

TIME AND ETERNITY

The wise man Solomon wrote this: "I have seen the business that God has given to the children of man to be busy with. (11) [God] has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into man's heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end." (Ecclesiastes 3:10-11 ESV) In this passage Solomon speaks of Time and Eternity.

Hello I'm Larry Murdock. I preach for the Gandy church of Christ.

Solomon says that **Eternity** is in the human heart; how often do we think that eternity is "out there" some place? Solomon describes **Time** as being "the beginning to the end." According to the Bible, earth's "history" is a straight line from "the beginning to the end." The word "history" in practical terms simply means "Time." In fact, history's chief characteristic is "Time", chronological Time. The globe, the earth, spins a cycle in roughly 24 hours. God called that a "day." But while the earth is spinning it is also circling the sun. God called a complete circle one "year." So, as the earth spins and at the same time circles the sun, both God and humans **count** "time."

As humans live out "time" we play, we love, we work, we grow old, but Jesus warned us to "Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a [person's] life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesses." (Luke 12:15 KJV) Notice that Jesus called a lifetime, "a man's life", and of course the word "man" is generic for a human being. Therefore a human being's Time in this world is called "life."

On another day Jesus called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said to them, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? For what can a man give in return for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." (Mark 8:34-38 ESV) Did you notice in that reading that Jesus was talking about two periods of Time.

The first period of Time is the lifetime of a person. During the lifetime of a human being a person can so live as to "forfeit" his soul! However, if he or she

chooses to follow Jesus then that person can "save" his life. Notice that a person decides to boldly follow Jesus by following Jesus' words or he chooses to be ashamed of Jesus and his words. The decision is made more difficult because a person must make his choice while living in an "adulterous and sinful generation." In other words, we will not get much help to follow Jesus from those around us in our generation. Jesus' generation was and our generation is an adulterous and sinful one! A generation is a lifetime. Therefore, in your lifetime you get to choose what and who you will believe and follow.

The second period of Time that Jesus mentions here is the time when the Son of Man "comes in the glory of his Father" and "with the holy angels." That historical event is also described in one of Jesus' parables as "the end of the world". (Matthew 13:39.) Therefore, between the "beginning of life on this planet and the end of life on this planet" **"Time"** spins and circles the sun; history is left in its wake.

History records **Time** in past tense. However, even if **Time** is **not** recorded or written down, history still resides in the memories of those who lived it. And in the memory of Christ your obedience in your lifetime or your disobedience in your lifetime will not be forgotten.

Some of the world's religions teach that "Time" is a series of circles, never coming to a stop. That is, they say that Time itself is eternal! These religions teach that human life is no different than animal life, and that everything is recycled. According to this teaching, a human "life" is of the same weight and value as an animal's "life." And as a person dies to one existence the soul migrates to another Time and perhaps to another dimension in which it is "clothed" differently from the past experience. So, in the next cycle the animal might become a person, or a person might reincarnate as an animal. In those religious systems the "works" of a soul in Time determines the destination of the next migration. It is unclear as to who makes the judgment call.

However, to the contrary, the Bible views "Time" as a straight line that has a beginning and ending. Time began and then continued when the heavenly objects were created by which Time is still measured (Genesis 1:14-19). Not only did Time have a beginning but animal life and human life also had a beginning. However, the first humans were made differently from the animals. The humans were given an animating spirit made in the image of God. God is an eternal "spirit" (Genesis 1:26-30; cf. Numbers 27:16; John 4:24; and Hebrews 12:9). The

human "spirit" was made in the image of God's spirit. That is, the human spirit also has the characteristic of "eternity." Once conceived the human spirit, being in God's image, will last eternally.

It is amazing to me that God entrusted to humans the creation of human souls through human propagation (Genesis 1:28). God placed seed within the man and seed within the woman so that the combination produces God's grandchildren. God told the first couple, "Be fruitful and multiply."

The result of this charge from God is that Timeless "spirits" reside in a physical "fleshly" universe fashioned for temporal **Time**. Solomon was right on point when he wrote that God "has made everything beautiful in its Time" and that God "has put eternity into man's heart".

The Bible teaches that from a human standpoint "Time" is positioned between the "Beginning and the End." It is interesting that Jesus called Himself "the beginning and the end", the "Alpha and Omega." (Revelation 1:8, 11; 21:6; 22:13)

Again, from a human standpoint, consider this: before the **Beginning** of Time with the creation of its measuring devices (the sun and moon) there was Eternity Past. After the **End of Time** there will be Future Eternity. Or, to say it differently, Time is positioned in the midst of Eternity.

Human **flesh** is made from human seed in Time and for Time; on the other hand, the human **spirit** is created from the same seed that has the God-given, God-like characteristic of Eternity. The human experience called **life** begins in Time, but the human experience of life will continue when Time is no more. The eternal human spirit is created in Time but will span both Time and future Eternity.

Moses was the man to whom God revealed the creation of Time. Moses wrote about the Beginning when God created the heavens and the earth with its Time-oriented characteristics. He also wrote of the creation of mankind and animal-kind. Moses' revelation is recorded in the first book of the Bible called Genesis. Moses' book of Genesis also shows that God's offspring did not continue faithful to the Creator. After Moses wrote down his revelations it was revealed to other prophets that this Time-oriented universe would be destroyed. For instance Jesus' apostle Peter describes its destruction this way, "The day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. Since all these things are thus to be dissolved,

what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells." (2 Peter 3:10-13 ESV)

Although destruction is ahead, something will survive the destruction of the earth! That which God created in His own Eternal image will survive the destruction of **Time**. At the end of the world, future **Eternity** will begin. However, the fleshly body that was born and that lives in **Time** must be changed in preparation for Eternity. Jesus' apostle Paul gives the reason, he wrote, "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." (1 Corinthians 15:50) Therefore the flesh and blood body must be changed into an Eternal body. Even the earthly decayed human body will be raised from the dust as a spiritual body, having been reunited with its departed spirit. Paul says that change of bodies will happen in the "twinkling of an eye" (1 Corinthians 15:52).

Jesus revealed that the obedient human being who keeps His sayings will "never see death." (John 8:51) Was Jesus saying that the obedient person's flesh and blood body would NOT experience death? No. But when that obedient person's physical body dies his or her spirit will continue to "see" life until that person is reunited with a resurrected body made for eternity.

On the other hand, the person who does not keep Jesus' sayings can expect to "see" (or experience) their death. The disobedient person will "see," that is experience, the "separation" which is called the "second death." (Revelation 2:11; 20:6, 14; 21:8) Jesus described this death when telling the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus recorded in Luke 16:20-25. Jesus said that the rich man died and was buried and "being in torment he lifted up his eyes...." (Luke 16:23) That man was "seeing" or experiencing his separation from God, the "second death".

The Holy Spirit said through the writer of the book of Hebrews that earthly Christians, still in the flesh, live in the same kingdom as the "spirits of just men made perfect" (Hebrews 12:22-24). Those "just men" are now deceased physically, but still alive in the spirit! Friends, the human spirit is eternal.

The Sadducees of Jesus' day did not believe in Eternity. They did not believe that physical bodies could be raised from the tombs and transformed into eternal bodies. So Jesus pointed out an old testament passage. Jesus asked, "Have you

not read what was said to you by God: 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? [Jesus concluded] He is not God of the dead, but of the living." (Matthew 22:31-32 ESV) In other words, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were still alive somewhere! They had left the halls of **Time**; their bodies were now dust; but they were still alive in the halls of **Eternity**.

Do you believe in Eternity? Do you see that Jesus wants you to live for Him in your lifetime? He wants you to deny yourself and pick up your cross and follow Him. Jesus wants you to live a moral lifetime. Jesus said, "He that keeps my sayings shall never see death." (John 8:51) Do you believe Jesus?

Find and Visit a church of Christ near you; they can help you follow Jesus Christ.