

God is... Eternal

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[0:00] You're going to need two things. You're going to need a Bible with Psalm 90 open before you. And you should have been given one of these little sheets with a load of scriptures written on it.

Ultimately, as a church, we have one concern, only one, and that is to know God. That is what we're about. To know God, to serve Him, to enjoy Him, and ultimately to see Him glorified.

I hope that you could draw a straight line from everything we do as a church to that. Why do we do Little Stars with parent and toddlers on a Monday morning? So that people would come to know God.

Why do we do Club 16 and Ignite? So that our children would be instructed how to serve God and enjoy Him and to glorify Him. Why do we do the language class?

So that people would learn English, yes. But more than that, we want to show them the love of the God whom we want them to know and to serve and to glorify and enjoy. And so there's nothing, nothing more important in our church's life, in your life, and in my life, than knowing God.

[1:14] And that's why we're doing this series on Sunday mornings, looking at the Westminster Shorter Catechism's teaching on what is God. God is a spirit, infinite, eternal, unchangeable in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.

And so we come this morning to God is eternal. Verse 2 of Psalm 90 reveals something of God to you. Before the mountains are brought forth, or ever you've formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting, you are God.

We've learnt that God is a spirit. We've learnt that God is infinite. And we come to this truth, that God as a spirit, He is infinite and eternal.

Eternal in the sense that He is not bounded in any way by the boundaries of time. He's not limited by time in any way. He's infinite. We learnt that last week, didn't we?

He's not infinite, not limited by space. He's everywhere. But this week we learn that He is not limited by time. And Psalm 90 sets this contrast.

[2:25] It very simply says this, that God is not like you. God is not like you. In two ways. First of all, it sets it out in terms of our own frailty.

We are frail. You are frail. It sets out our weakness. It describes us as dusty. We are dusty.

We are made of the dust of the earth. God is not dusty. There is nothing dusty about God. Because He is from everlasting to everlasting.

But there's something dusty about us. We are made from the dust. And we return to the dust. The psalmist says, A thousand years in your sight, O God, is but as yesterday.

But with us, time is different. When it comes to God, time has no effect. Whatever speed it travels. But that's not true of you, is it?

[3:30] Not true of me. We know that there is a constant motion of speed. And yet we say, don't we, time flies. We still wonder how it comes about that life is speeding up.

That it's passing us by more quickly than it did when we were young. We find ourselves with the psalmist saying here, We've been swept along in our life.

As though we're being swept along in a flood. The water moves quickly in a flood. We find ourselves in life, we're like grass. That jumps up to life in the morning.

And then it withers and it's cut down in the evening. It's distressing, isn't it? To see how weak. To see how dusty we are. To recognize how quickly life passes us by.

And time is operating, I think, upon us in more than one way. It's a picture, I think, of the speed of time. So when you're little, you children, isn't it?

[4:34] When I was little, I used to think, I can't wait until I grow up. I can't wait until I'm a grown up. I remember really vividly sitting in Welsh. You had to learn Welsh until you were 16.

And I'd sit in Welsh on a Tuesday afternoon. And the lesson lasted forever. I sat just in front of the clock. And I watched the time going around an hour. Rambo was the teacher, was his nickname. And it lasted forever. And time when you're little, it seems... Do you remember your holidays, isn't it? Your holidays, they seem... Three weeks were going to be away. They seem to last forever. Summer holidays come.

It seems to stretch on for ages. But it's not like that when you're older, is it? The days. The weeks. The months. The years. They fly by. And sometimes when you're older, do you know, children, you can't remember what year it is.

[5:31] 20, 26. It's passed so quickly. And people tell me you're older than I am that as you get older, it just zips by even faster. Time seems to get faster.

But the contrast here between I'm God and you is not just in terms of the speed of life. And the speed of which our life passes. But it also explains why that's the case.

That the speed of our life passes, and that is a direct result of sin. Sin has caused that. And that's what he's saying. Look at verses 7 and 8.

It says, We're brought to an end by your anger. By your wrath we're dismayed. You've set our iniquities, our rebellion before you, our secret sins in the light of your presence.

For all our days pass away under your wrath. We bring our years to an end like a sigh. The years of our life are 70. If by reason of strength, maybe 80. Yet by their span they are but trouble and toil.

[6:35] And that last phrase there, toil and trouble, that is a reference, isn't it, back to Genesis 3. To the toil and trouble that fell upon us because of the curse.

Genesis 1 and 2, there's no trouble. But because we've fallen into sin, this life is not the life it was meant to be. The speed at which life happens is not simply just, well that's life.

But the speed in which life happens is because we live under the toil and under the sorrow of what it is to live under the curse. And the effect of the curse of God on our life.

And the nature of sin as it's affected us, that we're dying. We are experiencing the wages of sin that we're suffering.

We are living lives under the curse of God as it fell upon men and women. And those two things, the speed of life that's passing and the nature of that speed.

[7:37] In terms of its toil and its sorrow and its rapid change. Well that's what's happened to sinners like you and I. And the contrast Psalm 90 wants to say is God is not like that.

Not only does God, for God the speed of life does not pass him by. He's also not affected by sin. He is not like us.

Time doesn't affect him. Nor is he affected by the curse. He is from everlasting to everlasting. God is eternal and he is timeless.

And maybe that's a really hard one to understand. The problem is when we speak of time and eternity. And we're speaking as if we understood the meaning of those words.

As though we understand the meaning of time. As though we understand the meaning of eternity. And when we think of eternity, we define it in terms of time.

[8:40] But I don't think that's very helpful when we look at the character of God. We think of eternity as unending time. And yet time itself is something that God has created.

Time itself is something that God has made. And what it sets out to us here is what we can hardly begin to understand. We can hardly begin to understand time as it's created by God.

And so we can hardly begin to understand eternity. That God is eternal. That God is not affected by time in the way that we are. That God as being the creator of time and being above and beyond time is not affected by time.

How incomprehensible God is. How far above us he is.

And that should lead us at least to humility as we look at this aspect of his character. So what I want to do is I want to do three things the same as we did last week. Is I want us to look really what does the scriptures teach us about this.

[9:51] And then I want us to look at what does it mean. And then how does it apply to you and I in our day to day lives. And so if you look at the sheet. What do the scriptures teach us about that God is eternal.

There's many many verses in the Bible. That make it very clear to you that God is eternal. So Genesis 21 verse 33. Adam planted the tree in Beersheba. And there he called on the name of the Lord.

The everlasting God. Stated categorically. Deuteronomy 32 verse 40. God speaking of swearing by his own name. And he says I lift up my hand to heaven.

And swear as I live forever. God is telling us something about himself. Deuteronomy 33 verse 27. The eternal God is your dwelling place.

And underneath are the everlasting arms. What a beautiful verse. Job 36. Behold God is great. And we know him not. The number of his years.

[10 : 49] It's unsearchable. Psalm 102. Oh Lord you laid the foundation of the earth. And the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish. But you will remain. They will wear it like a garment.

You will change them like a robe. And they will pass away. But you are the same. And your years have no end. The children of your offspring shall dwell secure. Their offspring shall be established before you.

And that verse is really helpful. Because it's setting before us. One of the meanings of the fact that God is forever. One of the meanings. As we'll see in a moment.

Is that God does not change. He's unchanging. That's next week's sermon. God is a spirit. Infinite. Eternal. And unchangeable. So Isaiah 40. Have you not known? Have you not heard?

The Lord is the everlasting God. The creator of the ends of the earth. He does not grow faint or grow weary. His understanding is unsearchable. They draw on in chapter 44. The Lord, the King of Israel.

[11 : 48] And His Redeemer. The Lord of hosts. I am the first. And I am the last. Besides me there is no God. The uniqueness of God is stated there. He alone is eternal. Isaiah 57.

That says. The one who is high and lifted up. Who inhabits eternity. Whose name is holy. I dwell in the high and the holy place. And also with him who is of a contrite and lowly heart.

To revive the spirit of the lonely. And to revive the spirit of the contrite. Here again. Can you see the contrast? God dwells in eternity. And there is no limits in space to contain him.

There is no limits in terms of time to contain him. And yet can you see from Isaiah 57 where else he dwells? He dwells in the heart of the contrite.

The poor. The broken. The humble. The sinner. It is astonishing grace. You go to Romans 16. Where it talks about the Lord Jesus.

[12 : 47] That he has now been disclosed. And through the prophetic writings. Has been made to all the nations. According to the command of the eternal God. To bring about the obedience of faith. And so right at the heart of the good news of the Lord Jesus.

Is the eternity of God. Commanding the obedience of faith. And when Paul gives his doxology in 1 Timothy 1.

He says to the king of the ages. What does that mean? It's a wonderful way to describe that he is the Lord of all eternity. And it means that he is everlasting.

To the king of the ages. Immortal. Invisible. The only God. Be honor and glory. Forever and ever. Amen. And then Revelation is full of it. Revelation 1. 4.

John. To the seven churches that are in Asia. Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come. And from the seven spirits who are before his throne. You go on later in that chapter.

[13 : 44] And he says. I am the Alpha and the Omega. The beginning and the ending. Who is. Who was. And who is to come. The Almighty. Revelation 10. Who swore by him who lives forever and ever. He created heaven and what is in it.

The earth and what is in it. The sea and what is in it. That there would be no more delay. And then chapter 15 verse 7. One of the four living creatures. Gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls. Full of the wrath of God.

Who lives forever and ever. And can you see that there. Which is quite important isn't it. The everlasting nature of God. It stands right beside his wrath.

His anger. It's one of the lessons that we need to bring to bear upon ourselves. Those I think that they are sufficient aren't they.

As we gallop through the word of God to show you that God is eternal. This is part of the character of God. That God is spirit. Yes. God is infinite. Yes.

[14 : 41] God is eternal. He is everlasting. He was. He is. He will always be. He's the alpha and the omega. He's the first. The last. The beginning and the end.

And there is no one like him. He is incomparable. He is everlasting. And that is gracious to us and to our children. He is everlasting. It means that his wrath abides.

Forever. And so we need to stand very carefully listening to the word of God and taking heed of that. So what does it mean? What does it mean?

When the Bible tells you that God is eternal and God is everlasting, I think there's three things. First of all, it says that God has no beginning. It's really obvious. That is incomparable to have no beginning.

There's nothing else like that. Nothing. God is the only one, the only being who had no beginning. Remember, we're told, first verse of the Bible, in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

[15 : 45] And when we think of time, we think of time as the movement of these things that God has created. When we understand time, what we're doing is we're understanding the movement of the things that God has created.

God created the heavens and the earth. And that is the point at which God creates time. At least as we measure it. At least as we understand it.

Now let me explain what I mean you are fortunate to have as a minister one of the great scientific minds of all time. And so let me try and explain it with my GCSE science. It is God who set the earth upon its axis.

To revolve upon its axis once every 24 hours. That makes a day. And we used to measure the year by the lunar calendar, by the stages of the moon and how it appeared.

And we divided things up in that particular way. And we were measuring time in terms of a lunar calendar, a lunar month. And we measure our years by the orbit of the earth around the sun.

[16 : 50] Once every 365 and quarter days, I'm told. That's how we measure time. But God made that.

God set that up. God invented that. God thought that up in his own mind.

Before there was nothing. Can you understand? There was just God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And he set it up in this exact way, in this exact detail.

He started it. He invented it. He thought it. He set it up. He made those things happen. He had no beginning. To start. No start. And no one invented God.

Or thought him up. Or started him up. Or set him in motion. God has always existed. He always was. Do you remember how Moses at the burning bush said, tell me your name?

[17 : 54] Do you remember what God said his name was? I am. That I am. He's using the verb to be. To describe his nature.

To reveal something of himself. Tell us who you are. Well, I am. Okay. And we can't grasp that because we live on a little ball that turns around.

And goes around once a day. And there's other little balls kind of going around it. And that in turn is moving another thing. But God made all of that. He has no beginning.

And let me take it another way. Let me contrast it. With our own existence. With our own beginning. We were formed, weren't we, in our mother's womb.

And we were born on a certain day. Those of us who are parents. Do you remember that time when you were handed your child? And you held them in your arms?

[18 : 59] I remember holding Ellie with their little kind of bright eyes. Looking at me. This little head of her. The softest cheeks. The softest skin. She's looking at me. What is a baby when you hold a newborn baby in your arms?

What is that? Helpless. Totally helpless. And on the day you were born. You were utterly, utterly helpless.

God was never helpless. God had no beginning. God was never young. God was never immature. God was never developing.

God was never growing. God was never childish. God was never weak. God was always perfect. I think that's a good way to illustrate it.

God had no beginning. I had a beginning. And you had a beginning. And the whole world in which we live had a beginning. Time had a beginning. He made it. God is above that.

[20:01] And beyond that. And he's not limited in any way in that direction. But the second thing that is true and what it means for us is that God is eternal.

That he had no beginning. Well, it's obvious that he will have no end. There will be no end to him. Let me give you two examples.

In the end, God will take the universe that he has made. And he will scrunch it up like a piece of paper. And he will bring it to an end.

And the earth revolving on its axis. The moon going round the earth. The whole thing going round. The sun. The whole universe. He will just take it up. And he will crump it like a piece of paper.

The sun and the moon and the stars and everything we know. He'll end it. He'll call a stop. It's degenerating. It's decaying as a result of our sin. It's under the curse and groaning.

[21:03] And God will renew it. Yes, of course. But he'll bring it to an end first before he renews it. And the psalmist says that's just like us. This world in which we live is going to come to an end.

But God is not like that. And so you and I are decaying. And growing old. Don't we know it? We start to lose our edge. We start to lose our fitness.

We start to lose our shape. You don't need me to go any further than that. You know that. We don't need to be specific.

It's happening, isn't it? I watch it. As I look at you week by week. And you watch it week by week. But it'll never happen to God.

There's no decay of God. There's no slowing down. He doesn't lose his edge. He doesn't lose his fitness. He is unending.

[22:04] He is as he is forever. It's astonishing. It is mind bending. What he was. And what he is. And what he will be. And what he will be.

He will be forever. So the third thing. In terms of what the meaning of this has. God has no beginning. God has no end. But it also means that God is the same.

He's always the same. And I'm running into next week's sermon. But I can't help it. That God is unchanging. God is a spirit. Infinite. Eternal. And unchangeable. Time does not operate upon God. He is the creator of time.

He's always present. He is the great I am. He's always the same. God is always the same. There's immense comfort in that. There's also immense warning in that.

It doesn't mean. And this is where the kind of discussion gets complicated. It doesn't mean. That God cannot do things in sequence of time. If God is always the same.

[23:09] How can he do things in sequence. One thing after another in time. In the time that he's created. Well I don't know. How he does that. But he does do that. And of course he does.

He does things sequentially. In the world that he has created. He's always the same. He does not change. And we'll look at the implications of this next week.

But you must not think of God as frozen. He is alive. And active in all the greatness of his being. He is so large and so great. And so free. As to be exalted. In his being above time.

And he is not governed by time. I want you to love this question. From the Shorter Catechism. Because God is a spirit.

That's point number one. And then there's three adjectives. Aren't there? What is God the spirit like? He is infinite. Eternal. And unchangeable. And then you can apply them to every point.

[24:09] God is a spirit. Infinite. Infinite. Eternal. And unchangeable. In his being. Wisdom. Power. Holiness. Justice. Goodness. And truth. That means God is eternal in his being. He's eternal in his wisdom. He's eternal in his power.

He's eternal in his holiness. He's eternal in his justice. He's eternal in his goodness. He's eternal in his truth. But let's use the word always. His being is always.

He always is. He's always wise. He's always powerful. He's always holy. He's always just. He's always good. And he's always true. He's the same. He's unchanging.

He's not affected by time. And we thank God, don't we, that he has entered the time that he created. And that he has acted in the time that he created without changing anything in himself. It's the amazing grace of God which flows from his character. From he who is in his eternity. Who always was and always is and always will be.

[25:13] And so he is unchanging. Now let's apply it to ourselves. And let me try and apply it to your week. First of all, the eternity of God silences our pride.

It silences our pride, I hope, in several ways. First, some of the verses that we read earlier, they refer to the wrath of God. And the all-knowing wisdom of God.

He knows all things. And I think one of the things it means for us today is that God knows every sin that I have ever committed.

He knows that. Because he's always the same. He's unchanging. And he does not grow forgetful. We do.

I have forgotten many of the sins that I've committed. And we pray, don't we, David's prayer in Psalm 51. Oh Lord, do not remember the sins of my youth.

[26:12] Meaning, please don't raise them against me. But many of my sins from my youth I've forgotten. Since God is eternal. Since he was and he is and he will be.

It is stupid for you to think that there are sins that God does not know about. It humbles our pride. It humbles our pride, too, in terms of the way in which we suppress the knowledge of God.

And we worship and serve anything else other than God. It silences our pride in the way that we try to prove that we've evolved. Or that we're somehow better than we were as people.

We're such a flash. We're a flash in the pan. And God is forever. We're so proud. And I think the eternity of God puts us in our place.

It humbles us. The eternity of God, I also think, though, should have this implication and application. In Ecclesiastes, we're told this glorious verse that God has set eternity in our hearts.

[27:22] Every single human being, God has put eternity in our hearts. It's a reminder of the way we've been made.

That he's put eternity in our hearts. It's a reminder that we were made to be forever. That we were made to glorify and enjoy God forever. But that it's been spoiled by sin.

But it's still part of human nature. It's still part of even the atheist. The atheist still longs to know him. And is restless until it finds its rest in him.

Even though he denies his existence. He's put eternity in the hearts of every human being. It's such an encouragement in our evangelism. We know that, don't we?

No one who says, when they say, oh, where do you want to go out today? We've got a day off.

Where do you want to go? I'll tell you where I want to go. I want to go to the crematorium. No one thinks like that, do they? No one thinks, oh, I love going to the funeral home.

[28:23] No one lives like that. No one lives like that. Because we know death is horrific. But in our folly, in the words of Jeremiah, we've tried the broken systems.

We've sought water, not the living water. And it's not satisfied us, it's failed us. But you were created with eternity in your heart. And nothing but the eternity of God will satisfy you.

So that you can know him and love him and serve him and adore him. You know that you were made for something bigger than this life. Thirdly, the eternity of God is a comfort.

It should humble us. He's put eternity in our hearts, but it should comfort us. I don't know how you look at our culture. I don't know how you look at the news when you hear it.

It's really easy, isn't it, to be fearful. It's very easy to think what kind of world are our children growing up in. It's really easy to think, if my children, God gives them another 20 years, and they marry and have children of their own, what kind of world are they going to be living in?

[29:36] But God will still be the same. And when we're surrounded by lawlessness and evil, the eternity of God is such a comfort. Jesus Christ will be the same in 25 years.

The gospel of Jesus Christ will be the same as it is today. And the God that we have found to be our comfort and our refuge, the God who says, I am the everlasting God, and underneath you are the everlasting arms, 25 years will be exactly the same.

to our children's children, and our children's children, and for every generation, until the Lord Jesus Christ comes again, there is great comfort and grace for sinners.

And so we do rightly look at the world, and we can be fearful, but actually we bring our children up in faith, don't we, that God will be with them, not fear. And the fourth and the last thing about God being eternal is that the eternity of God exalts the name of Jesus Christ.

Because we are told that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. And we're told in Hebrews 7, you'll see that verse on the sheet, this is the way which he's exactly like Melchizedek, that mysterious figure in the Old Testament.

[31:07] And he has become a high priest forever, because he is, by translation of his name, King of Righteousness, King of Salem, that is, King of Peace, without father or mother or genealogy.

Why? Well, he's eternal. Having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God, he continues to be a priest forever. And metaphorically, those things are applied to Melchizedek, but ultimately they are true, Jesus Christ.

He is a priest forever. There is a gospel that stands forever for sinners in the person of Jesus Christ. Revelation 14, there is an eternal gospel. And Paul, in Colossians, says to the church there that Jesus Christ is the image of the invisible God.

He's the firstborn of all creation. By him all things were created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities.

[32:05] All things were created through him, before him, and he is before all things. And in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church, he's the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.

For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of the cross.

the eternity of God takes us directly to the blood of Jesus Christ and the gospel that is there for us and for our children.

God is eternal. And so let us exalt Jesus Christ, for he is worthy. Let's pray. Let's pray.