

04 | The Time is Short

ETERNITY Series

Well, hello and welcome to Part four of this series on eternity. In today's teaching--in this teaching, I want to talk about the fact that the time is short. So, this is part four of five. You're almost to the end. If you've stuck with it this long, keep going. Don't quit. And I know the Lord is going to speak something to you I believe in this lesson and in the last one, as well.

Remember, we read in James Chapter Four, verse 14, it says, "... whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow." That's good to just pause and acknowledge that right there. We don't know what's going to happen tomorrow. Sometimes we're so sure we know exactly how things are going to pan out. But this says, no, you don't. You don't know what will happen tomorrow. Then it says, "For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away." This life, this one shot we have here on this earth, is here only for a small moment, a little portion of time, and then, poof, it's gone. That's it. There's an urgency right now in particular to win and disciple people. Why? Because the lost are getting more lost. The darkness is getting darker. People are more confused than ever. The depression rate is going up, the suicide

rate is going up. Our culture is really struggling, and people are dying every single day on that wide path of destruction, which we talked about in a previous lesson. And we can do something about it. We have the message to be delivered to them that can redeem them not only for eternity in heaven, but also here on this earth to give them a hope and a future and set them free. And on top of that, as we know, Jesus is coming back soon. Very soon.

I know what you're thinking, "Jonathan, I've heard this my entire life." Right? And generations before me that Jesus is coming back soon. However, let me just share a couple of things that point to the fact that He's coming back sooner rather than later.

Number one, the first thing is Israel. The nation of Israel was nonexistent for almost 2000 years. And about 66 A.D., after Jesus had resurrected and departed the nation of Israel actually began to become scattered and the nation no longer existed. And it was like that way for almost 2000 years until 1948, when they just officially became a nation again. Now, why is that important? Well, that's because when the Bible talks about the very last days before Jesus' return, it mentions what's going to be happening with the nation of Israel. And for almost 2000 years, people could look at those passages and disqualify it and say, "Jesus can't possibly be coming back soon because how could he be? The nation of Israel doesn't even exist." And the Bible talks so much about it. And so, it's just even in a recent time period that we've seen that

the nation of Israel, which was prophesied that many things will happen in the last days involving the people of Israel. We now see that that's now, again, clearly a possibility. Look at Zachariah 12:3 as it prophesied about the last days. It says this, "And it shall happen in that day, talking about the last days that I will make Jerusalem a very heavy stone for all peoples. All who would give it away will surely be cut in pieces though all the nations of the earth are gathered against it." This is prophesying that in the end, two things are going to happen. One, the nations that come against Israel will be cut into pieces. They will not prevail over Israel. And also, it says, "... though all the nations of the earth are gathered against it." Well, we know in the Six Day War, which is when Israel first became a country, that the big nations around them attacked Israel, right? Egypt, Jordan, Syria--Arab nations came against Israel. Israel being the small nation, the underdog, and it's called the Six-Day War, because Israel defeated them in six days, killing over 20,000 Arabs versus only 800 people in Israel being lost. Well, how did that happen with Israel being the underdog? Why I don't think it just happened because of natural causes. I think it happened because the Bible predicted that in the last days this type of stuff is going to happen.

Nations will gather against Israel, but God will protect it. And again, how could that have happened if Israel didn't exist? But all of a sudden, in our and many of our lifetimes, Israel has come back as a nation together and

God is protecting Israel. It also says in Zachariah 12: 3, it says that all nations of the earth will be gathered against Israel. You probably have noticed this, and if you haven't, let me just inform you that the political climate is going away from Israel or against the tide towards Israel. Israel is becoming less and less popular in the world, with America being Israel's primary ally, and America, over the last decade or so, has started more and more to waver on whether or not they're supporting Israel. And we're seeing that the current could be going either way. But it just so happens the current is going the way that the Bible predicted it would, which is that all the nations will actually become against Israel ... opposed to the nation of Israel. The Bible also predicts that the Antichrist will come and he'll sit in the temple in Israel.

2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 says, "Let no man deceive you by any means for that day, talking about the last days will not come unless the falling away comes first. The man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition," or the Antichrist, " ... who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that He sits as God in the Temple of God, showing Himself that He is God." Well, also, if you read that prophecy, that's also something that for thousands of years--for many, many years, people would argue, can't be done. There is no temple in Israel, the temple of God that was historically there and there at the time that this was written. However, in recent days, in our time, right

now, they are finalizing plans to rebuild this temple. They have desires to rebuild it, and there's plans to do that. And so, we're seeing how prophecies that before in certain periods of time, you couldn't quite see how it's going to line up and some things you may never see. And God will just do it miraculously. But we are seeing with these processes that things are lining up like never before for the ultimate return of Jesus. Now, when exactly is Jesus coming back? Well, he's coming back on September 9th. No, I'm just kidding. We don't know. I don't know the exact date or the hour. And that's because Matthew 24:36 says this, "But of that day and hour, no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only." So, we don't know. I don't know the exact date or time that Jesus is coming back. But what I do know is that God gives us the ability to see the signs around us.

Matthew 16:3 says, "... and in the morning it will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening and Jesus said, "Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times." In other words, you can see the weather and you can see, "Oh, it's going to end up being this way or that way." But the times that are around, you can't even tell what time and season you're in. And even if we don't know the exact day or hour of His return, we can discern that we're in the season or the times when it's approaching. So, what do we do? Right?

Matthew 24, verses 42 through 44, says this. "Watch, therefore." "Watch, therefore." That's an active role, right? Be aware that the time is short and so, "Watch, therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore, you also be ready, for the Son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect." So, for many people--I don't know if you've ever felt this way--sometimes I picture that before Jesus comes that there's going to be like this great buildup to where you can clearly say, "Oh, tomorrow's the day, right?" Sometimes I picture like that you'll hear maybe for six months.

First you kind of just hear trumpets in the background and then they just get louder until there He is. And it's on this glorious, huge, clearly apparent day that He comes back. But the Bible says that's not actually how it's going to be for a lot of people. It's going to feel like another day in the times that we're in. It's just another day. And yet here He is. And He's coming at a time that they do not expect. Because the time is short, we need to watch in anticipation and obey what it is the Lord is saying. Sometimes we live our life as if there's just endless time. There's just plenty of time to do whatever it is that we want. And there's not. Again, because not only is Jesus coming back soon, which we're seeing things line up for His return, but also because people are dying every day that don't know Jesus. People are dying. Some people

unexpectedly are dying and they thought they would have time and they don't know the Lord. They're on their way to eternal destruction and we have the right message to give them. We have the ability to speak. In fact, Jesus did the hard part, right? He's the one who died and lived a perfect life, then died a torturous death to save them. We have the easier part, which is to live for Jesus and share the message. Right? Aren't you glad that Jesus didn't reverse it and say, "You get to die and I'll go tell him." Now we get to tell them and Jesus is the One who did the hard part. He's the one who died for the sins. We have to tell the world. We have to preach the gospel, which is why it says that in Mark 16:15, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." And we need to make disciples. That's our job.

Let me read you a story of a young lady named Ashley. And some of you may have heard this story before, but it's so eye-opening and I think so powerful just to hear this story that she wrote, in fact, I'm going to read some of her journal entries that she made. Ashley was a student who went to the University of Florida, which is a well-known party school. And here are some journal entries from her personal journal that she wrote starting in January.

On January 7th, she wrote this. "Happy final semester of college. Okay. So M is officially out of the apartment. I'm so glad he's gone. Though I loved him for the last two years and I still do love him so much. But I'm renting

out one of the rooms because I really do not want to live alone. I rented it before winter break to this quiet girl named, Krista. She seems sweet, but turns out she's a fruitcake. She's into all that God bleep. But I'm pretty sure that she's more whacko than Mom, Jacob or Jeff. I asked her what she did over winter break, and she said she went home and then came back early to a conference in Atlanta. I made the mistake of asking her what kind of conference it was. Apparently, it was the greatest thing she's ever done. She said that God really changed her at this Passion Conference. Well, I do what I do not link God and passion, but whatever. She said, she got to worship God with over 20,000 college students. So, yeah, that was the best thing she's ever done. She needs to get out more, a whole lot more. So that's the new fruitcake. School this semester's going to be a breeze. I'm taking four classes and three are electives. That was smart-planning on my part. I'm going to party like it's 1999 this semester and have the time of my life before I can no longer hide behind the fact that I am a college student. Lol. Well, I'll be back later."

Then here's a journal entry from five days later. "M and I are back together. Well, kind of. I do love him so much. He came over last night and we hung out with J and C and C and F and we were all just drinking and watching a movie. The lights went out, and of course, I quit watching the movie right after the credits, and we were amazing together. He did not say anything about us officially being together again, but he did spend the night. He

said that he had to go to class and so do I, so I have to run." Another few days later. "Okay. So it's been a few days since I've been here. I've been so busy. I went running today. I was running past one of the buildings in the complex and I see M's car and then he comes out of this girl's apartment. I just kept going. He had the same clothes he had on when I saw him at C's house the night before. He told me last night he still needed a little bit more time to figure out what he wants. So, I was like, 'That's cool.' But there's only one reason he would sleep at that bleep's house. I can't believe he slept with that bleep bleep. I ran an extra three miles and finally came home dripping in sweat. Mind you, it's 40 degrees outside. I had already taken off my jacket. I came and went straight into the kitchen, walked past Krista, and pulled out a beer from the fridge and an ice cream from the freezer. I jumped on the counter, drank my beer and ate my ice cream and just cried. Krista asked me if I was okay. I said, 'Bleep no, I'm not okay.' Fruit cake then grabbed another container of ice cream from the freezer and sat down at the table. Why the bleep do we have so much ice cream in January? Seriously? There's got to be more. There's three more containers in there. I really just ... I really just wanted her to leave me alone.

"But since she was not going to do it, I asked her what was wrong with her. I mean, obviously, she doesn't drink, she doesn't go to clubs. So, she asked me what I meant and I asked her why she was the way that she was. And she said it was God. She said it was her goal to live

a life that Christ would be proud of. I laughed. I couldn't help but the fruitcake was so serious. I asked her if she's ever slept with Jeremy, the guy she's dating, and she said no. She said she's waiting until she gets married and that she'll be a virgin on her wedding day. Wow. Those are still around? She said she's been dating him for three years. I've not dated a guy for three weeks and not slept with him. I cannot imagine three years without sex. The girl is a fruitcake. She then said it was because she had a personal relationship with God that she was saved. I do have to admit she's different from the Christians I know, but she's still a fruitcake.

“But then she asked me why I was so upset, and I told her about M wanting more time apart and seeing him come out of this other girl's apartment. I cannot believe how much one guy can mess me up. I told her all about the bleep he's put me through and how he used me and cheated on me. And you know what? She didn't give me all the Christian crap that my mom always gives me when I mention him to her. Fruitcake just sat there and listened to me vent. She didn't criticize me when I was done. All she said was, 'Wow.' Then she said, 'Ashley, I'm really sorry that he's done that to you.' Then she did it. She asked me if she could pray over me. I laughed, jumped off the counter and said, 'I need a shower.'

“After my shower, Krista was gone and I just sat on the couch and cried. I love M and I hate him. How is that possible? I should only

hate him. I cannot figure Krista out in her little Bible-thumping world. You know, she actually reads the Bible like a lot. I see it move around the apartment from the kitchen to the living room and even to the office. I should be the enemy to her--one she wants nothing to do with. But she does not seem to think she's better than me. It also seems that God and this Jesus stuff are actually real to her. I do not understand the fruitcake at all.

“January 18th, the Fruit and I went running together. I cannot believe she actually kept up. Who knew Christians could run? Amazing thought.

“January 19th. Okay, so I have to find out what makes Krista so different from every other Christian I've ever known. She does not look down at her nose at me. She's really nice to me and acts as if she wants to be my friend. It does not make sense. No one ever just wants to be Ashley's friend without getting something in return--especially not a Christian. God is not for people like me, and Jacob's supposed to be the only Christian who doesn't judge me. And that's only because he's my brother.

January 21st. 14 days later, “Okay. Today, I did it. This morning Fruitcake and I were in the kitchen and I asked her why this God stuff was so important to her. She told me it was because He truly loved her and He was her closest friend. So, I asked her what she meant by that and she said exactly what I said. She said, God is all about love and God's love is

the greatest thing ever. So, then I was like, 'Why do you live your life all perfect like you do?' She laughed and said she wasn't perfect by any stretch of the imagination but that she was forgiven. She said that she was at this Passion Conference--the 20,000-people-with-no-lives-thing in Atlanta. She said she was reminded that God not only loves her, but also the rest of the world, and that He sent His son to die for us all. Basically, the Easter story. My mom used to make me go to church all the time. I hated it. I quit going when I was in high school and able to stay at my dad's place all the time.

"See, God is not for people like me. God is for people like Fruitcake, Jeremy and their friends. I'm way too screwed up for God to care at all about me. Fruitcake had to go to work, so we had to end our conversation. She said that she would love to talk some more when she got home tonight, and I told her maybe. Well, after she left, I was on the couch when M came over and apologized for this, that and the other. But as he said, we're not together anymore. But he did say that when he saw me running away, he realized what a big mistake he made and said that he loved me very much and that I'm the only one he wants to be with. I really want to believe him. We've been through so much together, but can I forgive him for sleeping with that bleep again? Besides, he's not going anywhere in life. He's a professional student. I asked him to leave. I told him I could not do this again and that I'm moving on with my life. He left and I cried and cried for a very long time. I do not need

first, middle and last name. I can live life on my own. Besides, I can get any guy I want who needs M?

Still January 21st, “Okay, so I'm back again. Bleep! It's been a crazy day. Crazy enough to make me come back here twice on one day. So, no actual homework got done today. I cried, I shopped, I cried, I ate, I cried, I ran, cried and then ate again. So, you get the point. There was a lot of crying today. I did not answer my cell literally the 17 times he called me today. Well, I'm on the couch when Fruitcake got home and she sat down and asked me if I wanted some ice cream, I could not help but laugh. We sat there in silence for a really long time and then I asked her how much God was going to punish her for living with a screw up like me. She just looked at me and said, 'Actually, God is really not like that at all. He really does love us.' I told her I knew all about this God stuff and that I was way too far gone and way too screwed up to even think about God's kind of love. I'm not a religious nutcase like my mom or her family. As much as I love them, they're crazy.

“So, she pulls a couple of DVDs off of the shelf in the unit. They were sermons on DVD. I could not believe that Fruitcake had sermons on DVD, but I agreed to watch them anyway. Not like I had anything better to do. So, the first one I watched is called, 'Indescribable,' and it talks about how God is differently than I ever had heard before. It was kind of weird. He made it sound like God was for everyone. He made it sound like God, who created the

universe, really cares about all of us. Then when it was over, Fruitcake asked me what I thought. I told her I didn't buy it. I told her that God is not for people like me. She asked me if I wanted to watch another one, a.k.a The Preacher Man. I said whatever. And again, I had nothing better to do, so we watched one called, 'Past,' Started talking about grace and how God is loving and forgiving and that God wants to forgive us. It all made sense. I could hardly breathe, seriously. I was sitting and oxygen was just not flowing through my lungs the way it should. The DVD ended and the fruitcake just looked up at me. I was crying and then began to regain control of my lungs and gather my thoughts. I asked her if what she said was true--that because of the grace of God that He could actually love me, that God could give even our love--even the screw ups.

"And she said, 'Yes, it sounds so easy, but all we have to do, is ask Christ to save us, and He will.'" I've heard salvation my whole life, but I never agreed with the whole deal that all I have to do is ask and that everything would be okay. But then, Fruitcake explained, that's where Grace comes into play. She said it was because God is such a gracious and loving God that He forgives, that Christ took everything on the cross. He did not just die, but that most importantly, He rose again--Easter. And that Christianity is the only religion where we get to worship a God that has walked on the earth, died and rose again. So there on my couch in my living room where a lot of bleep has gone on, I decided I wanted

what fruitcake had--that I wanted what Jacob, Jeremy, my mom and Jeff all had. I wanted grace. So, I asked Jesus into my heart, and I asked Him to forgive me for all the mistakes I had made. I told Him that I knew I had messed up a lot, but if He would take me, I wanted to be a Christian. So, there you have it. I'm a Christian. I feel like a huge weight has been lifted off my shoulders and I can breathe again. I feel like everything is going to be all right. I feel like I found something I didn't even know I was looking for it. I know this all sounds crazy and I am sober. I promise. Fruitcake said that she's been praying for me since the first day she moved in. And then we got out the ice cream. I'm going to get fat with this ice cream around Fruitcake.

January 28th, I also drove to Jacksonville to tell my mom, Jeff and Jacob that I'm a Christian. Mom cried and said that she was so happy that I made that decision. Jacob went and I went running and just did a light jog so we could talk. He was also pretty stoked about me learning about the grace of God and stuff. Daddy told me that I've gone crazy, but he loves me anyway. That's Daddy's way. It'll take him a long time. But Jacob says that if I pray, God can use those prayers to soften Daddy's heart. And maybe he'll become a Christian, too.

February 8th, I went to a Bible study with Krista tonight, and that was actually kind of fun and cool. Everyone was like, 'Hey, Ashley,' and didn't make me feel awkward and

stuff. It was like I belonged there. They sang some songs, which I did not know and everyone else did, but it was cool. My favorite--when I came home, I looked at the lyrics. Here they are because I just love them. I do not know why I started crying when they were singing it and I wanted to lift my hands like they did. I did not, though.

I talked to Krista about it afterwards and she says it's just a way of worshiping God. Jesus did take me just as he found me with all my failures and all my screw ups. He loved me just like I am. He showed me so much compassion and mercy and He loves me. And that blows me away, you know? She then wrote the lyrics of the song (in red), which is a song that I'm sure many of us have heard before. I'm not going to sing it. I'm going to read it. But it says, 'Everyone needs compassion, a love that's never failing. Let mercy fall on me. Everyone needs forgiveness. The kindness of a Savior, the hope of the nations. My Savior, He can move the mountains. My God is mighty to save. He is mighty to save. Forever, the Author of salvation, He rose and conquered the grave. Jesus conquered the grave.'" And there's one last part of this story that you should know--on April 28th. This is a few months after she accepted the Lord in her life. It says this, "Daddy and I went to the BMW dealership and ordered me a new car, which should be in at the end of June and delivered to San Francisco, the San Francisco dealership. I love my daddy. He is so proud of his princess. Jacob, Stephen and I went surfing today. Well, Jacob and Stephen surfed, I laid on the beach and worked

on my tan. I need to look great for the graduation night picks. Tomorrow I am driving back to Gainesville after church and sushi in Riverside. We're going to the Sushi Cafe." And this was Ashley's last journal entry because on her way back to Gainesville, she was in an automobile accident and she did not survive. She died just three months after accepting the Lord.

You know, God wants to use you and me to reach the people around us. And like in this case, no one around her had any idea that her time on this earth was not very long. But the Lord used Krista--"Fruitcake" is what she named her--to show the love of the Lord and to reach her, and to allow her to be saved. I wonder what would have happened if Krista didn't represent the Lord. If Krista didn't take those moments to talk to her and notice one of the beautiful things is that this whole story of this person coming to Lord happened outside of church. I can guarantee you that if Krista would have invited Ashley and said, "Hey, why don't you come to church with me?" And that was the first step that Ashley would have said, "No way." But instead, she just showed her the love of God and was willing to talk with her and speak to her and minister to her. And now she was able to be saved and follow the Lord and is ultimately now and has been since this journal entry, in Heaven for eternity. How much do you think Ashley appreciates what Krista did for her on this earth? A

nd the question that I would have and leave you with today is who are the Ashleys that God

has put in your life? Who are the people that God has allowed you to have interactions with? Maybe they're coworkers, maybe they're neighbors, maybe they're friends, they're family members. And are we taking these moments seriously? Because the Bible says and we talked about it already, that God desires for all men--all people to be saved. But we have a part to play as the Body of Christ. And how many precious people are there that they would be willing to hear if they just saw what it means to be a real Christian? Notice she said that Krista, her roommate--she would see her actually reading the Bible, that she would find the Bible in all different types of places throughout the house, and that she would actually read it. Listen, we don't know how long we have on this earth. We don't know how long the people around us have on this earth.

Again, James, Chapter 4 says you do not know what's going to happen tomorrow. So, are we living this life, taking it seriously? Are we living our life doing what it is God's called us to? Are we being who it is God's called us to be? Or are we living our life like everybody else? As if this is it? It's not it. It's not it. The time is so short. Jesus is returning. People are desperate and in need of a Savior, not only for this life, but more so for the next life, as well. So, let's come before the Lord right now, and maybe no matter where you are, if you'll take a moment, if you'll ask the Lord, maybe there are some Ashleys that God has put in your life that you are the one God wants to use to reach them. And maybe you haven't been taking it seriously. Maybe you

haven't been taking the time to speak to them or minister to them. And let's take a moment. Let's ask the Lord to use us right now in this moment, because eternity is so long and people are so desperate for hope, but most people, they will not respond to an invite card to church. They've heard it too many times. They need somebody who's going to actually show them what it means to be a Christian and actually walk them through these things and help them to receive the Lord and disciple them, as we saw, started to happen right there.

So, let's come before the Lord. And as always, wherever you are, if you can pray, as well, as I pray, that's important to do. But Lord, we come before you, God. I pray that you help me even personally, God, and help every single person watching this not to miss these opportunities, Lord, to minister to the people around us, God. There are hurting people all around us. People that are going through things that we would have never guessed or known, God. And you want to reach them, Lord. I feel, Lord, that even You're saying to some people in this video, Lord, that You want to encourage them ... that feel like You're saying, Lord, that there's some people watching this, that you think that the people around you are too far gone and the Lord saying, "They're not." If you'll just allow the Lord to use you to chip away at their heart, to in a way, chip away at some of the hardness of their heart by the way you walk in love, by the way you represent the gospel to them, by the way you invite them into your home. The Lord will use you, so, Lord to use

us, God, to reach people. Lord, help us not be so focused on the things in this world, God, that we miss the people around us that we're called the impact, Lord. That people around us that we're supposed to be used to pull out of the pathway of destruction and onto the pathway of life. Lord, your work calls us to be the laborers of the harvest and to pray for laborers to come to the harvest, so help us do that, God. So, I pray, Lord, that as we go about our life, as we go about our day, as we go about our week, Lord, that You help us to keep in mind that the time is short. It's not time to just do whatever feels good, Lord, but it's time to allow you to use us to reach and disciple the people around us. Let it be so in Jesus' mighty name. Amen.