

And we shouldn't think that we can wait until the last possible moment either, because most of us won't become Christians on our death bed. We may not have a death bed, and even if we do, we may not be in a fit state to do anything by then. We don't even know what tomorrow may bring:

James 4:14  
*Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow....*

After the Lord brings us to Himself, the rest of our lives now have purpose. We'll now be spending our time obeying the Lord's individual guidance to us, whatever that may be. Always keeping our eyes firmly on eternity.

We will no longer be bothered about the football results, but new concerns will come along which we never had before. We'll suddenly find ourselves surrounded by an unbelieving family, and we'll need to be a good witness to them. We'll all go to imperfect churches, and we'll need to learn how to stop getting worked up by this-worldly church politics. We'll all be persecuted by the world, so we need to trust in the Lord, and realise He is in complete control of all things. All this and more we are going to have to manage. But we will always have the Lord's help, and the knowledge that it will only be for a very short time.

So, what will eternity be like? We're not told all that much about it actually. Our life here is compared to a seed as opposed to the full grown plant:

1 Corinthians 15:37,38  
*And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body.*

How can a seed understand what it is like being the full grown plant? It can't, and neither can we begin to understand what eternity will be like. We are given some details about it. We know it will be a good place:

Revelation 21:4  
*And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.*

We know it will be a place of eternal rest from our labours:

Revelation 14:13  
*And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth:*

*Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.*

We know that God alone will be the focus:

Revelation 5:13  
*And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.*

Many people think Christians have just invented heaven as a coping mechanism for their miserable lives here. A perfect place after death, a "pie in the sky when you die." But what we believe isn't fantasy. We're told just enough about it to whet our appetite, but not too much, to stop us trying to make any grand plans for when we get there, because it will be totally different from anything we know here.

And the most wonderful thing of all that we're told about heaven, is not only that we will be with Christ, but also we will be like Him:

Philippians 1:22-24  
*But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.*

1 John 3:2  
*Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.*

So, let us not become bogged down with the various problems and situations that come along in this life. They will soon fly away. Our time here is so short, and we'll be in eternity soon enough. How should we then live?

1 Corinthians 15:58  
*Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.*

2 Corinthians 4:17,18  
*For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.*

## Even a Vapour

James 4:14  
*For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.*

Since time began, men have pondered the big questions of life, thinking, for reasons I can't understand, that they can come up with all the answers. This has led them to inventing many fanciful theories. How did the universe begin? Well, we're told in all the best educational establishments, by a big bang billions of years ago. How did man come to live on the earth? We're reliably told, we all evolved from fish. Isn't it wonderful how scientists know all these things!

These ridiculous, laughable answers are taken quite seriously in our major institutions. University professors mock anyone who doesn't believe this. And our media listens to such people of influence, and so these ideas become mainstream in the general population.

All these influencers have been looking for answers to these big questions in the wrong place. They think they can work everything out by observation. But it is not possible to know such answers, except our Creator God reveals them to us. And, praise Him, He has condescended to do exactly that:

2 Peter 1:3  
*According as his divine power hath given unto us **all things that pertain unto life and godliness**, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue....*

He hasn't revealed everything about the universe to us, because, for a start, we wouldn't understand it, and in any case we don't need to know it all. But everything we do need to know has not only been revealed, but has always been clearly available. Firstly, through oral tradition. Seven generations of oral transmission was all it took (people lived longer in the early days than we do now) before the truth began to be more permanently recorded for the many future generations scattered throughout the world in the Scriptures.

Since the time of Moses we have had a clear, written record of the truth. Truth has been staring us in the face ever since. Yet science, falsely so-called, still thinks it knows better.

James, here, asks one of these big questions: "*What is your life?*" What a question! But I'm not sure if many people today are actually asking those kind of questions. They're more interested in the football results or what's on the television tonight or their next holiday or the next birthday party.

James questions this whole attitude. He sees far too many people busying themselves with their life here, in this world:

James 4:13

*Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain....*

Football seasons, television series, birthday parties, buying and selling, all come and go, yet they consume our mind. And we think our life is going to carry on like this for ever:

2 Peter 3:4

*And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.*

God Himself, in His mercy, occasionally tries to wake us out of this mindset, by upsetting the status quo. He sometimes allows wars, "natural disasters," and pandemics to occur, in order to focus our minds more on the brevity of life. When people are dropping dead all around us, surely then we'll begin to take these things seriously, won't we?

Mark 13:7,8

*And when ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, be ye not troubled: for such things must needs be; but the end shall not be yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles: these are the beginnings of sorrows.*

James then asks this one great question that nobody seems to be asking: "What is your life?" And he immediately provides us with the answer: "It is even a vapour."

Yes, that's all life is, a vapour. That should bring us down to earth and make us think. And James emphasises the specific quality of a vapour he has in mind. A vapour "appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." Its transience, its evanescence, its brevity, is the quality of our life that we are to be particularly concerned with.

Our life is soon over. And surely we ought to know this. But we never think about it. In fact, we're probably too scared of stopping our activity even for a moment and reflecting on this fact, because we assume the only alternative is despair. If life is so fleeting, what's the point of anything? We may as well give up on everything and indulge ourselves, because we'll be dead soon enough:

1 Corinthians 15:32

*What advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for to morrow we die.*

If we think this life is all there is, it becomes so easy to fill our lives here either with activity or debauchery. Which is exactly what the majority of people around us are doing. But, whether we like it or not, there is one thing that we all must face. Death is not the end. We all have immortal souls:

Ecclesiastes 12:7

*Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.*

We personally continue on into eternity. We don't reincarnate as somebody or something else with no connection to our previous lives in an endless cycle of life. How ridiculous a theory is that, yet millions believe it. We, ourselves, continue on past death. This means that our time here, albeit brief, suddenly becomes far from pointless. Our time here now has meaning. We come to realise that this short life is merely a preparation for the next. So we should be living accordingly.

The wisest man that ever lived (except Christ) tried everything the world had to offer, and concluded:

Ecclesiastes 2:17

*Therefore I hated life; because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me: for all is vanity and vexation of spirit.*

But he didn't go off the rails. He saw things from an eternal perspective. And that brings God into the equation:

Ecclesiastes 12:13

*Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.*

If we are here today and gone tomorrow, then we can live how we like, there would be no eternal consequences to pay for our actions. But if we have immortal souls that live forever, we are responsible to the God who made us. No longer ought we to be busying ourselves with our own pathetic, inconsequential little matters. Our only motivation for living now, must be to live our lives to the glory of God:

1 Corinthians 10:31

*Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.*

We don't know how long we've got in this world. Our soul may be required of us tonight:

Luke 12:20

*But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?*

So, in the very short time we still have left here, we need to prepare ourselves for eternity. We must make absolutely sure we are right with God before we die. If we ignore God and carry on living for ourselves regardless, we will end up in the next world having to take the consequences. Those who....

2 Thessalonians 1:8,9

*....know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ....shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power....*

That's not where we should want to be. Once in eternity, it's permanent. There'll be no second chance after death:

Luke 16:26

*And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.*

So we must make sure we have our sins dealt with before we die, otherwise we'll be sent for ever to a place where we'd never be able to pay off our debt. Thankfully, God is a merciful God, and He has provided an escape – which He didn't have to do – by sending His only Son into the world:

John 3:16

*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

If we repent of our sins against God and embrace the Lord Jesus Christ to save us from them, if we pray to Him, trust in Him, and acknowledge Him as our Saviour, we can be saved from the eternal consequences of where our sins would otherwise inevitably lead us. Everything else we do in this world is utterly pointless in comparison to making sure we have Christ as our Saviour:

John 3:36

*He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.*

Those who come to Christ and trust in Him, by the Lord's grace alone, will be saved from the wrath to come. But we must come now. Waiting for some kind of redemption in the next life is waiting in vain, because there won't be any:

2 Corinthians 6:2

*....behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.*