



## Time

Genesis 1:5 NIV

**God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." And there was evening, and there was morning — the first day.**

What Time Is It?

Time changes everything...or should it better be said, over the course of time, everything changes. Thomas J. Watson, the Chairman of IBM in 1943 said, "I think there is a world market for about five computers." Ken Olson, the President of Digital Equipment Corporation noted in 1977, "There is no reason for any individual to have a computer in their home." The President of Lewyt Vacuum Cleaner Company predicted in 1955 that in ten years nuclear powered vacuum cleaners would be a reality. Charlie Chaplin was not exactly prescient in 1914 when he commented, "The cinema is little more than a fad. It's canned drama. I'm going to get out of this business. It's too much for me. It'll never catch on." Garry Cooper in 1938 laughed off the possibility of the movie *Gone With the Wind* ever making it. "*Gone With the Wind* is going to be the biggest flop in the history of Hollywood. I'm just glad it'll be Clark Gable who's falling flat on his face and not Gary Cooper." The potential benefit of having railroads was scorned by Dr. Dionysus Lardener in 1845. "Rail travel at high speed is not possible, because passengers, unable to breathe, would die of asphyxiation." The former governor of the state of Washington in 1977, Dixie Lee Ray stated, "A nuclear power plant is infinitely safer than eating, because 300 people choke to death on food every day." Napoleon Bonaparte, on the edge of his great defeat at Waterloo commented in 1815, "I tell you Wellington is a bad general, the English are bad soldiers; we will settle the matter by lunch time." General George Custer at Little Big Horn in 1876 blustered, "I guess we'll get through with them in a day." He was right. (Fourth Bathroom Reader, c. 1991, pp. 150-151.)

We of course must be careful what we decide about things and sometimes, perhaps many times, time will prove us wrong. Time is often seen as a cruel tyrant; many have cursed the passage of time and some feel it is a great enemy. We forget of course that time was created in the beginning when the universe was perfect and free of all troubles and hardship. Time, as far as we can tell, started with a day, the day of the first round of creation when the Lord **God created the heavens and the earth.** (Genesis 1:1 NIV) Within those moments, instantly there formed the timeline of past, present and future. The created order operated within those parameters. A timeline established in the universe marked the way everything functioned. All of the universe move along in an orderly fashion, never going back, always forward. Time became wrought in everything we touch, see, smell, hear and taste.  $E=mc^2$  was now the formula of the physical realm and time is a part of it, etched in the speed of light.

We speak of God being beyond time in the sense C.S. Lewis philosophically sketched it. Time operating within a one dimensional line and all of creation within it. God, however, is beyond the line in a two or three or more dimensional sense. He is the beginning and the end all at once whereas we are somewhere in between moving along over time. Living within the line of time, we are unable to grasp time as a two dimensional element, we can't live within either the past or the future as we all know. We have memories of

the past and can think about the future, but we are always moving along at a present spot, never behind or in front. Yet, as Solomon so eloquently put it, **He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end.** (Ecclesiastes 3:11 NIV) We do however have eternity in us, a part of our DNA so to speak. It is nearly impossible for us to root out our sense that time does not end for us, that it has no stopping point and that God is at the foundation of it. Solomon though also spoke of the brokenness of time within a sin-wrecked universe in his famous teaching in Ecclesiastes 3, "a time to live and a time to die". Before however Adam and Eve ruined life and energy and matter, we had only an ongoing rhythm of good, never stopping but, always going onward.

The circadian rhythm we see in our cells and revealed magnificently within our nervous system was established by God when He set up the twenty-four hour day. There is within each of us a biological clock operating at the cellular level that adapts our body's functioning to the time of day. It functions on a 24 hour basis, resetting each day just as the Lord's six days of creation. God's pattern of life worked in us as He put our universe together was a cycle of morning to evening creating and evening to morning stopping from it until the next day. It is quite marvelous how each day of creation followed the same pattern we all experience. **And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." And there was evening, and there was morning — the first day.** (Genesis 1:3-5 NIV) First, there was the barach of Creation, "barach" being the Hebrew word for the work of making something out of nothing which in the Hebrew Bible, only the LORD is capable of doing. In this case it was the barach of light and the separating of it from the darkness which resulted in day and night. Immediately following, there is evening and then morning, a period on the timeline when there is no mention of anything else being created, a sort of rhythm of work and no work in a sense.

This happened six times, the cycle of morning to evening and then evening to morning; each wave with something new coming to pass in the morning to evening period. What was happening within God and spilling into creation during the second phase of the day, evening to morning, we cannot say but, it became the metaphor for our own cycles of work and rest, work and rest. As God worked His way through the remaining parts of creation, he came to a stopping point as such. Translations that render what happened on the seventh day as rest leave a mistaken impression that the LORD had to take a break on the seventh day, that creation wearied Him in some way. The Hebrew word "Sabbath" means primarily to cease, to end something. When the manna in Joshua 5: 12 stopped, the Hebrew verb used for it ending was sabbath. **The manna stopped the day after they ate this food from the land; there was no longer any manna for the Israelites, but that year they ate of the produce of Canaan.** (Joshua 5:12 NIV) In Genesis 8: 22 sabbath is used to insist that as long as the earth continues, seasons will never "sabbath" or cease. **"As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease."**

Time is a cycle of progression when in Christ, a movement of repetition that is never the same but, continually similar. In the perfection of a sinless world, all of God's creatures were made in this image of starting and stopping, of doing and becoming still. Worship is a circadian rhythm; a movement forward that starts and stops and looks like what it has been before but isn't. You read your Bible, you don't. You pray, you don't. You sing and praise the Lord of your salvation and you don't. The repetition is never a copy, it is always moving forward into something new. Yes, we read the Bible and it may seem like the same old stuff. We pray and it feels like it did yesterday and the day before. We sing our songs of praise and they are the ones from last week or last month. However, they are never the same. New life flows through them. New communion occurs. New koinonia with God takes place. It is never the same because our life with God is on a timeline of progression, of changing, of moving ahead. And don't be non-plussed by the idea that there is an ebb and flow even in our life with Christ; a stopping and starting that has a herky-jerky feel to it rather than a steady smoothness. We are made this way to work and rest, stop and go, even in our life with God.