

# ETERNITY EXPLAINED

As Catholics, we should know and understand eternity because it can explain some of the more complex things associated with our religion, such as why God, who is supposed to love us, allow what to us are tremendous sufferings caused by pestilence, wars, starvation, and cruelty. To make sure we do understand eternity, let's look at two different ways of explaining it:

1. A Story.
2. A measurement.

## A STORY

Satan suddenly appeared in a church to a group of people kneeling in prayer to God. They were startled and looked at this apparition not knowing what it was.

Satan spoke to them, saying that as they were sincerely praying, he'd like to offer them a wonderful gift.

He said that he would ensure that they and their loved ones lived to the end of time, were never ill, had great peace and happiness in their lives, and were always the richest people on earth. However, to achieve all this, they must promise him their souls.

This sounded like a wonderful gift. Peace and happiness, living and being the wealthiest people on earth to the end of time. What more could anyone want? Some of the people thought this a great offer.

One of the group, an elderly woman, suddenly shouted, 'You must be Satan, because you're offering nothing'. Satan assured them all that he could do what he promised. The old woman told him that, unlike God, there was no mention of eternity in his promise. God had a greater promise than Satan's. It was living with God in Paradise for ALL ETERNITY for their souls if they obeyed his rules.

She then looked at Satan and asked him what would happen to them at the end of time. No doubt, it would then be pain and suffering for their souls in hell for all eternity. She told Satan to leave; he was offering nothing, especially as 'till the end of time' was nothing when compared to eternity, which was part of God's great promise.

When the rest of the group heard their elderly colleague, they realised she was right. Time until the end of time, which sounds endless, was nothing when compared to an endless eternity.

## A MEASUREMENT

When we're asked what eternity is, the reply is usually a simple phrase such as 'For all time', 'For ever more', 'It's no end' and other similar ones.

Now, let's look at a simple way of measuring it. When human beings are fit in mind and body, they could expect to live for around 100 years. If we represented this on a tape measure as being 1 mm long—about the width of a needle—it would only need a very tiny bit of tape.

If we used the same scale to measure 2000 years, around the time when Our Lord Jesus Christ was on earth, we would need to show this as being 2cm; about the width of an adult thumb. Again, only a tiny bit of tape measure is needed, but 2000 years is a long time for human beings. Then there is the lifetime of our universe. This would need an exceptionally long tape, but it would end somewhere, yet all these are nothing when compared to eternity because it would need a tape that has no end.

### OUR LIFE IN TERMS OF TIME IS NOTHING WHEN COMPARED TO ETERNITY.

This is why it is so important to realise eternity's vastness. It's why Jesus, when asked what his mission here on earth was, said in different ways "I've come to save sinners". What does it all mean?

God has promised people a place in Heaven with him for all ETERNITY for their immortal souls when they die, but only if they use their free will while alive to obey His commandments. Is this the greatest promise ever made to human beings?

To help us achieve this, God sent his Son Our Lord Jesus Christ to show us how this wonderful offer can be achieved. It's no wonder then, that the Catholic Church has the same great mission – To Save Sinners.

### NEVER TRIVIALISE ETERNITY, WHEN USED IN A RELIGIOUS CONTEXT, IT'S FAR TOO IMPORTANT.

To God, all great tragedies, which are terrible things to us humans, such as wars, plagues, and famine, must appear as nothing to Him because of how long they last when compared to the eternity in Heaven He offers for our souls after death.

The disciples and early Christians realised this and accepted painful deaths rather than deny Jesus was the Son of God. They realised that the suffering in this world, even for all their life, was nothing compared to living in Heaven for all eternity.

Jesus knew that comparing eternity in Paradise for our souls with what happens here on earth during our lifetimes wasn't worth considering. That's why all He wanted to do was save sinners, making sure their souls went to Heaven after their deaths.

He showed His disciples how this could be achieved and told them to tell all nations on earth that the only thing that matters here on earth is that people obey God's commandments, the two main ones being that they should love God and their neighbours.

He gave them special powers and abilities to carry out this work. Their successors, priests and bishops of the Catholic Church are still doing it today with some of the powers he gave, such as changing bread and wine into His body and blood for us to eat and drink and for people to know that God has forgiven a person's sins when they are absolved during the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

God exists in eternity. Do not underestimate or misunderstand its limitlessness. To God, the timescales of events throughout our history that we look at as great disasters may appear to him as nothing. When we look at eternity as the vast, endless thing it is instead of quick definitions, its importance to our understanding of God's love for us becomes clearer.

NEVER TRIVIALISE  
ETERNITY  
INTO A SIMPLE PHRASE.

Could existing in eternity be one reason Jesus said that his father does not think and act as human beings do?