – without mercy with the cards she picks!

My brother, Phil, turned 60 this past Tuesday.

This is the card 'we' gave him.

Pic – "Not Dead Yet" trophy on the front.

Inside: "Way to survive another year!"

Age is a funny thing.

If you want a good reaction out of Kim – just say something about her age – especially if you add a year or 2 – or if you just round up a bit.

Earlier this year – after I showed a picture of our daughter, Jessica on the screen – someone in the lobby – after church – thought Kim was Jessica – and said something like,

Person: **‘You must be the lovely daughter!’**

Kim said: **‘Daughter...of who?’**

Person responds: **‘The pastor.’**

Kim: **‘Yes I am!!!!’**

Age... Time

Time is the brutal equalizer of us all.

No matter how much you fight against it...

No matter how valiantly you fight – **Time Always Wins!**

Time Machines – Time Travel – Time Savers – The Fountain of Youth.

Time is a big deal.

We all know how time equals the score.

Time – and what it does to us - is the motivating force behind the ***cosmetic industry***.

It’s the motivating force behind the ***nutrition industry*** – the ***vitamin and supplement industry*** – ***the fitness industry***.

Time makes the athletic superstar an average player.

Even the greatest intellectual minds – are no match for the ravages of time – who lose their mental sharpness ‘*over time*’.

We know that we can never get time back that we wasted.

It's like water under a bridge – once the second-hand advances another click, it's gone – forever.

This is why the Bible tells us we should be “...making the best use of the time...” (Eph. 5:16).

How does God relate to time?

Does God get old?

Is He getting passed up by time?

Can God ever be ‘old news’?

Today we're going to see what the Bible says about God and His relation to time – and we're going to see why this detail about God is important for us – and why it matters.

God is eternal.

What do we mean by ‘eternal’?

Definition:

Grudem – “God has no beginning, end, or succession of moments in His own being, and He sees all time equally vividly, yet God sees events in time and acts in time.”

(Systematic Theology, by Wayne Grudem, p. 168)

Because we are so bound up in time, it's difficult for us to truly comprehend something / someone who is outside of time – who exists without the ravages of time taking a toll on their being.

But the testimony of the Bible is very clear on this point.

Genesis 1:1

“In the beginning, God...”

John 1:1-3

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.”

Both passages start with the same phrase:

“In the beginning”.

This phrase is a reference to the beginning of historical time - the beginning of the creation.

Time began when God created.

Time was part of His creation – one of the things He created.

These verses tell us before that happened – God was. God was already present – when He created time.

So, part of understanding what it means when we say *God is eternal* – is to realize:

1. God had no *beginning*.

For our finite mind that only knows the reality of time, this is hard to comprehend.

To help us understand this, let’s look at it from the other perspective... If God had a beginning.

If God had a beginning, the assumptions of science would tell us that something / someone caused God to begin – caused Him to come into existence.

Something / Someone cannot just begin to exist without a cause.

If God had a beginning, then something / someone caused His existence, which means that something / someone other than God is greater than God – because the something / someone is the source and power of God coming into existence.

This would mean that God is not God – if there is a creator greater than Him that caused His existence. This would make God dependent on this creator for His existence, which automatically cancels out His deity.

Revelation 4:11

“Worthy are You, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for You created all things, and by Your will they existed and were created.”

Psalms 90:2

“Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting You are God.”

2. God has no ending.

This is a bit easier for our mind to comprehend.

After all, this is how many of us live our own life – as if it will never end.

Biblical wisdom encourages us to think of our own mortality.

Ecclesiastes 7:4

“A wise person thinks a lot about death, while a fool thinks only about having a good time.”

This is wise, because our life will end.

We will die.

It is very rare for someone to know when they are going to die.

Usually, death invades our life at an unexpected time. We are often unable to think clearly and know death is approaching because of the ravages of time through illness, disease, or some sudden trauma like a heart attack or a stroke.

But God is life.

He's not just alive. The very essence of His being is life.

He is the source of all life – He created all life.

Nobody else gave God life – which makes Him independently eternal due to the nature of His being.

Even Jesus – who entered time when He became flesh – as the God-man – gave up His life.

His life wasn't taken from Him.

John 10:17-18

“I lay down My life that I may take it up again.

No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of My own accord.”

For the believer – the follower of Christ, we receive His life – eternal life. In this sense we will not have an end either.

Even though we will have no end – eternal life – we will not be eternal like God is eternal.

Even in heaven we will be in a time-oriented existence, but the curse that time brings in our current world will not be present in Heaven.

3. God exists in the eternal present.

Eternal present.

This is so foreign to us that we need to stop and think about this term awhile.

There are some theologians who offer a slight caution with this term as it is applied to God, because the term has a reference to time (*'present'*).

But it's difficult – for us – not to have some time reference – even when referring to the timeless, eternal nature of God.

What is 'time'?

The succession of moments...one after another.

“When God began to create the universe, time began, and there began to be a succession of moments and events one after another. But before there was a universe, and before there was time, God always existed, without beginning, and without being influenced by time.”

(Systematic Theology, by Wayne Grudem, p. 169)

Romans 11:35-36

“For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be glory forever. Amen.”

God is. God exists – not within the confines of time – but above time – outside of time.

For us, we look at life through the lens of time.

The past... present... the future.

God sees all of history and the entire future in the present – the Eternal Present.

He is aware of time – but He does not exist within time.

Time does not form the basis for God's knowledge, His power, or His will – and time does not limit any of the attributes of God.

Let's hear something from one of the great minds in history that might make our head explode - a theologian of the past.

Anselm – the Archbishop of Canterbury from 1093-1109, wrote this about God being eternal.

“Through Your eternity You were, You are, and You will be. And since being past is different from being future, and being present is different from being past and from being future, how does Your eternity exist always as a whole? Does none of Your eternity pass by so that it no longer is, and is none of it going to become what, so to speak, it not yet is? Then, in no case were You yesterday or will You be tomorrow; instead, yesterday, today, and

tomorrow, You are. Or better, You simply are - existing beyond all time. You do not exist yesterday or today or tomorrow; for yesterday, today, and tomorrow are nothing other than temporal distinctions. Now, although without You nothing can exist, You are not in space or time but all things are in You. For You are not contained by anything but rather You contain all things.”

(God Is, A Devotional Guide to the Attributes of God, by Mark Jones, p. 53)

God had no beginning – He has no ending – God exists in the eternal present...

4. God acts in time.

God is ‘above’, ‘outside of’ or ‘separate’ from time – although He is active in time.

This is where we see what’s referred to as His *Transcendence* – that He is above all things – intersecting with His *Immanence* – that He is present with us.

He is not a God that is distant and oblivious to our reality and our experiences.

He told Moses in **Exodus 3:7-8**

Then the LORD said, “I have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians...”

When we discuss God's eternity, it's easy to come away with the sense that God is distant – 'a world away' – that He is so unlike us and what we encounter in life. We can lean too heavily into the Transcendent nature of God.

But that would be a mistake – not only as we see in His words to Moses in **Exodus 3** but consider these 2 passages.

Galatians 4:4

"But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son..."

Acts 17:30-31

"The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now He commands all people everywhere to repent, because He has fixed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by a man (Jesus) whom He has appointed..."

In these passages we see God working within the restraints of time.

He chose to act in a very specific time frame – a very specific time in history.

Even though He is above time – separate from it – not controlled by it – He is aware of time – aware of the impact of time on the creation – and because of His love for us He enters into the realm of time and acts within the confines of time.

He created time – so He’s not at the mercy of time – but He is aware of time, and He acts within our realm of time – and His timing is always perfect! It’s perfect in the execution of His will, not necessarily in regard to our desires or plans.

Apply it... So What?

1. His judgment of unbelievers.

For the believer, knowing God is eternal brings us joy and peace when we think about the eternal nature of the blessings that await us in heaven.

1 Corinthians 2:9

“What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love Him”

But for the unbeliever, God’s eternal nature is the worse news they could ever hear.

Because He is eternal, His judgement will never end. Eternal judgement means just that – eternal – never ending.

Think about the times in life we suffer – the times when things are not going well.

What often gets us through those dark valleys in life is knowing they won’t last forever.

Things will get better.

But when the unbeliever dies and enters the next life, they will be under the judgement of God for their sins – due to their unbelief in Jesus – and the judgement of God will be their experience for all eternity.

No relief! Never!!!

In Hell – time will still be a reality – but as with times of human suffering or agony – it will seem as if time slows down.

“Time flies when you’re having fun!”

The opposite happens in a time of suffering.

In heaven, the believer’s joy will increase throughout eternity.

In hell, the unbeliever’s despair and agony will increase – for eternity.

They will exist without relief – and without hope – forever.

If you have not put your faith in Christ for the forgiveness of your sins – this is your future.

But it doesn’t have to be – you can change that right now!

Admit your sins – your need for a Savior.

Believe in Jesus as your Savior

Commit your life to Him – His grace, truth, and love.

2. You can trust His plan for your life.

He sees all time in the present.

He knows what the future is – we don't.

God sees the past, present, and the future at the same time.

This is why – from our perspective – God may be slow to act.

His timeline rarely matches ours.

That's not due to a lack of care or concern on His part.

It's not due to an inability to act.

It's due to His eternal nature – and His omniscience – perfect knowledge of all things.

2 Peter 3:8 (also Psalm 90:4)

“But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.”

It can be difficult to trust God – when from our perspective He is silent and still.

But His eternality should encourage us to fully trust His plan for our life.

We can take great comfort that nothing takes Him by surprise – that He is the Alpha and the Omega – the Beginning and the End – and He knows the “end from the beginning” (Isaiah 46:10) – and everything in between.

(Isaiah 44:6; Revelation 1:8, 21:6).

3. Choose God's way over your way.

The blessings of God are eternal.

The glories of heaven are eternal – never ending.

Why would you set His eternal blessings aside, in favor of temporal pleasures or material blessings?

Do you want the eternal – or the temporary?

Close in prayer