



Living for Eternity

What does it mean to live for eternity? We use the phrase often, but what does it actually mean? How do we do it? Can it even be explained?

When the Israelites were delivered from 400 years of slavery in Egypt in the Exodus story, they found themselves wandering in the desert for quite some time. God was providing them with manna to eat, and eventually they grew tired of the manna and grumbled at God, and asked for meat. Picking up the story, in Numbers chapter 11, we read:

"..... the sons of Israel wept again and said, "Who will give us meat to eat? We remember the fish which we used to eat free in Egypt, the cucumbers and the melons and the leeks and the onions and the garlic, but now our appetite is gone. There is nothing at all to look at except this manna (11:4-6).....The Lord therefore said to Moses (11:16a)....., 'Consecrate yourselves for tomorrow, and you shall eat meat; for you have wept in the ears of the Lord, saying, "Oh that someone would give us meat to eat! For we were well-off in Egypt." Therefore the Lord will give you meat and you shall eat. You shall eat, not one day, nor two days, nor five days, nor ten days, nor twenty days, but a whole month, until it comes out of your nostrils and becomes loathsome to you; because you have rejected the Lord who is among you and have wept before Him, saying, "Why did we ever leave Egypt?"'" (11:18-20).....Now there went forth a wind from the Lord and it brought quail from the sea, and let them fall beside the camp, about a day's journey on this side and a day's journey on the other side, all around the camp and about two cubits deep on the surface of the ground. The people spent all day and all night and all the next day, and gathered the quail (he who gathered least gathered ten homers) and they spread them out for themselves all around the camp. While the meat was still between their teeth, before it was chewed, the anger of the Lord was kindled against the people, and the Lord struck the people with a very severe plague. So the name of that place was called Kibroth-hattaavah, because there they buried the people who had been greedy." (11:31-34)

Numbers 11:4-6, 16a, 18-20, 31-34

In the story above, the Israelites were bellyaching for meat, and did so to the point that God said He would not only give them meat, but give it to them to the point that they would be sick of it. God had a meal plan, manna, and that is what they had been eating. But it wasn't good enough, and they cried out for more, for meat.

On top of that, they actually went so far as to reminisce on the "good old days" of slavery in Egypt, when they had plenty of different things to eat. Never mind the fact that they were slaves, their baby boys were being drowned in the Nile River, etc. They actually looked back with fondness on their captivity. Dissatisfaction with present circumstances can often do that to us, causing us to forget the bad and only remember the good from our past.

But imagine for a moment, that they had realized that they were in a great story that the entire world was going to know, a story that people would read, tell, and retell for thousands of years.

Imagine that they somehow knew that an annual festival would be created to memorialize the experience they were currently going through (Passover). How would their behavior have been different if they realized that the entire world was watching them, analyzing their decisions, studying their actions? How do we act when we know someone is watching, as opposed to when we think we are alone? Do children behave the same in front of adults as they do in front of other children or when they are alone?

I once remember seeing someone I know at a checkout in a store, and she did not know I was there. Something had gone wrong and the interaction was getting ugly. My friend, who I thought was a very nice person, was treating this checkout person terribly. I could not believe the things she was saying to her and how mean she was being. If she had known I was watching, I suspect she would have behaved quite differently, but her assumed anonymity brought out the worst in her.

We sometimes see this behavior in ourselves as well. Whether we are in a checkout line, in online posts, on the phone with customer service, in traffic on the way to work.....we often behave differently when we have this sense of anonymity. But what if WE realized that we are living in a great story? What if we realized that our life was going to be known and studied by others not just for thousands of years, but forever.....for eternity? Imagine how differently we might live our lives if we could only realize this and remember it all day long every day. How would we treat others? What would our attitude be like? How would we handle difficulties? Would we be more content? Less fussy?

You might say that we are in the wilderness, you and I, and we are headed for the promised land of eternity. Are we satisfied with the manna God is giving us, or are we whining for meat? Has it even dawned on us yet that we are in a great story, or are we trapped in the moment, unable to see the big picture? Do we realize that we are in a story as great as the Exodus story, that it is being written as we live our lives, right now.

This is what it means to live for eternity. To realize we are in God's great story that He is writing today, and we are to live our lives accordingly. We are to see God's provision in our life as being part of this great story, and to accept it joyfully rather than complaining and asking for something else, or longing for things from the past when we were slaves to sin.

So what are the quails in your life? What are you always grumbling or whining about? What do you wish God would give you? What are the things you miss in 'Egypt', the things from your life when you were a slave to sin before God delivered you and you were born again? What is it that if you "just had that", you feel that your life would be better, you would be happy, you would be content. What makes your heart jump when it goes by and you say to yourself, "I wish I had that"? Is it a better job? A better marriage? A nicer house? Better children? More money? Better health? A faster car? Fame? Something else? What do you long for more than you long for God?

Whatever your answer to these questions is, that is your 'quail'. It is your 'meat' that you are bellyaching to God about. I urge you to repent now before it is too late and He fills your life with so much 'quail' that it is coming out of your nostrils, you are sick of it, and possibly you die from it. (Yikes) Open your eyes and realize you are in a great story, His great story, a great and marvelous adventure with God, and He is leading you thru the wilderness to the Promised Land of eternity. Enjoy His provision. Rejoice in the manna He gives you. See everything in your life as God providing for you while you walk from Egypt to the Promised Land. This is what it means to live for eternity. To realize this, and to live accordingly.

Lord God almighty, I come before You in Jesus name, and I ask for forgiveness for the whining and complaining I have done over the years. I ask that You would give me eyes to see and ears to hear so that I might see and realize that I am in a great story, a story that will be told for millions and millions of years in eternity. Forgive me for being discontent with Your provision in my life. Deliver me from my lust and slavery to the "meat" that I crave, (list the things you are struggling with here), and enable me to be satisfied and joyfully content with the "manna" (list the things God has given you in this area as his provision for you on this respect). Thank you so much for Your provision in my life. I now see it as an amazing part of the great story I am living with You. Bring me to the Promised Land, and give me the courage to go in when I get there. I repent today of my whining and fussing and I commit to being appreciative of Your provision in my life. In Jesus name I pray, amen.