

Better is the End of a Thing

Selections from Ecclesiastes 7, Acts, Revelation

Fitting that it's New Year's Eve today. The last day of the year.

365 days down. 0 to go.

The world can't wait for tomorrow.

Unprecedented security at Times Square, other venues

Threat of terrorism taking away tomorrow

People want to escape the past. Start fresh.

Gym memberships will skyrocket.

Health food and fitness equipment will sell.

Churches may get another attendant or two for a little while ("start the year off right" sign)

After a few weeks, those running shoes could be up on the shelf.

Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof:

Ecclesiastes 7:8a

The beginning is NOT better than the end.

IN the world's eyes, it is. NEW IS BETTER.

- *Iphone slowdown after a year...make you buy the new one*
- *Cost of new cars "stealership" - buy a year or two older model, maybe off lease, maybe just sat on the lot - save a TON of money. Depreciation off the lot.*
- *Some supercars selling for hundreds of thousands less just a few years later*

NEW is not wrong or bad, but...

NEW is NOT ALWAYS BETTER.

It may just be different at first, but eventually, you'll see it the same.

My new TV will be my OLD TV before long

Your NEW job will be the one you want to quit in no time

Starting off school, two weeks later pining for summer

*When you're hungry, you can't wait to start eating...but isn't it better to be full than to take that first bite? **Sure, it tastes good, but you're not satisfied yet.***

The honeymoon cruise- the best part is getting the bill, ZERO dollars

The end of a meal is the worst part now eating out, you get the bill - it's where fast food has a win - you'll part with your inheritance to get that soup. Then you eat the soup and you wouldn't be willing to pay that much for it anymore

That feeling when you first hit the bed after a long, hard day - it's wonderful. But not as wonderful as the fulfillment of a full night's sleep (what was that like again?)

Even our study, it's fun to start a new section, a new chapter. But after we've finished a chapter, or a book, or a section, isn't it better? We've been edified, taught, have something to take with us, to share, God has spoken. It's better to have the word of God to remember than to be waiting in anticipation for the next one.

Sometimes we need to "repent and do the first works...return to your first love" because we kept seeking something else, something new.

When things are over. It's better. Bad or good.

Anticipation for star wars. Now that i've seen it, i definitely was more excited about it before hand than I am with how it turned out.

A million examples.

A day, a relationship, paying bills, the work week, the weekend (time to get back to work), vacation (because you've had it)

...and the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit.

Ecclesiastes 7:8b

It's interesting that this is related to patience.

Patience will get us through to the end of something.

Pride, through impatience, will have us seek a shortcut, a way out, to something new, the beginning of something (new, else)

[Rom 5:1-5 KJV] 1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: 2 By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. 3 And not only [so], but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; 4 And patience, experience; and experience, hope: 5 And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

We need experience to make it through. You might be able to download book smarts, to plug in and "know kung-fu" like Neo

Watching youtube videos on how to

But it's not until i do it, until I go through it, that i really know, that i have the **experience**

Not just simply the experience
How mall's are changing into an experience center

But experience - time under your belt

You don't get time under your belt unless you've actually done the time

Doing the time can hurt. And sometimes it hurts more when it's over than it did in the beginning
Watching The Pacific again, kids wanting to go to war, getting there, im sure having their eyes opened

[2Ti 2:3-6 NKJV] 3 You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. 4 No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of [this] life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier. 5 And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. 6 The hardworking farmer must be first to partake of the crops.

**We are in a war and we are God's foot soldiers.
 If we are not enduring. We are not gaining ground.
 There is no shortcut in war.**

Olympics, cheating, lance armstrong, doping, etc.
 Teaching mia about the fishing game

We've got to endure. If we don't, who will?

The world certainly won't endure hardship for Jesus.
Four types of soil

Sometimes we must endure to become that good soil. The rocks need to be sifted out. The weeds pulled up. The scorching sun and dry heat and cold endured to make it to the next season, ready to bear much fruit with the nutrients gained in the prior season

[Ecc 7:1-2 KJV] 1 A good name [is] better than precious ointment; and the day of death than the day of one's birth. 2 [It is] better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting: for that [is] the end of all men; and the living will lay [it] to his heart.

Did you catch that?

IT IS BETTER TO GO TO THE HOUSE OF MOURNING THAN TO GO TO THE HOUSE OF FEASTING

**Because that is the end of all men
 The living will lay it to his heart**

New things in life are never a guarantee

Stock market could crash, job may go under before your retirement, you may never be able to afford that brand new car you want...no matter how hard you try

But the end is always guaranteed

If the Lord doesn't return first, you will die. Your relationships will end at some point - til death do us part. You will become obsolete. You will not be young anymore. The money you once had will be spent or will lose its value to inflation

We try to avoid it, we try to ignore it, but it's always better to face the music.

Why though? What's it worth? What do we do?

[Psa 90:12 NKJV] 12 So teach [us] to number our days, That we may gain a heart of wisdom.

Our days are numbered

13,291 days

August 11, 1981 - December 31, 2017

Do you want to be wise with what's left? That's how we start. Realizing that there's no guarantee of how many are left and that we've spent so much already.

Kids growing

What a downer of a message!

YES! BUT THAT'S GOOD! HOPEFULLY, PRAYERFULLY WE'LL LET IT MAKE US WISE.

[Ecc 7:3-4 KJV] 3 Sorrow [is] better than laughter: for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better. 4 The heart of the wise [is] in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools [is] in the house of mirth.

I want to be the old wise man, not the old fool. I've been a fool too long already.

As believers, coming to this realization of REALITY supercharges us spiritually. It gives us motivation to get cracking.

Nothing like a deadline to speed up the process!

There's a reason they call it a deadline

Heat

Roger Van Zant: What are you doing?

Neil McCauley: What am I doing? I'm talking to an empty telephone.

Roger Van Zant: I don't understand.

Neil McCauley: 'Cause there is a dead man on the other end of this line

Our lives, our frailty, our limited time, understanding, strength, stamina should all be the alarm clock to wake us up!

What are we doing?

Why are we doing it?

Is it worth it?

If not, figure out how to stop doing it wisely

(sometimes that just means stop, drop and roll, sometimes that means give your two week notice, sometimes that means just start looking, praying, considering)

But when you realize that, and take it to the Lord, at some point it will be time to go.

You can either follow him or not. What's worth the most?

Disciples being called, left their nets and followed him

It was time to go. Their lives weren't worth it.

What's stopping you? Are you like the rich young ruler who went away said when Jesus told him to sell everything, give to the poor, then come follow him? What could really be worth more than following Jesus?

[Mat 6:24-34 NKJV] 24 "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. 25 "Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? 26 "Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? 27 "Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? 28 "So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; 29 "and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 30 "Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, [will He] not much more [clothe] you, O you of little faith? 31 "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32 "For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. 33 "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. 34 "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day [is] its own trouble.

He's got your life in his hands

He's got the whole wide world, in his hands...

Do we believe that? Not in a testing way (jump off a cliff, God'll save you...no, do not test the Lord Your God)

So not every day will be a quit your job and go on the road with Jesus day literally

today it might be quit relying on yourself. Quit turning to Oprah before the Bible, quit waking up and not doing your devotionals. But one day, if you're following him spiritually, mentally, emotionally, it will play out physically.

You begin praying for XYZ, you pray enough, one day you might just wake up and find yourself going.

It happens in the natural...talk about going on a vacation, doing something, buying something...say it enough and eventually you probably will - not always a good thing,

But spiritually, when God says it once, shouldn't that be enough?

Do we want to follow him...or not?

Do we really want to be Christians...or not?

Do we really want to be like Jesus, his followers...or not?

If the answer is yes, it should spur on our taking on the spiritual responsibility that is already ours, t

hat we may or may not already be taking responsibility for (will we remain children?

When I was a child...but when I became a man, I put away childish things)

[Act 20:28-38 NKJV] 28 "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. 29 "For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. 30 "Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. 31 "Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears. 32 "So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. 33 "I have coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. 34 "Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me. 35 "I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must

support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' " 36 And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. 37 Then they all wept freely, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him, 38 sorrowing most of all for the words which he spoke, that they would see his face no more. And they accompanied him to the ship.

- Paul's leaving was sad for him, for those who loved him
- But it gave great opportunity for the gospel to be spread
- For GOD to use him to reach people elsewhere
- And for God to use the people "left behind" to reach more people where they were

It's not up to us where God sends us. Only to obey.

Are we not soldiers? Doesn't our General have a better idea of what front lines we'd be most needed and effective on?

[1Sa 15:22-23 NKJV] 22 So Samuel said: "Has the LORD [as great] delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, [And] to heed than the fat of rams. 23 For rebellion [is as] the sin of witchcraft, And stubbornness [is as] iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He also has rejected you from [being] king."

All Saul had to do to be king was obey the Lord. God made him king and it went to his head and Saul began taking matters into his own hands, disobeying God, and what was his by God's design, was now taken away from him by his own doing.

It's much simpler to obey.

Like we've started to see with Abram

Obedience always leads to blessing.

Jesus' last words to his disciples while on Earth:

[Act 1:6-14 KJV] 6 When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? 7 And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. 8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. 9 And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. 10 And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; 11 Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye

have seen him go into heaven. 12 Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey. 13 And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James [the son] of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas [the brother] of James. 14 These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.

Times, seasons...in other words, be patient
God will come.

Don't stand around staring up - that's not being patient

That's being foolish.

Get busy about waiting for God to work. And when he does, get busy about being a part, getting involved

Don't get involved physically until you see God involved spiritually

Is he poking you? Prodding you? It's time to get involved.

Are you standing around, looking up? Wondering what he's doing? Not seeing him anymore? Get with the others and pray and wait.

He'll come. And when he does, watch out. The wind will blow. Fire will fall. People's lives will be changed...starting with yours.

The Apostle John's and Jesus' last words in the scripture:

[Rev 22:8-21 NKJV] 8 Now I, John, saw and heard these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things. 9 Then he said to me, "See [that you do] not [do that]. For I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God." 10 And he said to me, "Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand. 11 "He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still." 12 "And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward [is] with Me, to give to every one according to his work. 13 "I am the Alpha and the Omega, [the] Beginning and [the] End, the First and the Last." 14 Blessed [are] those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city. 15 But outside [are] dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie. 16 "I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star." 17 And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!"

And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely. 18 For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; 19 and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and [from] the things which are written in this book. 20 He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming quickly." Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus! 21 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ [be] with you all. Amen.

The time is at hand. God is calling you.

Your life's work. Is it just work, or is it TRUE Ministry?

Either way...it will be over one day.

Will it be full of spiritual substance? Or cluttered with the chaff of busiwork?

What do you want for your life? I know what God wants.

[Jhn 10:10 NKJV] 10 "The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have [it] more abundantly.

You don't need to wait until tomorrow. You don't need a new year's resolution.

Let this last day of the year be the last day you're living for anything but who God is and going with him wherever he's going.

Then, do it again tomorrow. And the next day. And the next.

Because better is the end of a thing, than the beginning thereof.