

Wings

*"Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength;
they shall mount up with wings like eagles."
Isaiah 40:31*



January 21, 2018

Eternity in the Heart

Human beings are unique in the animal kingdom, but one particular feature puts us closer to God than anything else.

"He has put eternity in their hearts, except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end" (Eccl. 3:11).

"For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse" (Rom. 1:20).



The Hebrew word translated "eternity" in Ecclesiastes literally means "that which is hidden," particularly in respect of time. Elsewhere in the Old Testament it is used to describe the infinite, the everlasting, a long span of time, neither the beginning nor ending of which is visible to us.

Our bodies are captive to the concept of time, having very clear boundaries at conception and death. We measure our time upon this earth in days, months, and years, knowing that it won't last forever. We are transient creatures painfully aware of our limits.

However, unlike the lower animals, whose consciousness is largely focused

on the present moment, humans have the ability to think of time as a continuum that stretches far beyond what we experience in this mortal life. This awareness of the infinite, stretching behind and before us, is a gift that God has placed in our hearts. It's a unique quality that positions us to contemplate reality far outside the bounds of our brief lives.

Alexander MacLaren describes this awareness as "a repressed but immortal consciousness that [one] belongs to another order of things, which knows no vicissitude and fears no decay." It is "a spark of eternity" that has enormous implications for how we think about life.

For example, this conception of the infinite allows us to ponder the vastness of the universe. When we look up into the heavens on a clear moonless night, our minds are drawn to wonder at the seemingly endless expanse of space and time it displays. As science presses deeper into the far reaches of space, we have an understanding of the magnitude of the cosmos that the ancients could scarcely imagine. As a result, this "spark of eternity" screams even louder.

Our awareness of eternity also reinforces an instinct of personal immortality. That instinct, in turn, affects how we use the life we've been given. Even those who dismiss the idea of life after death must struggle with the bigger questions: Why am I here? What purpose does my brief passage through this life have? Or does it even *have* a purpose? These questions are hard-wired deep inside all of us, because we were created for eternity.

Finally, this eternity in the heart drives us to embrace the concept of God. It is no coincidence that virtually every branch of the human race has some kind of belief in a higher power. As Paul argues, all mankind can "clearly see" the eternal power of deity through what has been made. We have to suppress part of our humanity to deny Him.

But for all that, it remains that "no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end." Our knowledge of the past and future is shrouded in a fog we cannot penetrate. Our only recourse is to trust the revelation of the God who equipped us for Himself.

– David King



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