

FROM HERE  
TO  
*Eternity*



Touching Lives  
with James Merritt

# FROM HERE TO ETERNITY

*Touching Lives with Dr. James Merritt*

## ***Series Summary***

Death is a scary concept for a lot of people. As believers, we have a lot of hope that death is not the end for us, but that doesn't mean that death isn't scary or unnerving at all. And because it is such a morbid topic, many people don't like to talk about death and the topics surrounding it. But in this series called "From Here To Eternity," we aren't going to shy away from the conversation. We are going to explore what the Word of God says about what happens at death, what happens after death, between death, and the time when we believe Jesus will return.

# Touching Lives with Dr. James Merritt

## Last Breath

From Here To Eternity | Week 1 | Hebrews 9:27-28

### INTRODUCTION

Unless Jesus comes back before you die, one day one of your breaths will be your last. Your chest will rise and fall one last time. You will take in oxygen and breath out carbon dioxide one last time. You need to be ready for that moment, because today may be the day that moment comes. In Hebrews chapter 9, there are several verses that give us an encyclopedia of truth about our last breath. That’s what we’re going to dive into today.

### NOTES

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### KEY POINTS

#### 1. We Have A Definite Day With Death

Our key passage for today’s message makes it very clear that we are definitely going to die at some point. Hebrews 9:27 starts by saying, *“And just as it is appointed for people to die once...”*

The word “appointed” literally means “to be laid up” or “to be laid aside.” You can also translate it as “reserved.” When you make a reservation at a hotel, that means a certain room has been laid aside for you and no one else. Every one of us has a reservation with death. You didn’t make it; God made it. You have a date, a day, a minute, a second, a moment that has been laid aside for you to draw your last breath. You can’t cancel the reservation and you will keep the appointment. That is a reality we all need to come to terms with.

#### 2. We Have A Determined Destiny After Death

Romans 6:23 makes it clear that the reason for sin is death, but the result of death is judgment. Everyone has to face judgment after they die. If you are not a follower of Jesus, you will face the judgment of dying without Jesus. If you are a follower of Jesus, you will be judged for how you lived for Jesus. Everybody faces judgment. That is everyone’s destiny after death. But the good news is that if you understand God’s justice and His judgment, that should make you extremely happy and extremely thankful.

#### 3. We Have A Deliberate Decision Before Death

As we’ve seen, you don’t have any choice as to whether or not you are going to die, and you don’t have any choice as to whether or not you are going to stand before God. What you do have a choice in is how you are going to stand before God.

# Touching Lives with Dr. James Merritt

## Last Breath

*From Here To Eternity | Week 1 | Hebrews 9:27-28*

That is where Jesus comes in and Hebrews 9:28 tells us, “So Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.”

Here is the way it works. Jesus came to die for your sin problem. When He takes care of your sin problem, He takes care of your death problem. When He takes care of your death problem, He takes care of your judgment problem. When He comes again, if you have accepted His forgiveness, you will be spared any judgment for punishment. But if you haven't, you will be condemned in your own trial by your own unbelief. One of these days you will take your last breath, but until you do it is never too late to escape the penalty of sin, the problem of judgment, and the fear of death.

### NOTES

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# Touching Lives with Dr. James Merritt

## **Last Breath**

*From Here To Eternity | Week 1 | Hebrews 9:27-28*

### **QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER**

1. Are you afraid of dying? Why or why not?
2. Before today's message, what did you think happened after death?
3. How do you feel about being judged by God when you die?

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**In The Meantime**

From Here To Eternity | Week 2 | 2 Corinthians 5:1-8

**INTRODUCTION**

**NOTES**

There are three days that we believe are the most important days on the calendar of any believer. There is what I call our "birthday." By that I mean you come to the realization that you are a sinner and you need a Savior. So you repent of your sins, place your faith in Jesus, and surrender to Him as the Lord of your life. You are "born-again." The second day is what I call "moving day." That is the day we die, the day that we transition from this earth to be with the Lord. And then the third day is what I call "resurrection day." That is when our bodies are raised from the dead and we receive a brand-new body, an eternal body. With all of that in mind, we must consider this question, "What happens in the meantime between moving day and resurrection day?" That's exactly what we're going to look at today.

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**KEY POINTS**

**1. There Is An Entrance Into Life**

Paul describes the life that we live and the place we live it in as a tent or a house. He says in 2 Corinthians 5:1, "*For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands.*" In other words, we need to think about our bodies as the house we are currently living in. But when "moving day" comes, we will no longer be in this house. Your God-given house does have something in common with your man-made house. It was not made or built for you to live in it forever. The house is not your final home. It is not your final resting place. And that truth should be encouraging and reassuring to us as believers.

**2. There Is An Exit From Life**

Talking about making an exit from life might sound scary, but it is important to remember that you are not your house. You live in your house, but you and your house are two different things. In fact, the moment your house collapses, you are no longer in the house. You don't have to leave, because your house will collapse; your house is actually going to collapse when you leave and that leaving is called "death."

Whether you are a Christian or not, there is a time you are going to move out of this house, but as a believer, you don't immediately move into your new house. What I mean by that new house is what Paul called in verse one, "*...a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands.*"

**In The Meantime**

*From Here To Eternity | Week 2 | 2 Corinthians 5:1-8*

**NOTES**

Once you die and you move out of this house, you go to heaven, and this old house stays behind, but you don't yet move into your new house yet. That is where all of our loved ones are right now in this intermediate state, but the question is, "In the meantime, in-between time, what happens to us? Where do we go?" That leads to the third stage of this entire beautiful process.

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**3. There Is An Experience After Life**

I hate to break the news to you, but even though the Bible has a lot more to say about our entrance into life than our exit from life, it doesn't have a lot to say about our experience afterlife (before the return of Jesus and the resurrection.) There is frankly a lot we just don't know and anything we might say would be speculation.

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But let me tell you what we do know. What we do know is that we exit into an experience.

*"Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. For we live by faith, not by sight. We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord" (II Corinthians 5:6-8).*

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An absence from the body leads to a presence with the Lord. Personally, immediately, eternally we are entered into the presence of God himself. We see that over and over again in Scripture. So even though we don't have a lot of details, we can be confident that there is an experience after our life on earth ends and we are in the presence of God.

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**4. There Is An Eternity Beyond Life**

Contrary to what some people believe, we are not going to be like a ghost or an invisible spirit hovering around for all eternity. There is a resurrection yet to come when we will be in a body that will last forever, but everybody is going to be raised (both believer and unbeliever). In fact, Jesus said in John 5, "*Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done what is good will rise to live, and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned,*" (John 5:28-29).

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There is a resurrection for life eternal and a resurrection to death eternal. When you die, you will either go into the presence of God or you will go out of the presence of God. Everybody is going to spend eternity somewhere. The moment you make your exit from this life your eternity is sealed forever.

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# Touching Lives with Dr. James Merritt

## **In The Meantime**

*From Here To Eternity | Week 2 | 2 Corinthians 5:1-8*

### **QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER**

1. Before this message, what did you think happened right after you died?
2. What about today's message did you find comforting? Was there anything about today's message that felt unsettling?
3. How does the content of this message motivate you to share the gospel with nonbelievers so that they might spend eternity in heaven?

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# Touching Lives with Dr. James Merritt

## Your Day In Court

*From Here To Eternity | Week 3 | Revelation 20:11-15; Daniel 12:1-2; John 5:28-29*

### INTRODUCTION

As we continue in our series called “From Here To Eternity,” we are going to talk about the time we will all stand before God to give an account for our life. This is when we will have our day in court. As we learn about this text, keep in mind that when it comes time for you to have your day in court, make sure you know the judge. Let’s dive into Scripture and learn more about this judge and all that we are going to experience in His courtroom one day.

### KEY POINTS

#### **1. We Are Going To Encounter The Powerful Vision Of The Judge**

When we appear before the judge, will we learn that this is no ordinary judge. This judge is a king. He is the King of Kings. He is sitting on a great white throne. It is a great throne because He is the most powerful judge you will ever stand before. It is a white throne because He is the most pure judge you will ever stand before.

Who is this judge who is so perfect and so pure? It may shock you to learn it is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. The baby born in Bethlehem is now the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the universe. How do we know that? Because Jesus Himself told us, *“Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son” (John 5:22).*

#### **2. We Will Experience The Perfect Virtue Of The Judge**

When we as believers stand before God, we already know when it comes to sin, we have been found innocent, because we know the judge who is also our Savior. When a person without Jesus stands before the judge, he will be his own prosecuting attorney. He will be his own accuser. It will be his unbelief that renders the verdict guilty.

Sadly, the unbeliever will find no matter how many good things they made have done on this earth, all their goodness will mean nothing apart from a personal relationship with Jesus.

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# Touching Lives with Dr. James Merritt

## Your Day In Court

*From Here To Eternity | Week 3 | Revelation 20:11-15; Daniel 12:1-2; John 5:28-29*

### QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Do you “know the judge?”
2. How does the thought of your day in court make you feel? At peace? Anxious? Uncertain? Excited?
3. Does today’s message give you a sense of urgency to share the gospel with those who don’t yet know the judge? If so, what’s one step you can take this week to share the message of Jesus with an unbeliever in your life?

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# Touching Lives with Dr. James Merritt

## Heaven On Earth

From Here To Eternity | Week 4 | Revelation 21:1-4; Revelation 27

### INTRODUCTION

Have you ever heard somebody say something like this, “I don’t know what the future holds, but I know who holds the future.” That sounds good, but it is not completely true, because if what we read in Revelation 21 is true, we do know what the future holds. Around 95 A.D. on an island called “Patmos,” the one who holds the future revealed what the future holds. The resurrected Jesus pulls back the curtains of eternity and reveals to a disciple named John our brand new, never to be destroyed, beautiful beyond words home called “heaven.”

### KEY POINTS

#### **1. We Are Going To Live In God’s Perfect Place**

I believe the Bible is the only truly perfect book that has ever been written and if you would expect a perfect ending to a perfect book then we have it, because the first two chapters of the Bible talk about the creation of heaven and earth. Now, the last two chapters talk about the re-creation and the restoration of a new heaven and a new Earth. This is where we will spend eternity with Jesus. And I believe it will absolutely blow any idea or expectation we have about heaven out of the water.

I have been privileged to travel so many places around the world and I have seen absolutely some of the most beautiful places to be found. At times, I’ve had the thought run through my mind, “It just can’t get any more beautiful than this.” Well, I don’t know whether Jesus would use this grammar or not but if what we are reading is true, I believe Jesus would say to us, “You ain’t seen nothing yet.” We don’t know what it is like to live in an absolutely perfect place, but one day those of us who know Jesus are going to find out.

#### **2. We Are Going To Live In God’s Perfect Presence**

As beautiful as heaven is going to be, what makes this city so magnificent is not how beautiful it is or how big it is, but who lives in it, “And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “*Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God*” (Revelation 21:3).

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# Touching Lives with Dr. James Merritt

## Heaven On Earth

*From Here To Eternity | Week 4 | Revelation 21:1-4; Revelation 27*

For the first time, all of God’s people will live in God’s perfect presence. We will see Him. Our ears will hear Him and our hands can touch Him. We will never leave His presence. He will never be out of sight and never out of mind. He will literally be everyone’s next-door neighbor.

### **3. We Are Going To Live In God’s Perfect Peace**

The amazing thing about heaven is that we will live in perfect peace because there will be no sorrow in heaven. No need for doctors and dentists, because there will be no sickness or pain. No need for hospitals, hospices, or healthcare. Thomas Moore put it this way, “Earth has no sorrow that heaven cannot heal.” There will be no death in heaven. Imagine a world with no cemeteries, no gravesites, no crematoriums, no funerals, no funeral homes, no mausoleums, no gravestones.

No need for policemen or the military. You don’t have to worry about drive-by shootings, murders, robberies, terrorist attacks. No need for gun control because there will be no more death. The reason why there will be no more sorrow and no more death is because there will be no more sin. *“Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life” (Revelation 21:27).*

We will be living in a world where everybody is not just good, but everybody is perfect. It is a world where there are no arguments, no lawsuits, no confrontation, no fighting. It is a world where no one ever needs to be forgiven and no one ever needs to forgive, because there will be nothing to forgive and nothing of which to be forgiven. What an incredibly peaceful place it will be.

### **NOTES**

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# Touching Lives with Dr. James Merritt

## Heaven On Earth

*From Here To Eternity | Week 4 | Revelation 21:1-4; Revelation 27*

### QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What are you looking forward to most about heaven?
2. What do you think it will be like to have God as your next-door neighbor for all of eternity?
3. What were your thoughts and expectations of heaven before today's message? Have they changed at all?

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# Touching Lives with Dr. James Merritt

## **Don't Go There**

*From Here To Eternity | Week 5 | Matthew 5:22, 28-30*

### **INTRODUCTION**

### **NOTES**

We are talking about hell today, because we are in a series that we are calling, "From Here To Eternity." We are going through what the Word of God says about when we die, where we are after we die, and at the end of time when no one else will ever die physically. Though everybody dies, not everybody goes to spend eternity in the same place. There is a real heaven and a real hell, and we need to know what each of these final destinations entails so that we might have a sense of urgency to share the message of Jesus with those who have not secured their eternity in heaven.

### **KEY POINTS**

#### **1. The Word Of God Confirms The Reality Of Hell**

This may shock you, but the first person in the New Testament that ever talked about hell was Jesus. It may also shock you to know that Jesus talked more about hell than He did about heaven. In fact, He talked more about hell than any other subject except money and the kingdom of God. He taught more about hell than any other person in the Bible.

For every one hundred words Jesus spoke, thirteen of them dealt with the subject of hell and judgment. Of the forty parables that Jesus told, more than half of them deal with the concept of hell and the judgment of God.

Therefore, if Jesus spent this much time talking about hell and devoted this much of His teaching to it, don't you think it's something we should take seriously as well?

#### **2. The Will Of God Calls For The Necessity Of Hell**

God hates hell, and He hates the fact that people will go there. But God's love is so merciful and so real that He allows people to choose hell if that is what they want. This is a crucial point for all of us to understand. It is the will of God that we have free will – that we have the ability to choose. Hell is not going to be populated with people that God rejected; it is going to be populated with the people who rejected God.

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**Don't Go There**

*From Here To Eternity | Week 5 | Matthew 5:22, 28-30*

**3. The Work Of God Cancels The Penalty Of Hell**

This is the part of the message I get excited about because the primary message the Bible gives about hell is not negative; it is positive. God didn't even prepare hell for the human race. It was never God's desire for anyone to go to hell. Jesus said in Matthew 25:41, *"Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels'" (Matthew 25:41).*

The place called "hell" was designed for the devil and his demonic followers – not for human beings. That is why God sent Jesus to die on the cross so we would not have to go to hell. God sent Jesus to take care of our sin problem, to give us a reason to believe, and to give us a desire to want to be with God forever.

The truth of the matter is God doesn't send people to hell. He sent Jesus so we wouldn't have to go there. God doesn't want anybody to go to hell. God has given us everything from a cross, to His Word, to the life of His own Son, so that we don't have to go to hell. Because of the grace of this loving God, I can say to you when it comes to hell, "Don't go there! You don't have to."

**NOTES**

Horizontal lines for taking notes.



# Touching Lives with Dr. James Merritt

## **Don't Go There**

*From Here To Eternity | Week 5 | Matthew 5:22, 28-30*

### **QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER**

1. What were your thoughts on the amount of time that Jesus spent talking and teaching about hell?
2. If someone were to ask you, "Why does God send people to hell?" how would you respond?
3. What did you learn today (about God, about eternity, etc.) that you didn't know before?

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# Touching Lives with Dr. James Merritt

## Graduation Day

*From Here To Eternity | Week 6 | 1 Corinthians 15:35-58*

### INTRODUCTION

Whether your last graduation was from college, high school, or pre-school, there is another graduation day that awaits all of us and for some of us it will be the greatest graduation day of all. It will mean no more death, no more disease, no more sin, no more sorrow, and no more suffering. For others, it will be a day of dread and disappointment, discouragement and defeat that no mind can even conceive. I am talking about that time when we are all physically raised from the dead. Today's key text, 1 Corinthians 15, is what you could call Paul's doctoral thesis on the subject of the resurrection. Specifically, he talks about the resurrection of the Christians. So as we study this text, let's consider what the resurrection is and why it is so important.

### KEY POINTS

#### **1. Let's Consider The Possible Manifestation Of The Resurrection**

As we read the beginning of today's key passage, we think about the resurrection of the body, not the soul. Remember it is the body that dies, not the soul. Our bodies are going to die, but we are not. If you are a believer when you die, you go to be in the presence of the Lord, but if you are an unbeliever and you die you will go to live in the absence of the Lord. Either way, you will still be around.

Thinking about this, however, does raise an honest question about how can this happen. How is it possible that a body that is turned to dust be raised from the dead? The simple answer to why resurrection is possible is God. With God, all things are possible. The truth is if you have a problem with a resurrection, you really have a problem with God.

There are some people who reject the Bible because of the miracles in the Bible and they just can't believe that the Red Sea parted, or five thousand people were fed with few loaves and a few fish, or that a man walked on water. But in these instances, the real problem is not with the Bible, and it is not with miracles. The real problem is with God because if you don't have a problem with God you shouldn't have a problem with any miracle, much less a resurrection.

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**Graduation Day**

*From Here To Eternity | Week 6 | 1 Corinthians 15:35-58*

**NOTES**

**2. Let's Consider The Practical Illustration Of The Resurrection**

In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul compares a body that is buried to a seed that is planted. If you have ever planted anything, if you have ever lived on a farm, or been on a farm, you totally understand this. When you sow a seed into the earth, that seed in a sense dies – it dissolves, it disintegrates, but over a period of time, out of the death of that seed comes a plant; out comes life. The body is like a seed. Like a seed is buried, the body is buried. Like a seed comes back to life, so the body comes back to life. You realize that while you think a body is buried, in God's eyes, it is sown.

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**3. Let's Consider The Powerful Transformation Of The Resurrection**

Right now on this earth, I am living in a body that is perishable. It is just like milk left outside of a refrigerator. It is perishable. It is going to spoil and die. I'm just a dying body and a dying person preaching to a dying people. My body has a terminal disease and an expiration date called "death." And at that point, it will no longer be a dying body; it will then be a decayed body. The truth is we begin to die the moment we are born. No matter how strong, how muscular, or how fit your body may be now, it is perishable.

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But as believers, when we are resurrected, we will be raised imperishable. Our future bodies will be indestructible. There will be no birthdays in heaven. You will look as young a hundred million years from now as you will when you first got started. There will be no need for plastic surgery. You won't need to take vitamins, medicines, diet, or even have to watch what you eat. We will have undergone a powerful transformation that will never deteriorate, decay, or die for all of eternity.

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**4. Let's Consider The Positive Affirmation Of The Resurrection**

There will be two types of people that will be present when the resurrection occurs. There are going to be those who are alive and they will be raptured to Jesus, and there will be those who already died and they will be returning with Jesus. The raptured believers are going to be able to say, "Oh death where is your victory?" The returning believers will be able to say, "Oh, death where is your sting?" Because of the resurrection, we don't have to fear death and we don't have to continuously grieve over a grave. Jesus has taken the doom out of death and the gloom out of the grave. What is in the ground is not a dead body; it is a seed that has been planted that one day will be harvested in a resurrection.

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# Touching Lives with Dr. James Merritt

## Graduation Day

*From Here To Eternity | Week 6 | 1 Corinthians 15:35-58*

### QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Have your thoughts about death changed at all after listening to this message? How so?
2. What did you think about the seed analogy? What did you learn from this illustration?
3. How does it make you feel to know that you will be getting an imperishable body in heaven?

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