



Time and Jesus

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?

One of my favorite places to go when I just need to clear my head and settle down emotionally is the beach. I don't even need it sunny and clear to enjoy it. The water can be cold and painful to enter, and I will soak in the joy of it there. Something about the crash of the waves and their perpetual drift in and out against the shore mesmerizes me, comforts me, draws out of me the tension and stress. What would be the effect though if one wave brought to shore a dead body, the next just hit and crashed, two waves later came a great oil slick, three waves and along arrived a pile of trash. The fourth wave carries in a live torpedo and five waves later a tank comes with its turret turning and the cannon firing along the shore. Those other waves though would be relaxing, peaceful. For a few minutes I could rest and recharge, only to find a new disaster washing up on shore. The Bible makes it clear that such is this life, each hour is a mish mash of good and bad, peace and unrest at any given moment in the day.

Solomon spoke of how the ebb and flow of creation looks when it is broken. Life and death. Making and destroying. Hurting and healing. **...a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot, a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build, a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance, a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them, a time to embrace and a time to refrain, a time to search and a time to give up, a time to keep and a time to throw away, a time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak, a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace.** (Ecclesiastes 3:2-8 NIV) In the perfect Garden before sin, these patterns of building and destroying were not there. The rise and fall of civilization, the success and failure of work was non-existent. There was only life and then life again, and life once more. This is all we have ever known; the coming and going of what we love and hold dear, but that is not the way it was intended, not how it will always be. One day it will be restored, the life to life, embracing and embracing again, loving and having more love, searching and finding. Until that time though, the cycle will include death and loss and brokenness as well as life and gaining and wholeness. We face courageously what sin has delivered and yet with an eye to the future, we look forward to what a new creation holds. The timeline moves forward and so do we.

One more point about time as we see it in the early days of creation. There was no Groundhog Day to it, no reset button that brought it back to where it was. In a perfect world, you could not redo. It was there and you moved forward. What you did remained on the timeline as you went ahead. The animals were named by Adam and that was that. Eve was plucked out of Adam and so she stayed. We may not give enough thought to this progressive quality of time because we live with it every day and pay little attention to it but there is a crucial point that must be made. If there was a reset to time; a going back and doing it over, then there would be an end to personal freedom. What you had done could be redone by someone else, it could

be taken out of reality and made nonexistent. With time as it is, what we do stands. It has its effect; it changes the world about us, and it is really done. Day follows day and the previous day is not swallowed up by the coming day. Whatever happened in it remains. It can't be eliminated from time by an arbiter. What you do is done and done by you. In God's image, you act within time and you leave an impact upon it. We don't just live and then disappear from time. We are in it and we remain in it.

We may think that it would be a great thing if the sin of Adam could simply be erased and a new reality put in place. No, it wouldn't. We would be shadows of reality and not the substance of it if such were able to be done. What we are and how we have lived could by whim be eliminated and there is no free will in that. Without behavior and actions that stand, nothing stands. Everything you do continues in time, whether for good or for evil. Adam and Eve each made choices and in the end they were marked by them. The same is true for you today. You are free to do as you will, but the decision you make has consequences in time. It does not disappear in a puff of smoke. It stays within the universe God has created. You are free to do as you choose. In time, you will know what to make of it.

Many wonder why God doesn't just wave off our sins; make it so they don't exist. If that were to be the way of it, behavior would not really exist, it all would be determined outside of reality, in a mind or if you prefer, a computer. Sins really do happen just like all the good deeds that have ever taken place and the only possibility for taking on the corruption and destruction of sin is to do what Jesus did. He absorbed them, received them. This is terribly difficult to grasp; and comprehension is almost impossible. Consider this moment in history. On April 10, 1865, when it was learned that General Robert E. Lee had surrendered, a great crowd of delirious with joy Washingtonians surged to the White House to celebrate with the President, crying out to him to make a speech. Lincoln came out and quieted the throng by promising to say a few words. First though, he looked over a band that was there and called for them to play "Dixie". "What? 'Dixie', the Confederate song? Why that? Was Lincoln making some sort of joke? "Dixie", he said, "is one of the best tunes I have ever heard, and now we have captured it." The crowd roared and cheered, and the band played 'Dixie'.

The only way for our sins to be "fixed" as such is for God to appropriate them, for them to be surrendered to Him, to then take them to Himself and suffer the consequences of them. They have to exist, not just get wished away by some cosmic wizard, or nothing can be certain of being real, not actually real...even the good. So, Christ took them from us when He died on the Cross, when we willingly give them to Him, they became His to endure, His to suffer the consequences. How can this be as they happened mostly in times after He died. Remember though, it was not Jesus the man who took our sins, the man who was living within time, but, God, who is beyond time who received our sins. For God, every spot on the timeline is in the present. There is no place on it where He is not living present tense. So, where it becomes exquisitely lovely to consider is that just as man, Jesus could not have taken our sins of the future, but as God too, He can receive them in the present time of the cross and as man let them be buried in Christ the man in a specific time. Why did Immanuel come to us? Many think it was so that God could descend into our world and make Himself relatable, knowable. That of course is a cute little concept; that God had to become a caterpillar to build friendships with caterpillars, but it falls far short of what God's most important task was as Immanuel. He came to die for our sins and as only Man, He could not have done so. But, as God also, He could both take them in our time and die for them at the Cross time.

Let us consider now the wages of sin, death. If sin's only effect was to make us die physically, then all God would have to do is raise us from the dead and that would be it. Death from sin is much worse than that. Death in sin becomes our personality, all of who we are. Corrupted through and through, we are dead at every level of us. Our sin had to be taken from us in the Cross so that sin death would not stay with us, be within us even after resurrection. The corruption of it, the wickedness of it, the deviancy of it, has to go or else what good is heaven, what good is the resurrection? It all is nothing more than the relocation of your dead soul from one place to another. When Christ took your sin from you in time, He makes you

emancipated from sin, all of it so that you enter the resurrection sin free, death free, corruption free, deviancy free. Take the full breadth of Jesus' words to us seriously. **So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.** (John 8:36 NIV) For Him though to bear your sin in time, it had to be given to Him beyond time or else it would be missed because Christ died too soon for you. Only God in Christ could do that.

Our life in Christ is much more than a chance at having God save us. It is God all through us, permeating every part of us, uniting Himself with us, us becoming, in due time, perfect in every way. It is crazy to not embrace this new life we have in Him. Each part of discipleship is taking in that new life and making it our home. Whether it be Bible reading, prayer, Christian study, or just doing what Jesus has said to do, it all is settling into what we are becoming; perfect and full of God. Consider what an odd one you would be to have a mansion prepared to have as home and settling to live in a municipal dump, drinking water from a cesspool. Our life in Christ is the greatest gift we could ever receive and only the craziest of fools would make little of the opportunities they have to live every minute with Christ as Lord of what they do.