



Facing Eternity

(re)Imagine Heaven | 4.12.26

Libin Abraham

(The following text is automatically generated and has not been edited)

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Eight Artemis two return to Earth and splash down at 8:07pm, on the coast of San Diego. How many of you are watching? Aren't we glad that everyone made it back safely? It's pretty amazing. What an amazing accomplishment these four amazing, brave astronauts. They've traveled further than any human being ever in history, going the distance of 252,760 miles. They re entered our atmosphere at the speed of 24,000 miles per hour, having traveled to the moon and back, incredible human accomplishment and a reminder of what's possible when people work together and achieve something great like this. When I watched the take off, I guess, a little over a week and a half ago, I couldn't help but think about the amazing, extensive preparation that went into this mission. Obviously, these astronauts and many others in NASA worked tirelessly day and night, perhaps for years, getting ready for this mission, learning the spacecraft, going through all of the drills if something goes wrong, and acquainting themselves with the specifics of this mission. But I was thinking more about what a lifelong obsession these astronauts have had to have for them to do something so brave, to really reorient their life around this mission had to have come from this deep obsession of loving the outer space, thinking about the moon, identifying craters, and being excited to name the ones that have yet to be named, this deep obsession. In fact, I would say it was their obsession about the outer space that made this mission possible, because it was costly. It required courage and bravery, but their obsession around the destination made the Mission Possible. And you've experienced this to a level too, when you've traveled to a foreign country or to a new city, how many YouTube videos do we watch to get ready for the environment? Because you don't want to get there and then try to get ready. You don't want to get to space and figure out how to stay alive in space. No, no. You want to do your homework ahead of time. So we're thinking about, what are people there where? What are our customs? What are the normal things of a new country or place we're about to go to about a year and a half ago, our family, we went to Japan with some of our friends, and so of course, we did YouTube university and to read up on everything, because we did not want to be surprised about norms after we got there. Well, there was one specific day. We had walked a lot, traveled the whole day, and we found this really awesome coffee shop, and just settled in. We ordered a bunch of coffee and some pastries, and pulled out our favorite card game, which is monopoly deal, not the other monopoly that takes six hours to play, but monopoly deal, much condensed version, and we weren't being overly loud. We weren't just taking up space because we had ordered a bunch of food. But then about an hour in, the owner of the coffee shop comes up to us with a big smile, but he's got an iPad, and on the iPad, he's got Google Translate open, and it said, This is not a playground. We don't play cards in coffee shops. Please leave. Oh, that would have been nice to know ahead of time. Didn't know that was not customarily appropriate. First time I've gotten kicked out of a coffee shop, by the way, when that usually happens, I say, Hey, I'm a pastor from a church called Prestonwood Baptist Church. So nice to meet you, and I just walk away. What I do? Love you, Prestonwood. But here's a question I want to pose before you, if these astronauts spent decades preparing for their mission to outer space, if we spend weeks, if not more, preparing for a city we are about to visit. How often do we obsess about eternity, where we will spend forever? How often do we think about plan, for, prepare, obsess about eternity, where we will spend forever. Guess what? We all spend eternity somewhere, and eternity is going to be way longer than your last vacation. It will be way longer than the Artemis two mission. But yet most people hardly think of it, prepare for it, reorient their life around eternity. So over the next six weeks, we're doing this series called re imagine heaven, where we're going to obsess about heaven,

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and I'm praying that the Holy Spirit uses the next six weeks to reorient our life, to live in view of it, that it might even reorder some of our affections and loves and the priorities of our life on Earth as we think about, how do we live in light of eternity?

Here's a road map for the next six weeks. We're going to talk today about facing eternity, because the truth is, whether you want to admit it or not, every single person alive today is facing eternity, not away from. It. We're all day by day, inching closer to what eternity will be. Next week, we're going to talk about heaven. Now, this is the temporary state of heaven right now, where people who die in Christ go heaven now, but then after that, we're going to talk about what we rarely think about, which is heaven. Then, what does heaven in its permanent nature look like. Because if I were to ask you imagine heaven, you would think up to the sky, and I get why. But really, when we imagine heaven, we ought to look around us the new heavens and the new earth. Revelation 21 says it's the new city coming down to earth, dressed and adorned like a bride. And that's actually really practical for us, even now as we think about what lasts into the eternal state of heaven. And then we'll talk about what we'll do in heaven. Talk about worship in heaven, as Caleb mentioned, what does our worship gathering look like if we're preparing for this eternal service of worship in awe of Jesus? Then we'll talk about rewards in heaven, and lastly, what it means to rule and reign with Christ for all eternity long. So that's where we're going for the next six weeks. I want to begin today by addressing why does this even matter? Why spend this amount of time addressing eternity? Why does eternity even matter? So a few reasons why. First of all, the last time I checked the death rate, death rate was still at 100% okay, I know this isn't what you want to hear on a Sunday morning, but guess what? You're going to die. You can look at the person next to you and confidently say you're going to die. Okay, some of you are doing that a little too seriously. Okay, I'm going to die. No. Now the only exception is if Jesus comes back before then if he doesn't, we're all headed towards eternity. Somehow, in fact, Hebrews nine. Verse 27 says it is appointed, decided, determined, for people to die once. This is the end of our human life on Earth, in fact, by the time we began this service, in nearly the last 45 minutes, do you know that almost 7000 people have entered eternity? They have died, because in an hour, 7000 people, on average, pass away. By the time the clock strikes midnight tonight, 170,000 people would have died, 170,000 people would have crossed over from this life to the next. It's a reality. So this means, if death is certain, then really, in view of eternity, life is short and Eternity is forever. Sometimes we think we're invisible, and This life seems like a really long time, but in view of eternity, it is pretty short. In fact, I want to illustrate that by one of the oldest youth group illustrations that I saw when I was a kid. Had a profound impact on me, and maybe you've seen it before, but I think it's good to be reminded imagine that this whole rope that we're not uncoiling a little bit, if that's eternity, and our life on Earth 8090, years, if we're lucky, in view of eternity, think about your life being this red dot. I know it feels like we live forever, but this is the span of our earthly life. Now the dot matters, because what you do with Jesus in this dot determines where you spend eternity, how you treat people in the dot matters because heaven is not just about a location. It is a way of being and bringing the values the kingdom of heaven on earth as it is in heaven. So the is incredibly significant. But sometimes, if we're not careful, we can be convinced to think that, because all we see is the dot, that the is all there is. So we get so preoccupied with building our life, tethering ourself to the dot, and we forget life eternal, if you think about it, that's the 7080, 90 years. And what's ahead of us is this eternal existence with God, or if you rejected Christ, man without him forever, then now the world has to end at some point, because eternity, but eternity doesn't it keeps going on and on.

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But how often do we fixate our whole life on the Red Dot and we forget the reality of eternity? The dot matters, and even if you wanted to fill in 6000 years of human history, guess what? Compared to eternity, it's just a bracket of time. That's it. And things can be hard on this bracket of human existence, there are wars, there's chaos, there's heartache, there's cancer. Good things happen, bad things happen. But regardless, you. I What's awaiting is eternity, and if we lived with this red in mind, thinking to ourself, this is my life, I wonder how quicker we would be to forgive people, to not hold on to grudges. Wonder how less we would fight for what is ours in this world to keep we think, man, my life, is just a blip on the radar. It's just a in view of eternity. Now the pain we go through this life, it doesn't go away just because we think of eternity, but it puts it in perspective, gives us a different frame to think our life compared to eternity. And this is what David has in mind when he writes in Psalm 39 verse four to five, David says, Lord, make me aware of my end and the number of my days, so that I will know how short lived I am, in fact, you have made my days just inches long, just a little bit, and my lifespan is as nothing to you. Yes, every human being stands as only a vapor, a vapor. So as successful as you are, as healthy as you are, as powerful and connected as you are, your life is only a vapor, and as hard as life might be, as alone as you might feel, as powerless as you might feel. Guess what? Your life is also just a vapor. Solomon, the wise king, said it like this in Ecclesiastes seven Solomon says it is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, since that is the end of all mankind and the living should take it to heart. And later, he says, This is what builds wisdom in your heart. It's profound. Solomon was saying, if you can choose to go to a party or a funeral, go to the funeral, because the living should take to heart the end of our human existence on earth, and living with that in mind is the secret to wisdom. So life is short. Eternity is forever. The third reason why this matters is because we have all experienced the loss of loved ones. Obviously, you're here

today because you haven't died, praise God, but we know the pain and the sting of losing a loved one. You know what it is to stand on that graveside and receive that phone call, the loss of someone you loved. In fact, I want to ask you to imagine, some of you are thinking of someone specific. If you've had a spouse who passed away, would you stand right now where you are? Just if you had a spouse who was with Jesus passed away, just staying where you are okay? If you've had a child, son or daughter, no matter what age, if you had a child who passed away, would you stand in their honor and keep standing? By the way, yeah. If you had a sibling who's with Jesus, you may stand where you are, yeah. If you had a parent, one or both of your parents, who's passed away, you if you had a grandparent or someone you dearly love, perhaps a mentor, a leader in your life, you may stand where you are. Yeah, we've all grieved in some way, the loss of someone we deeply cared about. That's the reality of the pain of losing a loved one, and you may be seated now, but isn't this why eternity gives us hope? Paul says we grieve, but not without hope. Grieving is normal. It's needed, it's healthy, but we don't grieve without hope.

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Eternity matters because eternity gives us hope. It gives us something to hang on to. It gives us an anchor to our life. And because of eternity, we can grieve and be grateful. Because of eternity, we can have peace in the midst of the brokenness we feel and see through death here on Earth, I'm praying the next few weeks, especially next week, as we think about heaven now, where those we've loved, who are in Christ, are there that it will bring comfort and joy to your heart. Here's the fourth reason why this matters. Eternity transforms our discipleship. Thinking about eternity is not to grow in information, it is to grow in transformation. It changes us again. The four astronauts, it was their obsession about the outer space that allowed them to make costly choices, reorient their lives, spend years in school and other training to be ready for this mission. It changes the very orientation of their life, I wonder, because the lack of obsession about eternity causes us to compromise morally. It causes us a slow drift away from the things of faith. Even makes us have a passionless faith of our own. I want to read to you how eternity impacted the early Christians in Hebrews, chapter 11, notice how their life here was impacted by the eternity to come. Hebrews 11. Verse 13, the writer says These all died in faith. So these early Christians were faithful to Jesus. They didn't just live in faith. They died in faith, although they had not received the things they were promised, but they saw them from a distance, greeted them, and confessed that they were foreigners and temporary residents on the earth. Now, those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a homeland if they were thinking about where they came from, they would have had an opportunity to return, but they now desire a better place, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them. For these early Christians, life is costly. Following Jesus meant difficulty, persecution, imprisonment, and the writer of Hebrews is saying, if they only thought about where they came from, they would have returned to their life, because that's easier, more comfortable. But the way that they endured the difficulty of life following Jesus is that they didn't just think about where they came from. They thought about where they were going. They thought about this new and better place. I love the language that they greeted it. They confessed it, even though it was at a distance. They confessed it daily. They welcomed it, and therefore they realized, man, we're only foreigners, temporary residents here. This is not our forever place. So the cost is worth it, the price we pay for Jesus, it's worth it. Why? Because that's the better place we're headed to. This isn't our home. In fact, a few verses down, the writer of Hebrews says this world was not worthy of their life because they look forward to this better city. Oh, it's deeply transformational when you live a life oriented towards eternity. They did what Paul tells all of us to do in Colossians three, verse one, say, if you've been raised with Christ, seek the things above. Live from this eternal perspective where Christ is seated at the right hand of God, set your mind on things above, not on earthly things. And are you thinking? You met some people who, as they say, are so heavily minded they're of no earthly good. All they think about is heaven and turn it so they have no impact. But that is a complete false way of living. Because, again, heaven is way more than the location. It is a kind of being. In fact, here's what CS Lewis would say about that. CS Lewis wrote in *Mirror Christianity*. He says, if you read history, you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next, the apostles themselves who set on foot the conversion of the Roman Empire, the great men who built the Middle Ages, the English evangelicals who abolished the slave trade, all left their mark on Earth precisely because their minds were occupied with heaven. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this I love how he closes this section. He says, aim at heaven, and you will get Earth thrown in. Aim at Earth, and you will get neither

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he's saying. Think about eternity. Think about standing in front of God. Think about worship in heaven. Think about living a light of eternity and the values of heaven, the values of God's kingdom that shapes your life now, that's how you actually

have the greatest impact on Earth. But if you live for this world, think about only Earth. Build your life here, tethered to this world, wanting only to influence here,

Speaker 1 19:36

you'll lose it all. We think about heaven. You will have the greatest impact on Earth.

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Here's the last reason why I think, at least for today, we should be talking about eternity. Because heaven is a reality to be excited about. It really is a place. It is a reality, a way of being to be excited about. And I think if we were to be honest, what. We don't all that much get excited every day about heaven now we think about it and we're glad we're there, because we don't want the alternative choice, right? But do we leave with joy? And I'll be the first to confess last few days, I thought way more about the Masters than I did heaven, and I'm preaching in heaven today. Now it's partly because Augusta National is what I think when I imagine heaven, it's so the more I see it, if I could ever get there, I will be more heaven minded, I'm certain, but I don't think most of us have a great grasp on what is waiting for us, and I get why and all that. And sometimes we have misconceptions about heaven that create a lack of excitement or make us indifferent to being there. So if you're thinking man, Heaven's really this eternal worship service, and if I'm not all that into music and singing, I'm not very excited. And what kind of music is there going to be? Is it contemporary? Is it traditional? Like, am I going to like the kind of music? If not, I may not be excited about heaven, or you think man Heaven is me floating around on some clouds with a harp that I'm strumming for all eternity. Where is the break room? Can I have breaks friends? It's far from the truth of what heaven is actually going to be like. Let me give you a clue. Paul said it like this in Philippians, chapter one, verse 23 Paul is in prison, and he is saying, God, do you want me to stay here on Earth, to serve the church and to build up the kingdom of God on earth, or are you going to call me home? And Paul says, I'm torn between the two. I long to depart and be with Christ. What does it say? Which is far better? Now we believe Paul is referring to himself when he once said that he experienced the third heavens that he saw into the third heavens. So Paul is writing this after having seen just a glimpse of what heaven is like, what eternity is like. And as he thinks about that moment, and he thinks about his life. He's saying to be with Christ, it's not lesser, it's not equal, it's not even just a little better. It is far better, far better. It's a reality to be excited about. Think about this. The most beautiful sunrise you've ever seen is the sunrise you've seen in a broken world. So think about how better sunrise would be in a perfect, fully redeemed world. The best meal you've ever tasted is a meal prepared in a world marked by decay. Think about how explosive your taste buds will be when

Speaker 1 22:45

you're feasting the perfect and fully redeemed new heavens and the new earth.

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The most intimate time of worship, of being with Jesus you've had on this earth was only a whisper and a foretaste of seeing Jesus now through eyes of faith, but seeing him face to face, because then you won't just sense Him, you'll see him, and that is far better. There have been many physicians who wrote down a lot of accounts, in fact, 1000s of accounts of people who had what they call near death experiences. Now we don't build our theology on people's experiences, but it is interesting to know what a lot of them have in common. And here's one thing they had in common. Notice some of their words. Crystal said, there are no human words that even come close as they peered into heaven, no human words that come close. Gary said it like this, there are no words to express His Divine Presence. This Dutch patient. They said this, what I saw was too beautiful for words. Suresh put it in these words, having peeked into heaven, the kind of love that I experienced there cannot be expressed in words. What's common is, as these people, just for a moment, for a few minutes, they saw a glimpse of what weighted them. Their conclusion was, any human language, any the best vocabulary we have is insufficient to describe it so when you read prophetic visions of heaven from Ezekiel or John, you can tell they're reaching for words that they don't really have. John says, Man, heaven is like a sea of glass. Well, which is it a sea or glass? He says, both words aren't enough,

Speaker 1 24:38

because the glory, the wonder that awaits us, the reality to be excited about now

Libin Abraham 24:46

Heaven's heaven because Jesus is there. So I want to give you a word or two about Jesus and eternity, because the truth is, a

lot of religious figures have talked about eternity. So what makes Jesus a. Words uniquely authoritative about heaven. Couple of reasons. One, Jesus came from heaven, he returned to heaven, and one day will arrive from heaven. So if anyone's familiar with heaven, guess who it is? It's Jesus. Okay, notice this audacious statement Jesus said in John six, which, by the way, got him in a lot of trouble. He said, For I have come down from heaven not to do my own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. No other religious leader has said that, only Jesus would say, I've come from heaven. His incarnation puts him in a category all by himself, because he doesn't have earthly origins. He has a heavenly, divine origin. So Jesus is saying, I've come from heaven. But not only did Jesus come from heaven, notice after the Great Commission in Acts one, what it records about where Jesus went after he said this, he was taken up as they were watching, and a cloud took him out of their sight. While he was going, they were gazing into heaven, and suddenly two men in white clothes stood by them, they said, Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up into heaven? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come in the same way that you have seen him going into heaven. Came from heaven, ascended to heaven, and when we see him, he's returning from heaven. And the view of Revelation is he also brings Heaven down to earth. So Heaven's not a native, it's not a foreign place, it's his native home. So we can uniquely trust the description of heaven from Jesus and trust the promises he makes about heaven, because he has been the center of heaven as the Lord, the darling of heaven. Here's another reason why we can trust Jesus is because he defeated death, so we don't have to fear it. Though death is a reality, we don't have to fear it. Did you know that for 20% of people, the greatest people, their greatest phobia is death? It's the fear of dying. And think about all the lengths we go to to either defy death or to delay death. You got the whoop strap, a strap who promises, which promises to delay or reverse your biological age? Steve Frizzell is only 24 years old right now, because it's great. You got people who move to the blue zones because they think just a change of geography will allow us to live a few extra years. Or you got biohackers like Dave Asprey, who said, now I'm gonna live to 180 years. I'm gonna do whatever it takes. He puts butter in his coffee, takes 150 supplements a day, does hormone optimization, stem cell therapy, spent millions of dollars on technology, sees sunlight just a few times a day, avoids blue light because he is committed to living 180 years old. He's well on his way at the age of 52 we'll see how he does now, I'm all for living healthy. I'll probably have a bootstrap at some point, but a lot of people, the underlining reason is not to be healthy. It's to defy death.

Speaker 1 28:08

It's actually a fear that holds them captive to dying. But notice why Easter matters.

Libin Abraham 28:20

Hebrews two, verse 14 says, Now, since the children have flesh and blood in common, Jesus also shared in these so that through his death, he might destroy the one holding the power of death who is the Devil and free those who were held in slavery all their lives by the fear of death. Jesus went to the cross. He defeated death, he rose from the graves so that we would no longer live in slavery to death, because death is no longer what it used to be. So Paul would emphatically say in First Corinthians, 15, verse 54 death has been swallowed up in victory. Where death is your victory, where death is your sting. The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us victory through our Lord Jesus, Christ, Amen. Thanks be to God, Death isn't what it used to be. If you live your life in fear of death, you'll spend your life trying to add days to your life. But if you recognize that Jesus has defeated death and conquered the grave, you won't live your life merely trying to add days to your life, you'll actually add life to your days, which is far more important. You'll add life to your days, which means you are free to live the life God called you to. You will love better. You will lean into making an impact here. You will take great risks. Ask for the kingdom of God because you're not primarily interested in adding days to your life, but life to your days, because you realize death is not termination, it's not extinction, it is a doorway into life with God forever. Or as Dietrich Bonhoeffer would say, as he was taken to the gallows to be executed by the Nazis and they recognized he was not afraid. He said, Why would I be afraid of death? Because death is the last station on the journey to freedom.

Speaker 1 30:28

That's what death is. It's not what it used to be. Because of Easter, Jesus has conquered the grave.

Libin Abraham 30:34

We're gonna pick up here next week. But here's what I want to leave you with, all roads do not lead to heaven. Only Jesus does. I know it's nice to think. I wish they all did, but to believe that would be to disagree with the words of Jesus in John 14, where he said, I am the way. I am the truth. I am the life. No one as good as you are, as bad as you are, no one comes to the Father except through Me, says Jesus. So there aren't many multiple roads up the mountain. You just choose one and you

get to the same place. There's only one. He's Jesus. There's only one.

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Those who accept Christ as Lord and Savior, they spent eternity with Him and ever forever in Heaven, that's certain. And those who reject Christ, they spend eternity in hell. And hell is opposite of Heaven in every way. It's the exact opposite of heaven. That's why it's filled with destruction and torment and fear and darkness and pain. A pastor I knew in Houston was asked this question once. The question was, do all roads lead to heaven? And I loved his response. He said, No, I don't think all roads lead to heaven, but all roads can lead to Jesus, and Jesus is the only road to heaven. So hear me, not all roads lead to heaven, but all roads can lead to Jesus. So I don't know what road you're on today or what you've taken to get here. Maybe it's the road of good works or religion, or it's the road of failure and heartache and miserable things we try to do to save ourselves, but every road comes to the foot of the cross, and we must decide, what will we do with Jesus? And if we receive Him, eternity is secure. In fact, Jesus would say He is eternal life. That's where it begins with Jesus. Or if you reject, you're refusing the offer of Christ. Someone today, if some of you in this room and online, have you received Him, if not, make today the day of salvation. Receive Him as Lord of the Lord. He is life eternal for the rest of us. I think today is the day to consider, what have I been living the red dot for for myself, for this world alone, or am I obsessed with eternity that it makes me live differently now it changes the longings of our heart, and I'm committed to bringing heaven on earth until we see the flourishing of God's kingdom for all eternity. Would you bow your heads with me? Holy Spirit? Would you move our hearts tilted towards eternity? God, if we have been living for this life alone, would you convince us today, by the Holy Spirit that there is a better way to live, to live for something that is permanent and real? Cause there to be a fresh obsession with Jesus, first and foremost, and with heaven, where you are the center of it, so that it actually impacts our life, our discipleship, our choices, the way we see people, the way we treat people, the urgency we feel to share the good news that for who, those who've trusted in Christ, they've already crossed over from death to life. Father, there's any who have yet to receive Jesus. May today the Holy Spirit woo their hearts, win their hearts, may they leave here with a certainty that it is their belief in Jesus and nothing more that guarantees eternal life with God that begins now. So Father, we thank you for the door of grace that stands open for any and all whatever roads we've taken to come to the foot of the cross. Said this rejected and risen Savior is my Lord, my king, but we love you. Be with us in the next few weeks as we dive in to this incredible reality that awaits us all. In Jesus name we pray. The church said, together Amen, amen, amen. Thank you so much for being here. Church family Amen. You.