

THE GREATEST HOPE OF ALL 05 IN LIGHT OF ETERNITY STUDY GUIDE

In this series, we have looked at the rapture, our divine rewards, the Millennial Kingdom and the New Heavens and New Earth. There have also been two supplemental videos, one on hell and one on outer darkness. Today, we are going to wrap it all up with a big “so what”. We are going to live forever with Jesus – so how should that affect our decisions and how we live today?

And this is the challenge to live our lives in the light of eternity. To think about things on a eternal level. That’s a phrase used a lot in our house “in the light of eternity”.

Sometimes something will get under my skin – someone has behaved atrociously, really with no honour or faith or character – and I am stunned. And Amanda will say “Ben, in the light of eternity this does not matter” and it helps to get perspective. We are all going to live forever, so we need to not live in such a temporal perspective.

Read Hebrews 6.1-2. It outlines six basic doctrines we should all understand as Christians, the last being “eternal judgment”. Now when we read this, we think this is all about God judging us, but that is not what this phrase means. We have a tendency to think every Scripture about judgment is God judging us, but John 5.22 says that the Father judges no one, and has given all judgment to the Son, and John 8.15 says that the Son judges no one, so we do not need to worry about God judging us.

So, let us look at the phrase “eternal judgment”. In the Greek, eternal is the word *aionios*, which means “ages and ages” or “forever”. The word judgment is the word *krima* which means a decision or choice. So, really what this is talking about is forever choices. We need to learn how to make choices and decisions in the light of eternity.

Eternal judgments is not all the different ways God is going to judge you when you die, it is rather you living every day in the light of eternity, aware that you will be living forever. If we do not learn to make “forever decisions” we will never develop and grow into being a functional, mature Christian.

If we do not have the foundation in our life that we are living every day in light of eternity, that we are living for a new earth, then we will not thrive. Sadly, many Christians do not make decisions in the light of eternity, they do not make forever decisions. They are not aware of Heaven to the point it affects their decision-making process.

This is an elementary doctrine, and we must grasp it. Satan hates people making eternal decisions. He hates people living the light of eternity. His plan is to make you live today. To live for today only, to You Only Live Once. We have a generation of young people who only live for the moment, and so people do not make eternal decisions.

There are several decisions we need to make to live our life in the light of eternity.

1. You must be born again. Read Matthew 7.13-14. We must all choose the narrow gate and accept the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ as truth. We must be born again. We must go through the gate of Jesus to eternal life. When you get born again, you get the nature of God in your spirit – you get all the life of God in your spirit.
2. You must be fruitful. Read Matthew 7.17-20. We must continue to choose to be a tree that bears good fruit. Read Romans 12.1-2. We must renew our minds and change the way we think through meditating on the Word of God. When you do that you start to produce the fruit of life. We change the way we think, we stop

thinking about the world and letting the world define how we think, and let God's Word, God's goodness and God's love, define how we think and how we make decisions. Read I John 2.15-17. As Christians we must stop living self-gratifying, live for today, do what feels good, listen to the world, follow the world – but we need to make eternal decisions, choose to live for Jesus, to live for Heaven, to live for the Kingdom of God, to live for eternity.

3. We need to take the red pill. You will only understand that reference if you have seen the Matrix. In the middle of the film, Keanu Reeves finds out that he is living in a dream world – a world that does not matter. This world is called the matrix. The real world was taken over by intelligent machines that put all humans in a fake world – the Matrix – and they think they are living but it is all fake, a dream. So, some people have escaped the Matrix. But most people are living in the world – thinking all is good, but they are slaves. So, Keanu Reeves and others – they go back into the Matrix to try and set other people free. It is drama and action and intense. And most people are more interested in the false world in the film. Right now, we are in the Matrix, it is real, but it is just a vapour, it is going to end soon. Nothing in this world will matter. What matters is what we do for the kingdom of God. I know non-Christians who think I am a slave, that I have so many rules that I must obey, but the truth is that I am free, I have taken the red pill – I am free, I am not living for this world, I am living for the next one. People think they are free, but they are plugged into the Matrix – they are trapped by the opinions, the pressure, the values, the stuff in the world. They love the world; they are addicted to the world. They can only live for today. That is the easy, weak way to live. We need to not be like that, we need to live in the light of eternity, to be fruitful for the Kingdom of God.

Therefore, Tree of Life spends so much money on world mission, dedicating our lives to plant new churches in the UK. We are going to set people free from the Matrix, help them realize that this life is just a vapour, it really does not matter, what matters is eternity, and our decisions should be impacted by eternity.

4. You need to esteem earthly things lightly. That phrase is from Kenneth Hagin, he says that the hallmark of a mature Christian is the ability to esteem earthly things lightly. When something on earth gets damaged or broke, who cares? It will all go up in smoke no matter what one day! Read Hebrews II.24-26. Moses was a mature man – he turned his back on the pleasure of the world, he knew it would not last forever. He refused to be what the world labelled him, he refused to care about the world's wealth, or honour, or prestige. That is spiritual maturity. That is foundational – if you put earthly things above eternal things you will never grow up.

where dreams come true

Now God wants to prosper you, He wants you out of debt, with money in the bank, with nice things around you, but He never wants those things to be first in your life. Too many people are more interested in things more than they are interested in God! I have seen pastors take churches just to get better paid. I have seen people change churches just to move somewhere they get better paid.

5. Be Immune to the Praise of the world

So many people are moved by nothing other than the world's praises, it is all that matters to them. The world gives them a small criticism and they stop doing anything that will change eternity. Read Hebrews 12.1-2. These verses teach us not to get entangled with the world, about only doing what Jesus called us to. That is what Paul taught in Acts 20.24, to only give up our lives for things that matter.

I want to not get entangled with the world. The world is not my security, it is not my source of income, my worldly friends are not where my fellowship is.

6. Forgive Others Quickly

Holding grudges and getting bitter is one of the most earth-bound things that can happen. You are upset now; you are offended today. But in the light of eternity, it does not matter. I preached a whole bunch of messages on forgiveness, the sycamine tree, you need to listen to that message, but you have to take authority over bitterness and you walk above it.

Everyone in Heaven is forgiven people. You might as well get used to it and forgive people now.

7. Do not be afraid of persecution

Read 2 Timothy 3.1-5. We have to realize we live in tough times surrounded by people who do not like Jesus. This goes with not caring what the world thinks. Every time you step out and do something for the kingdom, then we will absolutely be persecuted. The good news is that there will be no persecution in the Millennium, or on the New Earth, so who cares about it now? Who cares what Earth thinks of you when you are changing Heaven?

8. Become Comfortable in the Atmosphere of Glory

You are going to live with Jesus and all His glory for all eternity, so get comfortable with that right now – be comfortable reading the Word, be comfortable singing praises to Jesus, be comfortable worshipping, be comfortable going to church. Get used to it. Get used to the glory of God, spend time with Jesus. Pray in tongues, fellowship with Jesus, and get to know His sweetness and kindness. It will prepare you for eternity.

9. Build with Gold and Silver and Precious Stone

Read Luke 19.12-26. A mina is a measure of money, now as everyone gets the same amount this is referring to salvation. A mina is a measure of money. Everyone is given the same amount, so it not money or calling. Silver represents our redemption. We all have different amounts of money and abilities, but we all have

the same righteousness, the same faith, the same love, the same new birth. We have the same goodness of God inside us. None of us are deficient. But we must use our salvation and use it to help people. Our job is to do kingdom business until Jesus returns. If you do not use it, you will lose it. You will end up acting as if you are not even saved.

We all have the same salvation, the same righteousness, the same faith, so let us all do something with it. Let us multiply our effectiveness by both giving away our salvation by serving, and letting others serve us. We can all grow, we can all be fruitful, we can all build with good things, we can all learn, we can all grow, we can all serve.

10. Be Planted in a Local Church

Read Psalm 92.13. We will flourish in the courts of our God – on Reward Day – in forever – if we are planted in the local church. Who is going to get the most rewards on Reward Day? People planted in local church. It is that simple. It is that easy! Jesus said He will build the church and the gates of hell will not prevail (Matt. 16.18). We need to build the church; we need to build the people in the church. That is living in the light of eternity, that is making forever decisions – going to church.

The church of Jesus Christ is the only organization that is leaving this planet before it is wiped out. There is no rapture for gospel crusades, for conferences, for leadership academies, for book clubs, for Bible Colleges. Jesus Christ is coming back for the church!

Read I Cor. 12.18. God has a place for you in the church, and it makes Him happy when you are where He set you. Christians who do not go to church – they fail to go for temporal reasons. They got upset about someone's behaviour, they are too busy earning money to go to church Sunday, when the church is going to Heaven and money will not. We go to church because church is eternal, it will be in Heaven.

Now notice from this verse, God sets you in church, you do not set yourself in a church! Church is not a supermarket, you do not choose the one you like based on the produce, convenience, and price! You ask the Lord where you should be and you go there and get set in place there.

I know people who move cities without even thinking about what church is in the other city. That is deciding purely on temporal issues! I have never left a church without praying and fasting because those decisions are so important.

Most 21st Century Christians would have left the church in Jerusalem the second the Greek widows were not being fed. They would have got offended when Peter said "I have to pray and read my Bible to feed you spiritually, I am not going to make you dinner too – I will delegate" – the church was happy – and they grew more. The only way we can really impact eternity is being in church!

You get planted in a local church –

You get planted in a Living Church, you serve the church, you will flourish. Philip was one of the deacons appointed in Acts 6. By Acts 21 he is an evangelist, preaching to crowds and seeing healings and miracles. He started serving soup to the widows. So many people want to be the evangelist but do not want to be the deacon first. They want to minister to everyone, they want their voice to be heard, but they do not want to be where God has set them. That person is not a disciple of Jesus in the slightest.

You might have the call of God on your life, but it will not mature unless it is rooted in local church. Your highest calling will never happen, you will never impact eternity unless you are rooted. It is that simple.

Now I have nothing wrong with people changing churches if the Spirit is leading them to be set in another church. But most people do not change church, they leave church. And they leave for temporal reasons – I did not like that, I did not like this, I do not want this. Jesus is the only perfect pastor; you must have to settle for an imperfect one.

As a church planter, planting new churches in towns, I often meet people on their trek from church to church to church to church to church looking for the flawless pastor. I tell them keep going – move on, I am not perfect and the church I plant will not be either.

Now remember Satan knows what I am saying, and he will do everything he can to uproot from the church God has planted you into. He hates you flourishing. The very place God has placed you will be the very place Satan wants you to be offended. That will break the link and stop you living effectively for eternity.

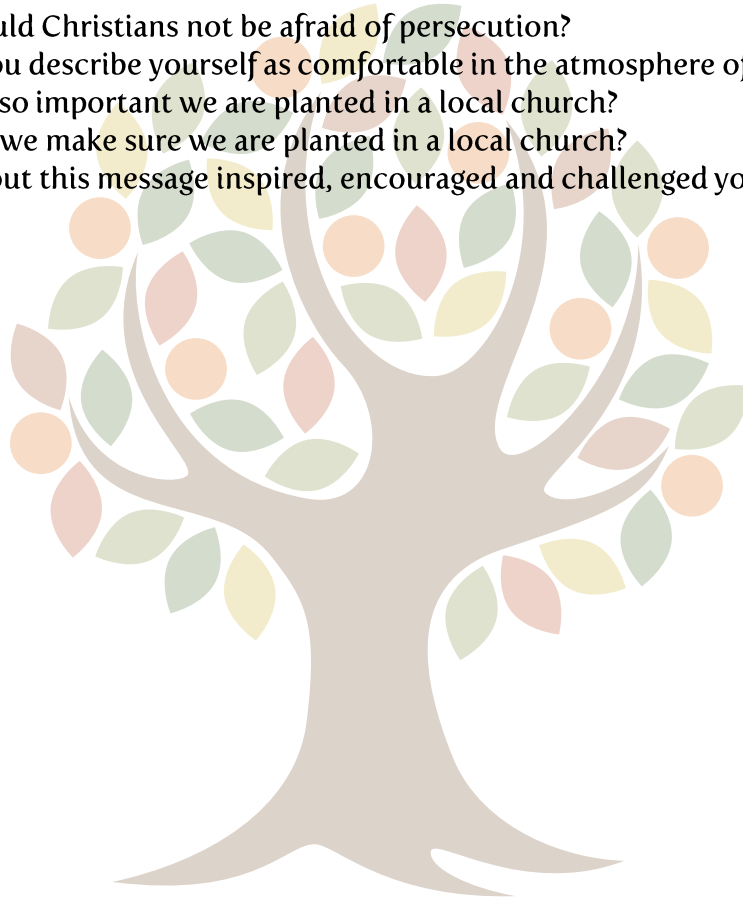
We need to be planted in the local church. A plant that changes environment every month will never flourish.

Some people go to two or three (or even more churches). Those people are not planted, and they will never flourish. Not ever. A lot of these people are called by God into ministry, but they will never start as a deacon. They will never start by being faithful and kind and serving a local church. If the church does not recognize their powerful anointing in about two weeks, they are offended. But no decent pastor will give you an eldership or the pulpit in two weeks. Not in two months, probably not in two years. But those people are blind to their character flaws, and they storm off blaming those leaders and accusing them of quenching the Holy Spirit!

If you are a tree planted in the house of the Lord, storms will come to that house one day. That is not the day to go for a walk. If a tree goes for a walk in a storm, it will die. It does not do that, it pushes its roots down deeper and gets deeper in.

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6. What steps can you take to be immune to the praise of the world?
7. How can you forgive others quickly, and how does this link to living in the light of eternity?
8. Why should Christians not be afraid of persecution?
9. Would you describe yourself as comfortable in the atmosphere of glory?
10. Why is it so important we are planted in a local church?
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12. What about this message inspired, encouraged and challenged you the most?



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