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“Where was God?” is one of the most primal reactions to tragedy, because we instinctively know that God and evil don’t belong together; our minds struggle and our hearts protest, and we find ourselves without answers. Take that instinctive reaction one step further. What if all good disappeared? What if selfishness and greed and hatred proceeded full tilt? What if all we knew were people who put themselves first at all cost?

We’d be without firefighters, that’s for sure. And we’d be without a lot more good too. Consider an eternity without God and His goodness as it’s revealed in people, and that would be a close definition of hell. In contrast, heaven can be defined as living forever with God and with others who have chosen Him and chosen to live as He does.

Life on this earth *does* matter. Every moment matters. That’s why we pay so much attention to it. But every moment in an eternity-long stretch of moments bears even more careful scrutiny.

While we cannot number our years on earth, we can be assured of our place in eternity. It starts by looking at the historical person of Jesus.

When Jesus walked on earth, His lifestyle corroborated His claims. He showed a power over sickness and death that

Disbelief. Terror. Fear. Anger. Helplessness. Fear. Patriotism.

Fear. “We have nothing to fear but fear itself,” Franklin Roosevelt once declared. Oh, but not so, it seems. We have so much more to be fearful of—so much more that goes bump in the night.

True, we’ve always had our less-rational phobias, and Hollywood has capitalized on them, with flicks from *What About Bob* to *Arachnophobia*.

And which one of us hasn’t faced very real, unnerving fears that proved true: *I wonder if I’ll be laid off...What if my wife doesn’t love me anymore?...I think there’s something wrong with my baby.*

from fear to eternity

Hollywood’s horror genre has also sparked new fears about what others might do to us. But even Hollywood couldn’t have equaled the horror unfolding in waves after September 11, the mounting panic. If we hadn’t already learned it from the movies, we learned it from real life: There are evil people out there, with evil intents. Anything seems possible now. And we are afraid.

We are afraid because we have invested so much into this life, and now it’s being threatened. And it’s all we have. Life is ours. Whatever the quality of it, whatever the affluence, however we compare it with that of others, it’s ours.

But is it really all there is?

It’s not that our life on earth doesn’t matter. Every moment matters. But what if there’s a life after this life? What if death is not simply an ultimate nothingness—an end to everything we have built all our lives? What if we knew that our 45 or 25 or 85 years on earth would be eclipsed by 85 x 85 x 85 years in eternity? What perspective would we then have on our fears? Would we find hope?

If the Bible is true, then there are two types of eternity: Forever *with* God. Forever *without* God. What might they look like?

could only come from someone for whom sickness and death are powerless. From the Creator of life.

Jesus’ ultimate show of power over death took place at the cross, because after He died, He came back to life. In doing so, He promised to all who follow Him that they, too, would face a life eternal after the grave.

To paraphrase what Jesus Himself said while on earth: *Don’t be afraid of those who can only take your physical life. There is one with much more power, one who controls life eternal. He is the one you should reverence. Yes, pay attention to Him* (Luke 12:4,5).

Even those who follow God aren’t promised a reprieve from all that evil people might do, yet they are promised hope for their future and God’s presence for their present. The Bible says, “*Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go*” (Joshua 1:9).

Just as Hollywood could not have prepared us for the reality that terrified us on September 11, nor the creeping fears since then, so also the big screen cannot capture the hope of eternity that can settle in our hearts with a peace we never imagined possible. 🔥