

MESSAGE TRANSCRIPTS

Series: Be Sure

Part 1

Tim Armstrong, Senior Pastor

Weekend 04.18-19.09

Well, good morning. Good to see you all here this morning. Before I begin, I've just got to tell you how proud I am of you. I thought last week's Easter celebration was one of the best in Crossroad's history. And I know that is Dan and Milo and Steve, Lori, all the programming team, they did a wonderful job but I tell you, I think the success was because you caught the mission and you moved it forward. You know, a few weeks ago, I encouraged you to enact the principle of "the ask" and you did it. We had over four thousand people here over that one weekend. That's great but you know what I'm really excited about is that we gave away just about seventy-seven New Believer packets and nearly a hundred people made first time commitments to Christ. That's what we should be excited about, and a lot of that came because you took it seriously that God would move through you. You brought people here and now we're involved right now in getting them connected, getting them information, moving them forward in their spiritual growth. We need to continue praying for them.

Actually, this series that we're about ready to start today is an extension from last week. The series is called, "Be Sure". And we're going to be studying one passage for about three weeks—Luke, chapter 10. I'd like you to take your Bibles and turn there with me. If you do not have a Bible, there's one in the chair back in front of you. It's found on page 869; we'll take you to Luke 10. Why this is an extension from last week is because last week we talked about the essence of salvation. Now we're going to be studying life's most important question and that is, how can I be sure? How can I be sure of my eternal destiny? That's not something you want to have a question about. That's not something you want to just kind of play maybe with. You want to know for sure. What do the scriptures say about eternity? What does scripture say about how I can know about my eternal destiny? You know, there's something innate in us—some human perception that tells us that there is more than this life; that there is something beyond this life. Why do we ask those questions? Well, one reason we ask those questions is that the writer of Ecclesiastes says it is because God has put eternity into man's heart. What does that mean? That means God has given us a natural bent, a divine implementation, an intuitiveness to ask the question, what's coming after my life? You don't have to be real bright to figure this out because all you have to do is to look through history and see how other cultures have grappled with this same question and they've put together different scenarios. Thousands of years ago, for example, the Quinn dynasty, Chinese dynasty dating 210 B.C., the emperor Quinn prepared for his life after this life in a unique way. He knew that when his life was going to end that there was going to be something next. He wasn't quite sure so he wanted to bring people along with him. He had all of his wives, all of his servants and even his pets murdered when he died so that they could join him on the journey. What a nice guy, right! But archeologists have found all kinds of things. He packed his mausoleum full of all kinds of goods and provisions, a barge full of food. He also created these terra cotta soldiers, about seven thousand of them and put them all around his gravesite as if those were needed to ward off whatever was going to occur in the next life. Just an incredible, fascinating concept!

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The Greeks were not far behind him. They would actually put a silver or gold coin in the mouth of the deceased person so that they could use that to pay the fare across the mystic river in the next life. They knew there was something after this life. We're all very familiar probably with the Pharaohs. Many of the Pharaohs were buried rather in large vessels, almost like ships that they could use to sail into the next life. You're probably all familiar with the most famous set of pyramids, the pyramids of Giza—the three pyramids. Those are actually burial chambers. Now we're not quite sure who built those. There's some speculation but we're not quite sure what Pharaoh that represents. They've done a number of digs. They found different artifacts and bodies and things like that. But just recently, really an amazing archaeological find. They've also known that there were two chambers. They were called the King's Chambers that went up into the pyramids. They've recently found two more they're calling the Queen's Chambers that go down into a subterranean type of shaft, way down below the foundation of these huge pyramids, the central pyramid. So far down that they actually had to construct and build a robot to send it down into the shaft that's going all the way to the bottom, reach the end and there's a door and the door has two brass handles on it. And now the next step is how to get past that door; they're thinking they might have the tomb of the Pharaoh that had these built. And why did he have these built? He had them built as a pathway. They have found just a number of different chambers filled with artifacts. Example: A very famous Pharaoh, King Tut, Tutankhamun and when they found his burial chambers, he was buried with four hundred and fifteen servants that were murdered when he died so that they could escort him. And then all kinds of other things, all kinds of food, all kinds of clothing, artifacts found in the burial chamber in case he needed those in the next life. Fascinating! Actually, we recently found some...what we thought were lost footage of this. You can just take a look at it; you can see it.

(Clip) (Laughter) There he is, King Tut. I know, it's a cheap joke but I couldn't resist it.

Anyways, what does all that mean? You know what it means. When you look throughout history, we discover that we're not that much different; we're wanting to know what is next, what is after this life? It's one of the central questions and then the leading question after that is, well, how can we know for sure? Over the next several weeks, we're going to be discovering that in this passage, in Luke, chapter 10, because Jesus has an incredible encounter with a man who asks the question we all want answered. It's a question that this man asks point blank. And we're going to study not only his question, but the response that Jesus gave. Let me just read the text and we'll talk about it. It begins in verse 25 of chapter 10: And behold a lawyer stood up to put to him...this is Jesus...to a test saying, "Teacher, what should I do to inherit eternal life?" There's our question, right there. He said to him...this is Jesus saying...What is written in the law? How do you read it? The lawyer answered him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all of your heart, with all of your soul, with all of your strength, with all of your mind and your neighbor as yourself." And then Jesus turned to him and said, "You have answered correctly; do this and you will live."

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Did you expect that answer? There are so many nuances in this text that it's going to take us a few weeks to fully understand it. Today, what we need to do is begin by understanding the context. Now you've heard me talk about context in the past; how important it is to understand what's going on in and around the text to fully understand it. So we need to understand the surroundings; we need to understand the environment; we need to understand the etiquette of the day before we can fully understand the answer that Jesus is leading this man to discover.

Let's begin by just thinking about the surroundings. We're really not quite sure where this event took place. We know that just a couple of chapters before, Jesus was in Capernaum. It was his home base for his ministry. It's where he would send out his disciples. He traveled there from about a day's walk away to the Mount of Transfiguration with three of his closest disciples; traveled back to it. He traveled through Samaria. There are just a number of indications that he was around this particular area. You say, what's the big deal with that, why does that matter? Because it's likely that Jesus was teaching in a synagogue. By this time, there was a large crowd of people following him including people such as the scribes, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, religious people of the day, people of the law and they were coming asking him questions and we see that in the text. It says: And the lawyer stood up and put him to a test saying...he was asking him a question. That was not rude; it was just part of the etiquette of the day in the synagogue. So you can imagine that this synagogue—a long narrow room; people flanking both sides, sitting all over the floor. Jesus was probably not standing like I am but was rather sitting. He was carrying on a dialogue with the people and a lawyer asked him a question. Now stop right there. The text makes special reference that this is a lawyer. We need to understand that. What does that mean? When we think of a lawyer, what do we think of? We think of someone who practices civil law or criminal law or something like that. That's not the sense here. This is not even someone who would have practiced Roman law. When the text talks about someone who is a lawyer, it's a specific reference to a type of person. You know when you're reading in the Bible and you run across the phrase that says something like—the Scribes and the Pharisees or the teachers of the law and the Pharisees, those scribes are lawyers. They are the people who were responsible for caring for and making sure that the people were observing the six hundred and thirteen laws of Judaism. There are laws that comprise both Old Testament Mosaic aspects as well as pharisaical traditions—traditions handed down by men. And they would always accompany a Pharisee because these scribes were seen as a type of legal counsel for the Pharisees who were the spiritual leaders of the day.

I'll put this in context. What were the Pharisees always trying to do with Jesus? They were always trying to discredit him and, how were they trying to discredit him? By finding a catch, a place where he would violate the law, either the Mosaic Law or the pharisaical law. And how would they do that? They would use these experts—these scribes, these lawyers of the law.

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And so look at verse 25 again, just the very first verse of our passage. It says: And behold a lawyer stood up to put him to the test. Now many commentators look at this and read into this and say, “Well here we go; now we see this scenario. The scribes and the Pharisees are probably there and the Pharisees are using the scribes to try to entrap Jesus.” And that’s the common concept behind most commentators. You know, as I was reading through this text and kind of push back from the text for a moment and I started thinking about this, I’m sure that’s the case. Because we don’t see anything in the scriptures here in this encounter at least that there were Pharisees in the room. Now it doesn’t mean that they weren’t there, it just means we can’t be sure that they were there. You have to take this kind of with a grain of salt, in other words, this is my interpretation of this text but I’m thinking that possibly this lawyer, this scribe, distanced himself for a period of time from his pharisaical brothers, heard that Jesus was teaching and went to find out for himself. Now maybe he was there to put him to a test, to entrap him, we don’t know. But maybe there was something else, another reason because look at the question. He says, “Teacher...” which by the way was a term of respect, he wasn’t being disrespectful... “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” He was asking this as a personal question. He wasn’t necessarily saying, in kind of an erudite way, what shall we do to inherit eternal life? I sense that there was this personal interest. What will Jesus say about this question? You need to know this was one of the most important questions of the day, just like it is today. When this lawyer would have asked that question, people would have hushed. The place would have fell silent to listen to what Jesus was about ready to say. This was one of the most popular topics for Jesus when he was teaching. If you question me on that, just read through the book of John. You can barely get through a chapter without Jesus talking about or mentioning the concept of eternal life. This was so important that when this scribe asked the question, I would imagine every person in that place was waiting to find out what Jesus would say. Now why was that the case? Well, it’s because you have to understand the context. Here is why. Everyone in that room, first of all, would have had questions about their own personal eternity but more than that, every person would have known at least three basic things taught to them from the Old Testament about eternity. This is the context.

Let me teach you those this morning. They would have known three things. This is why they were so intrigued. Number one: They would have known everyone is spiritually eternal. They would have known that from their own teachers. Remember Jesus is teaching at this point in his ministry to a predominantly Jewish culture—Jewish people. There would have been a few Gentiles mixed in with them but predominantly people who would have gone to see their Rabbi, who would have been going and practicing in the synagogue, who would have been listening to teachers and they would have learned that they were spiritually eternal. In other words, none of them would have been an annihilationist. Annihilationism is the concept that once you’ve lived your life and you’ve died, that’s it. You are just kind of returned to the dust and your back into the universe to float on and there is no more of you. You have a very specific period of time and that’s it. That’s a very secular concept that is popular today—that when we die, that’s it. That’s

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foreign to scripture; it would have been foreign to them at this particular time as well. In the Old Testament, the Rabbis would have used Psalms 133 to teach this concept as a chant, as a type of prayer to the people. It says: The Lord has commanded the blessing. What's the blessing? The text finishes: Life forever more. So they would have been well adept with the idea of eternity. Job speaks of eternity. Abraham speaks of eternity. Moses, David, Daniel, all speak of eternity. Just move with me into the Old Testament. You can leave Luke for a bit.

Come with me to the book of Psalms, Psalms, chapter 16, Psalms 16. If you're not quite sure how to get there, if you just hold your Bible and open it about into the middle, you'll probably hit the book of Psalms pretty close. Psalms, chapter 16 is a *michtam*. You say, what's that? That's a song, a Song of David. They would often sing this song. And in this, we see the theology of eternity that people would have been familiar with. David is writing in verse 8 of Psalms 16. He says: I have set the Lord always before me. Because He is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken. Therefore, my heart is glad and my whole being rejoices; my flesh also dwells secure. Why, David? For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol or let your holy one see corruption. Another way of defining that is the pit. You will not let your holy one go down to the eternal pit. You make known to me the path of life—this is the concept of eternal life. In your presence, there is fullness of joy. At your right hand are pleasures. What's it say? Forever more. This would have been engrained into them that there is an eternity waiting for them.

Now come with me over to the book of Daniel and we'll continue this. Daniel, why don't you find Daniel, we'll be there for a few moments so you'll be safe. To find Daniel, just turn south in your Bible, go through Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, you'll hit Daniel. Daniel, chapter 2; Daniel, chapter 2, Daniel is interpreting the dream for Nebuchadnezzar, an earthly king, who was very concerned about his earthly kingdom. But Daniel throws in a twist that God reveals of the future; and the Jewish people would have been hanging on this. It says in verse 44: And in the days of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms, earthly kingdoms and bring them to an end and it shall stand forever. You see, the Jewish people would have gravitated to that. Because why? Because they were waiting for this eternal kingdom. They knew they were people of the eternal kingdom. Why did they know that? Because they knew they were the promised, chosen people of God and it wasn't just about this life. It was about eternal life. Why do you think the teachings of Jesus held so much sway with the people? Because they were waiting for this eternal kingdom. And so they would have been sitting in that room waiting to hear what Jesus said because everyone there would have understood they were spiritually eternal.

The second thing they would have understood is that everyone was physically temporal and would be once—that everyone is physically temporal once. That combats the idea of reincarnationism. There is nothing in scripture that even alludes to the concept of

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reincarnation. Do you know what reincarnation is? It is if you live a life and then if you lived that life in a certain way, it determines what your next life is going to be. So if you're a rat in this life, you could come back as a literal rat in the next life or if you know, you're a saint, you know, you kind of go up the chain, however that works. Very mystical, very type of religious kind of concept, a spiritual concept that is real popular today. But there is nothing in the Bible that has to do with that. It's kind of the old joke: The lady says, well, my husband proves that resurrection is true. And they say, how's that? Because no one can get that stupid in one lifetime. Come on, the old jokes are the best jokes. Anyways, so where was I? David is saying when he says about his son who died, he says, I will go to him but he will not return to me. That's a very clear clue that when David dies, he will be like his son who dies. He will go to the grave but his son will never come back to him—will not come to him in life.

We can move that even one step further in the book of Job. You don't have to turn there; just listen to this. Job 19:26, And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God. The idea there is that there is something beyond. It's exactly what Paul says in 2 Corinthians, 5 when he says to be absent from the body is to be present with who? The Lord. Or when the psalmist says, Psalms 39:4, O Lord, make me know my end and what is the measure of my days. Let me know how fleeting I am. And that's true. We are fleeting. We live just one life. Now if there's any doubt about that, I can move you from the Old Testament into the New Testament. Let me just show this to you. Come with me to Hebrews, chapter 9. This puts the end to the discussion of reincarnation or the idea that there's something beyond a temporal life lived once. This puts the nail in that coffin. Hebrews, chapter 9, verse 27. If you don't turn there, then at least take out your program notes and look at it and read it along with me. In fact, let's read it aloud together as a congregation so we get the impact of this passage. Hebrews, chapter 9, verse 27, let's read together: An just as it is appointed for man to die once and after that comes judgment. That's right. We die once. Everyone in that room would have understood that which leads right into the third basic that we need to understand about eternity and that is everyone will face judgment.

Everyone is spiritually eternal. Everyone is physically temporal once and everyone will face judgment. Now are you back in Daniel? Look at Daniel, chapter 12. I can't help but imagine that when they were sitting there listening to Jesus that when this question was asked that immediately those Jewish men and women would have remembered their training in Daniel and they would have remembered Daniel 12. Daniel 12, too, tells us very clearly of the future. Daniel says, And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth...that's the idea of many of those who die...many of those who will sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake...this is a reference to the resurrection...some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt. Do you hear that? That's about as clear as any New Testament passage. These people understood what you and I understood that a person will go to one of two places after this life. They will either go to heaven or they'll go to hell. That's the only choice. Everyone listening to Jesus would have known that reality

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and when the lawyer asked the question, it was a question that everyone would have wanted answered themselves personally. It's as if they would have been saying, what must we do to inherit eternal life? They would have been sitting on the edges of their seats waiting to hear what Jesus says next. Why? Because it's the same question you and I ask today. It is the question we ask because we are human. It is a question that we ask because God has implanted that question in us, because we know we are spiritually eternal. We know that. We know we are physically temporal once. We know we will face judgment. Things have really not changed that much. And so when that question was asked, it hung in the air and dripped with anticipation as much then as it does now. And they would have leaned in waiting to hear what Jesus would say next just like we are. But to answer that question, you'll have to come back next week. And we'll pick up the passage now that you know the context; you're ready to hear the answer that Jesus gives this man.