

STRAIGHTWAY

**"AND STRAIGHTWAY THEY FORSOOK THEIR NETS, AND FOLLOWED HIM" (MARK 1:18).
CHRISTIAN PURITIES FELLOWSHIP**

The Importance of Time in Scripture

Dr. H. T. Spence

The last *Straightway* issue addressed the burden of Psalm 119:126, "It is time for thee, LORD, to work: for they have made void thy law." In this issue we must consider what concept of *time* prompted the Psalmist to declare such an urgency before God. How are we to view *time* in the light of God's Word, the Bible?

God Is Eternal, Yet He Made Time

The Christian must first understand that God is eternal and dwells in the dimension of eternity. He has no beginning; He has no end. There is no past or future with God. He dwells in the infinite present tense of His continual existence.

In the light of this truth concerning God, all His purposes and plans are found in eternity. God created the universe, including the angels, in dateless time (Gen. 1:1). Our concept of time did not come into existence until Genesis 1:3. When God created the dimension of time, He automati-

cally declared the concept of beginnings—establishing a past, a present, and a future.

But in declaring this truth, it must be seen that the concept of both universe and angelic time are different from our time. Interestingly, evolutionists declare millions and billions of years to account for the existence of stars and the universe. They do not understand that they are measuring the celestial existence of Gen 1:1 from earth's perspective of time established in Gen. 1:3. Human time perspective is very limited and very different from other time dimensions of the universe. Our time is based on our solar system, which is very infinitesimal compared with other heavenly systems. Earth time to us (both circular and linear) is based on the rotation of our planet and its revolution around the sun. Therefore, our time concept is limited to our immediate surrounding existence.

When considering angelic time, we must be clear that it is not based on

our solar system. Although God inhabits eternity, He works in time and through time. The universe was created by God prior to this physical earth, and we do not know what concept of time God worked through to create the universe. Nevertheless, we are clearly told in Scripture that God worked in the time dimension of six days to bring about the creation of this earth, rather than choosing to make the earth in a moment of time.

Genesis 1:14 states, "And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years." It is declared from this verse that God used these firmament lights for earth's concept of time. Time commenced with both linear (history and chronol-

ogy) and circular (seconds, minutes, hours) concepts of time. Yet, as to the planet Earth and mankind, the importance of time in God's thinking is found in the fact that He dedicated a full chapter to this truth in Ecclesiastes 3.

As the Book of Ecclesiastes carefully deals with the natural man under the sun, we are told that all the timings under the sun are in the hands of God. Twenty-eight times the word *time* is used in Ecclesiastes 3; fourteen pairs of opposites are employed in an effort to cover the widest possible range, and thus every aspect of human life. Life in its beginning and its end is first mentioned, and then everything in-between. These time seasons are mentioned to clearly reveal to us that the time for all things has been determined by God; everything rests on God's will and good pleasure. This includes the time when such a work is to be carried through as well as the process of the carrying through of the matter. Truly, God has His times and His seasons.

The Importance of Time in God's Thinking

Just how important is time in God's thoughts concerning this planet and humanity? Leviticus 23 reveals that God was careful in appointing that His feasts be held on selective days of the year: April 14th (Passover), 15th (Unleavened Bread), and 16th (First

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Fruits); June (Pentecost); and October 1st (Trumpets), 10th (Atonement), and 15th (Tabernacles).

God was also careful to record the various stages of a man's life as exemplified in the life of Abraham. Scripture reveals his being 75 years old when he entered the land of Canaan; he was 86 when Ishmael was born and 100 when Isaac was born. We also read of Joseph being 17 years old when he was sold by his brothers to the Midianites going down into Egypt; he was 30 years old when he was taken from prison and made prime minister of Egypt. The story unfolds with 7 years of plenty and 7 years of famine. Then Jacob sends his sons down into Egypt 2 years into the famine. All these time details are rendered in the sacred history of these men.

We read in Exodus 12 of the Exodus taking place 430 years to the day from the time that Jacob went down into Egypt (Exod. 12:41). Centuries later, Jeremiah 29 declares that the captivity of Judah is to last 70 years. Within the Book of Daniel, we read that at the end of the 70 years, another 70 "weeks" of years with a total of 490 years are appointed against the Jews and Jerusalem. Then those weeks of years are broken down to 7 weeks of years (49 years), 62 weeks of years (434 years), and one remaining week (7 years).

God Speaks of Appointed Times

Hebrews 1:2 reveals that God has al-

ready created the "worlds" or the "ages" (segments of time) for the history of the world. God has appointed the end of time (Dan. 8:19). Paul on Mars Hill speaks of the times appointed and a certain day of judgment of mankind (Acts 17:26, 31). We read in Luke 21:24, "until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled"; this time began with Nebuchadnezzar and will continue through the coming Antichrist.

God's Word reveals His involvement in an individual's life, as recorded in Ecclesiastes 3, where we are told there is "a time to be born, and a time to die." Job 14:14 speaks of "all the days of my appointed time will I wait." Hebrews 9:27 discloses, "It is appointed unto man once to die," declaring that an appointed day is laid up for each man's death. We read of this in Genesis 47:29, when the "time drew nigh that Israel must die."

Four Reasons for Time

Why is time so important? The Bible reveals at least four reasons for the appointment of time.

The first reason is time allows God to work in and through His creation. These workings are His carefully woven providences.

The second reason is time provides a probation for an individual, a church, a community, a nation, or the world. As we read in Genesis 6:3, "My spirit shall not always strive with man, . . .

yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years." God truly deals with us in seasons, calling us to get right with Him or to enter deeper realms of spiritual living with Him. To the Christian He declares, "To day if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your heart" (Heb. 3:7, 8). Mercy is not the doing away of judgment; mercy is the postponement or delay of judgment. It is often in that merciful delay a soul gets right with God!

The third reason is time is needed for the building of character, for entering the deeper things of God, and for the perfecting of the Christian life. How much time is needed or how much time will be taken is dictated by the heart of an individual, or even of a local church.

And a final reason is time reveals what is in a person, a church, a school, or a nation. God gave Cain opportunity to change his way: "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him" (Gen. 4:7). But we then read that Cain killed Abel. He passed up the day of opportunity. Likewise, in the days of Noah, God gave the people of the earth 120 years to repent, yet He eventually had to send the Flood as judgment. Even in the New Testament Christ cried over Jerusalem declaring, "O Jerusalem, . . . how often would I have gathered

thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not. Behold, your house is left unto you desolate" (Matt. 23:37, 38).

Seasons of God's Dealings

Oh, the seasons of life! Each is a part of the times appointed for us. There is the season of childhood that is to prepare for adulthood. Will the child respond to God and His Word during this early season? How will the growing child respond and live in the season of the teenage years, and then the season of becoming a young adult? As the seasons change, how will he or she respond during the prime of the life, and then in the autumn season of the latter years? Even when individuals come to God for salvation, they must come in God's season for that soul. They cannot enter the Kingdom anytime they want; God's dealings in godly sorrow to work repentance unto salvation must come within the appointed season. This is also true for a local congregation. When God is dealing with it, the people must respond in God's appointed day of grace, or such a ministry could pass up that day of grace.

History has already been planned out by God; therefore, it is to unfold according to His appointment. The thousands of prophecies given in Scripture not only prove that God knows the future but also that He is

the controlling factor of history. Note Daniel 2:21:

And he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding. He revealeth the deep and secret things: he knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him.

Times in this passage of Daniel becomes the broader term for the years, and *seasons* becomes the suitable time to do a thing.

The Scriptures reveal that God also has appointed a time in history known as the “Last Days.” The Bible clearly reveals that this period of time began with the coming of God’s Son. The Last Days were appointed for the church, the church mainly of the Gentile world. The last two thousand years have been the last days of the church ages, for as Paul designated in Romans 11:25, “Blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.” This fullness of the Gentiles will come to an end at the rapture, when the church concept will cease. Another time of God’s dispensational economy will then begin what is called the Great Tribulation.

Yes, God has appointed the ages. And though man’s world system seems to presently control and dominate the concept of time, God is working through it all in accordance to His

times and seasons and His plan for history.

Though we find ourselves in the Last Days, a concluding time of these Last days is prophesied about. Daniel speaks of the End Time (Dan. 8:17b, 19b). Jesus Himself gave us greater details in the two segments of the End Time and the end of the age. There is the beginning of the End Time (Matt. 24:4–8) and then the end of the End Time (24:9–14). We truly believe we are in this second segment.

The Church on earth went through many apostasies in the first fourteen centuries, but then the providence of God brought the Reformation, which profoundly affected the age time for Christianity. Nearly two hundred years later, God sovereignly appointed the Evangelical Revival that brought the church into its deepest insights of redemption, drawing the heart more to the inward workings of grace. This revival became a movement in time to prepare the true church for the second coming of Christ. If the rapture had taken place during this season, no doubt there would have been many more individuals ready for such a glorious catching away.

But how sad, after the greatest spiritual move of God within the church on earth, the present season of the Laodicean church age came. This season has brought the institutional church into its final plunge of global apostasy

and has established a prelude season to the coming of Antichrist. This is the worst, most deceptive falling-away of the church in all its history. It is not so much the apostasy of Roman Catholicism (the oldest Christian apostasy); it is the apostasy of the great move of God in the Reformation and the Evangelical, Revivalist movement.

Our present season of history has catapulted the institutional church well into a public, universal falling-away, which continues to declare the terms *Gospel*, *Jesus Christ*, and *Christianity*. But they speak of another Gospel, another Jesus, and another Christianity, for the institutional church has denounced the literality of the Bible and the historical Jesus. Christianity is the only religion that has publicly renounced the historicity of its sacred writing the Bible, and of its true Christ; it has created a modern Jesus and a modern concept of being a "Christian."

Yes, we have witnessed the *public* death of Christianity. We have come to the end of the church as a witness on earth, for it has become the voice of apostasy rather than "the pillar and ground of truth."

Conclusion

God has appointed the ages. And though man's world system seems to control and dominate the time, God is working through this present history in accordance to His times and

seasons. Just before the Great Tribulation, there will be tribulations, troubles unlike any time in history. The reason for these troubles is not only to set the stage in God's providence for the coming of Antichrist but also for the final preparation of a people to end the church age. Only a remnant will be watching and waiting for His imminent return. That remnant becomes the precious fruit at the end of the church. Only troubles can bring this about. These troubles will have to be hard and difficult; they will have to be wars and rumors of wars. It has taken a reckless, anti-American such as Obama to initiate the chaos in our country and the world; and it is taking someone like Donald Trump to bring about the final reactive chaos from the liberals to aggravate the evil in America, and ultimately all Western civilization and the world. There are many forerunners of Antichrist and many forerunners of the False Prophet to place the world in the posture of the finality of the "Day of Man."

The Bible's miraculous content gives the entirety of history. But God has placed enough mysteries in the prophecies that only He knows the intricacies and details of time and history. And this is true of our lives. Every stage of life and the seeking of God for that life are timed out by God.

Psalms 32:6 reveals, "For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found."

The Psalmist also declared in Psalm 37:18, 19, "The LORD knoweth the days of the upright: and their inheritance shall be forever. They shall not be ashamed in the evil time: and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied." Psalm 89:46, 47 brings the cry, "How long, LORD? wilt thou hide thyself for ever? shall thy wrath burn like fire? Remember how short my time is."

Hosea 10:12 exhorts us, "Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the LORD, till he come and rain righteousness upon you." Christ cried unto the city of Jerusalem in Luke 19:44, "because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation."

The apostle Peter announced in Acts 3:19, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord."

Our blessed Lord gives us a final word in Revelation 1:3: "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand" (the time of urgency, the time of crisis).

May God grant us both discernment of the times in which we live and discernment of the times for our lives in seeking the Lord.



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Linear Time vs. Circular Time

Dr. H. T. Spence

Edwin Hubble (1889–1953) has been called the “Pioneer of the distant stars.” His studies proved the existence of galaxies other than our own Milky Way and opened the vastness of the study of the universe. What was once considered at 100 billion galaxies in the universe has now recently been expanded to nearly 2 trillion galaxies. These changes are prompting questions among physicists like “what is a universe?” and “is there a concept of other universes?” Have we come to the understanding of *multiverses*? Is there an all-encompassing omniverse where all the various concepts exist? As the term *epistemology* has become the extensive word for the universe of knowledge, *omniverse* has now become the blanket word for all the known and yet to be known concepts of existence, whether visible or invisible. This word therefore includes the concept of the existence and the dimension of time.

What Is Time?

What is time? Throughout philosophical history this has been a slippery serpent of a multitude of proposed answers. When Augustine, bishop of Hippo was asked the question, he responded, “If no one asks me, I know what it is. Yet if I wish to explain it to him who asks, I do not know.” The Bible speaks much of time

in the light of this earth, of man, and of God’s workings. Has time changed? Will past, present, and future time be different from one another?

Hubble observed, “Past time is finite; future time is infinite.” We do not want to make this complicated, for many paths of contemplation will lead us to abstraction. As a Christian, our souls would gain nothing for spiritual living from such theorizing. Therefore, we want to take this burden from a simple two-dimensional aspect of time.

Should time be viewed as circular or linear? Should time be viewed as a linear timeline or calendar, or should it be viewed as a circular clock?

Some biblical perspectives of circular time include the rotation of the planet. What we have come to view as the 24 increments of time in a 24-hour day continues to repeat itself. From the creation account we also read of the 6 days of an evening and a morning, suggesting a morning, noon, and night cycle. In many parts of the world, there are the four seasons of fall, winter, spring, and summer; these cycle again and again yearly down through history. There are the cycles of the winds. Additionally, there are the cycles of water that fall to the earth, rise again, only then to fall again.

The Bible also expresses linear time,

revealing to us a beginning and an end. And everything from that beginning continues to press to that end of life. Once we are born into the world, there is no going backward; time is ever pressing us on to an end. However, some suggest that our lives are only circular, where one wheels around and around spiraling until we somehow manage to escape from it. This circular view is an old view, espoused by Buddhism and other religions we commonly associate with the East.

Gautama Buddha, born around 560 B.C. in northeastern India (now Nepal), is reported to have spiraled round and round in the great Circle of Life many times before reaching perfection. We are told that he experienced five hundred full circuits of terrestrial toil and trouble before at last achieving enlightenment and nirvana. The disciples of circular time and reasoning believe that we are given opportunity to re-enter the highway of life over and over again, each time representing a new opportunity to navigate by our own lights to some spiritual paradise. This is a belief of a second chance. In modern-day Tibet, for example, blind and otherwise congenitally disabled children are treated cruelly by society, even spat upon and cursed publicly. Buddhism believes in circular time and Karma; for example, blind children are reincarnations of people who were severely damaged in a previous life. Such individuals will continue in the circle

until they reach perfection. Nevertheless, the Bible is very clear in that life advances in a straight line from the past, through the present, and onward to the future.

Christianity has pioneered the Western view of linear time. In his book *Time and History*, British mathematician and science historian G. J. Whitrow states, "With Christianity, man acquired a new understanding of time." Long before anyone else (including scientists), Christians introduced the world to the idea that time advances in a straight, orderly fashion toward a knowable end. Time is the thread of a universal story line, and (to many) it is the greatest story ever told.

India's Hinduism (the oldest religion in the world apart from the true religion of Jehovah) only believes in circular time; this is why they were not motivated to record dates. Hinduism's circular way of thinking is called the *samsara*, a belief in reincarnation, the great circle of life. A newborn's physical being is determined by the number of merits, the quantity of *karma* he or she has earned during all his or her past circumnavigations of earthly existence. The more *karma* the child has racked up by thinking, believing, and acting rightly, the higher up on the chain the child's soul or *atman* can expect to land in the next go-round of life.

When we carefully read the Bible,

we see evidence that time presses on without exact repetitiveness in man's actions. History is recorded in Scripture, while prophecy is pushing history onward. Time was altered only twice: once by an extension of time during the days of Joshua, and once through a retraction of time in the days of Hezekiah.

When we come to the days of the birth of Jesus, we can view the miracle of the histories of the linear lives of many men and women brought together: Caesar Augustus, Joseph and Mary, Herod Antipas and Herodias, and Salome who demanded the head of John the Baptist, Pontius Pilate, Annas and Caiaphas, and the lives of the Sanhedrin Court. God took the threads of all their linear living and wove them together to bring about the greatest story ever told. Christ was born, He lived, He died, He was buried, He was resurrected, and He ascended.

Church history has unfolded, and we are in the days of the growing intense persecution against God's saints. We are looking to a rapture, a tribulation period, and the second coming of Christ to set up His kingdom. All these events are revealed in sacred Scripture; we have their sequences of events as well as descriptions of what is to come. The details of eschatology are all linear, temporal details. The temple of God, the holy city Jerusalem will be occupied by foreign powers for 42 months; the Antichrist beast will

rise and kill two witnesses. This will take place 3½ years before the Lord comes to earth to set up His kingdom.

The Father is able to comprehend all at once the endless streaming that we time-bound creatures call the past, present, and future, and bring it all together for the unfolding. And then, a new heaven and new earth will be revealed as God will come to earth to dwell with man (Revelation 21). This all is the unending of the ages in a linear concept.

Conclusion

Augustine, in his famous opus *The City of God*, declared the following:

The pagan philosophers have introduced cycles of time....From this mockery they are unable to set free the immortal soul, even after it has attained wisdom, and believe it to be proceeding unceasingly to false blessedness and returning unceasingly to true misery....It is only through the sound doctrine of a rectilinear course that we can escape from I know not what false cycles discovered by false and deceitful sages.

How do you see your life? Looking back over your years, do you view a vicious cycle of living over and over in sins and frustrations, never getting out of the rut of carnality? Have you entered a vicious cycle of your Christian life (as the days of the Judges) of sin, servitude, supplication, and restoration ever being repeated? Do you believe

you are bound because of your past to live this way? Have there been moments where some hope came from Scripture for deliverance? Or do you believe this is your destiny?

From the cradle to the grave, God is calling us onward, upward, ever living the unfolding of the Christ within. Once God has saved us from our sins, there is an initial entrance into the kingdom of God, and from that point there is to be no turning back, no revolving door. For the Christian there is always more and more of Christ! It is the linear life in Christ. Crises come within that linear life to enable us to go to the next-step dimension of this ongoing walk with God. If we do not go on with God, we will be as the children of Israel, wandering for years around and around in carnality, apathy, with no goals, no aspirations in Christ! We will be repeating our sins, repeating our repentances, repeating, repeating, repeating, and never going on with God. Such a life produces the monotony in our lives; any boredom is because of the cycle of living we create. Although crises come in a moment of time, they come to strengthen the walk of a linear perspective of time. These are woven with the linear life of a wife or husband, the linear lives of your children and those of other Christians. Whatever the case, we are all going together, either onward or declining. God never intended for us to go back. He never intended for us

to retrace, although failures may force us to do so! *But* if this happens, it is so we can go on. We can't go back even in time. What has been lost is lost! Pick up now and move on in Christ.

There is a destiny with God out there; you are ever moving towards it. You are only a child once; only a teenager once; only a young person once; only middle aged once; only autumn aged once; and, thank God, you only die once! It's the linear life—moving on, going on, praying that God will work in all your crisis times. There is no time for failure, for backsliding, for quitting; our Christian linear life must continue.

Where are you today at this hour in your Christian life? Is your family in a cycle? Is your own life in a cycle? Let us pray that God will pluck you out of the hamster wheel and bring you to an ongoing life with Christ! **S**

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The Time and Generations

Dr. H. T. Spence

To understand God's appointment for our lives and our generation, we must define and understand both the terms *time* and *generation*.

What Is a Generation?

In the book of beginnings, we have the word *genesis*, dealing with "origin" and *generation*, dealing with "posterity." Eleven generations are presented in the first book of the Bible. The Hebrew word for *generation* has the understanding of "births," an account of a man and his descendants. The Greek word bears a similar meaning. Sometimes the term refers to a race or class distinguished by common characteristics, such as a "faithless and perverse generation." There are also contexts where it can refer to an age, or the average lifespan, or a generation. Sometimes it is used as a figurative transference of thought applied to duration in eternity. Ephesians 3:21 declares, "Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end [Gr., 'to all generations of the age of the ages']. Amen."

But what is a generation in time or history? A generation in the Bible typically spans 40 years. However, we read that Abram's seed will be "a stranger in a land [Egypt] that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they

shall afflict them four hundred years. . . . But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again" (Gen. 15:13, 16). Here, a generation is 100 years ($4 \times 100 = 400$ years). This is understood by the fact that Abraham had his promised child when he was exactly 100 years old; the age of a man when his first child is born is the raw definition of a generation. The average of these two lengths (100 and 40) is 70 years. In Psalm 90:10 seventy is a generation according to the average age of a man at his death (rather than when the man's first child is born). Significantly, David died at 70 years old and reigned for 40 years. In summary, a generation in the Bible is primarily the age of a man when his first male child is born and, secondarily, the age of a man at his death.

A biblical generation length is primarily 40 or 100 years. However, on occasion it is measured as 70 years. As a result, the Bible uses these three time spans to represent the length of a given generation.

Two Perspectives of Time

Two prominent words in the Bible for time are *chronos* and *kairos*. Although both are defined as "time," they each imply different concepts of time. *Chronos* refers to measured time, as in minutes, seconds, hours, and years. *Kairos*

has the distinctive meaning of an “appointed time,” suggesting more of an appointed season or an opportune moment. As a Christian, I must come to understand both of these times in their specific contexts in my life.

Becoming a Christian with the presence of Christ in the life and the Word of God as the lamp and light to my feet and path, I discover a fresh, insightful perspective of my life and the concept of time. It is through the Word of God that I find why I exist. Through the Word of God, I am enabled to find the will of God for the divine purposes and appointments of my life.

We have often brought the clarity of two unique Greek words for God’s will. *Boulema* is the deliberately designed, purposed will of God. This is God’s sovereign and predetermined will that appoints the time for me to be born and the time of my death. This concept of God’s will also appoints who my parents will be, as well as my race and my country. It resolves the generation and period of history in which I will be born and live. We read of this concept of the will of God in Acts 13:36:

For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God [boulema, the sovereignly appointed period of history, his generation, his contemporary], fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers.

Yes, we all have our appointed generation designated by God’s sovereign will.

The Greek word *thelema* expresses the wish will of God, the heart desire of God for my life in my generation. We see this earlier in Acts 13:22:

And when he [God] had removed him [Saul], he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfill all my will [thelema, the heart desires; plural in the Gr.].

For the most part people tend to be reactive in life; their basic responses are in the context of what has come into their lives. They live basically by reactions to things, to circumstances. As Christians with the Scriptures, we need to become more proactive, preparing before things come into our lives instead of waiting for things to happen and then trying to adjust to them. We are not simply to be the horse with the blinders plowing the ground for hours and hours; we are to be as the hawk whose sharp senses are scanning the area from the flight above. Yes, I must come to know this about my life through the Scriptures.

The apostle Paul wrote in Ephesians 5:15, 16, “See then that ye walk circumspectly [exactly, diligently, perfectly], not as fools [those who are spiritually destitute of God’s wisdom], but as wise [those who have been taught of God and know what they need to do].” But what is this “redeeming

the time, because the days are evil”? It means continually buying out the time (Gr., *kairon*) or the season. As the merchants observe the time for buying and selling to make the best gain, this is what we are to be doing for the time appointed for our living. We are to be redeeming the time (*kairos*), the opportune moment, or the due season. Psalm 90 calls upon God to “Teach us to number our days.” Our time on earth is brief.

But the *kairos* is the season of time, the time for opportunity, the convenient time. I must respond, I must work, I must do it in that *kairos*; it is the brief window or the brief opportunity. Some moments are more valuable than other moments. It is not simply how much we can cram into twenty-four hours, the *chronos*. We must be sensitive to the moments in dealing with an individual about God, in dealing with our children, as well as to the season in coming to Christ, and the season in seeking God.

Chronos and Kairos

One of the great inventors of our generation Dr. John C. Taylor made what is called a “chronophage” (*chronos*, time; *phage*, eater). It portrays a mythical, insect-like creature which controls a magnificent golden clock. In 2008, Stephen Hawking (close friend of Dr. Taylor) presented the clock to Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. This *chronophage* represents how time

is consumed and never seen again. This unique clock shows how time is both universal and extremely limited at a personal level; time can never be regained, almost as if it were eaten up by a relentless, menacing creature with the grasshopper image consuming every minute and then every hour. Dr. Taylor made the following observation:

Basically I view time as not on your side. It will eat up every minute of your life, and as soon as one has gone, he's salivating for the next. It's not a bad thing to remind students of. I never felt like this until I woke up on my 70th birthday, and was stricken at the thought of how much I still wanted to do, and how little time remained.

The Greeks liked to personify just about everything; *chronos* was depicted as “Old Father Time,” a weary, bent-backed old man with a long grey beard, carrying a scythe and an hourglass. His resemblance to the Grim Reaper is not accidental. *Kairos*, on the other hand, was for the ancient Greeks, a young man graceful, agile, and handsome. In our Christian understanding, *kairos* has a sense of “the right time” and of “ripeness.” For example, the book of Ecclesiastes goes on to say: “To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted.” This is *kairos*.

In the New Testament context, *kairos* refers to a “decisive point,” “the appointed time of God,” or to God’s order and scheme of things. These are times of significant opportunity, times when remarkable things can happen. Then in John’s Gospel we encounter the incredible story of the “Word made flesh” (the *Logos*), where the Jesus of history, the Jesus of chronological time, is also the Christ of eternity, the one who exists for all time and who will always be there even when this momentary, mortal, chronological life comes to an end.

According to Stephen Hawking’s theory and Dr. John Taylor, time began at the initial explosion of the Big Bang theory; its ripples, as well as the expanding of the universe, have continued (although at one time, it was believed they were slowing down). But the God of eternity created time in His great wisdom. It was the offspring of eternity, and somehow it is parallel with present, continuing eternity. Time existed before I came and will continue after I leave this world.

There is considerable misunderstanding in our society concerning the nature of time. Time simply is; it cannot do anything. Time provides the historical framework in which things happen, but time has no innate ability itself. To express the same thought in different words: time is quantitative, not qualitative. This is an important distinction with several implications.

It is common for materialists to assert (in attempting to explain the origin of the material universe) that, given enough time, inorganic matter might create itself.

Some years ago, Dr. George Wald of Harvard University penned an article entitled “The Origin of Life,” which appeared in the prestigious journal *Scientific American*. Wald argues that it is possible that life spontaneously generated itself. Note how he explains this miracle:

However improbable we regard this event [the accidental origin of life], or any of the steps which it involves, given enough time it will almost certainly happen. . . . Time is in fact the hero of the plot . . . Given so much time, the “impossible” becomes possible, the possible becomes probable, and the probable virtually certain. One has only to wait: time itself performs the miracles (Scientific American, August 1954, Volume 191, Issue 2).

This is an absurdity that defies all logic. How can mere time provide the process by which the inorganic is transformed into the organic? Time may facilitate, but it cannot create. People don’t just get better with time, change with time; there must be some working in that dimension of time to bring about the change. God has given to each one of us a segment of time, a season of time in the vastness of the all-encompassing scope of time.

Conclusion

I was appointed to live within a generation in time; my days are numbered, and there is a day laid up for me when I will be called to my long home. Within my season of living in time, there will be the unfolding of time (*chronos*); within that *chronos* there will be *kairos*—seasons. I must respond in these seasons, or the seasons could be lost permanently if I do not lay hold of them. “Today, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts” (Heb. 4:7b). God has appointed my time and times (seasons). He will speak to me and deal with me in those seasons, and then those seasons will pass. Psalm 31:15 declares, “My times [my seasons] are in thy [his] hand.” The Book of Ecclesiastes proves that everything under

the sun is in the timetable of God for the seasons—everything. David did the will of God in his appointed generation. He did all the will of God in the seasons of his life, even his recoveries from sin and failure.

God “hath determined the times [seasons] before appointed” (Acts 17:26). Will I respond, grow, and yield when each season comes? Within the *chronos* time of my life (made up of seasons), there will be seasons (*hora*) of crises that will be turning points in my life, either for the worse or for the better. I must understand what the will of the Lord is in the seasons of my life in order to respond with wisdom and to respond with submission.

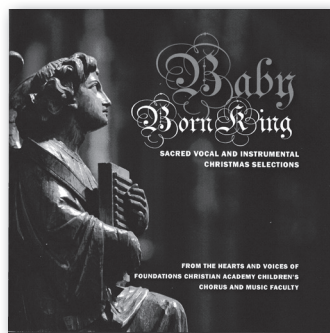
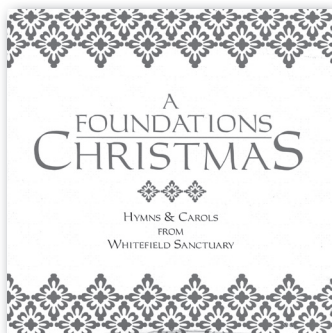


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The Collision of End-Time Generations

Dr. H. T. Spence

The End Time is the great enigma of history, of generations, and of time. The Book of Daniel reveals a dual insight about history and the power play that will take place in the culmination of the ages.

Daniel's View of Time

In chapter two the prophet Daniel revealed to Nebuchadnezzar the God of wisdom and might: "And he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings and setteth up kings" (Dan. 2:21). It is evident that Nebuchadnezzar was anxious, lest his appointed *time* (of which he dreamed) should pass away and a new *time* be established. But Daniel made it clear that the God of the Hebrews is the one who arranged the times and the seasons.

The Bible is clear that time was made by God. He made the sun, moon, and stars as parts of the measuring of time for this planet. He also made the seasons of the year, yea, the revolutions and change of times. He can make bad times better and turn night into day. He can make the sun go backward or stand still, as in the days of Joshua and Hezekiah. It is God's prerogative to change times. He also decrees how long one influence shall prevail and when another shall become operative. The seasons are in

His hands, shorter or longer, as well as the occasions when it is suitable to do a thing. Yes, God controls the time.

Daniel 7:25 speaks of the coming Antichrist:

And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time.

When the Antichrist comes, he will believe that he can take the place of God who "changeth the times and the seasons." He shall "think to change times [seasons] and laws." Some commentaries suggest this verse is referring to the Jewish festivals and laws according to their biblically appointed times and seasons. But these words seem to go beyond this. The Antichrist will believe that he can change the very concept of time and seasons. We saw this attempt in the days of the French Revolution when the seven-day week was abolished in favor of a ten-day week. We also saw this attempt in the Russian Revolution in their overthrow of the government, property, and marriage laws. The Antichrist shall attempt to do so but will not actually succeed.

Ecclesiastes 3 makes it clear that God controls all time and all the seasons of time, not only for the history

of the earth and mankind's history but also for the times and seasons of individuals throughout history. In the Bible we certainly view God controlling the times and seasons with Israel, the times and seasons concerning nations, the times and seasons concerning Nebuchadnezzar (even when seven years were appointed for him to live as an animal before his sanity returned). We also read of the numbering of the days of Belshazzar.

We once again declare that the End Time will be the great enigma of history, and thus will be filled with changes—changes from God! These changes will include dispensational changes with His dealings of nations, especially His dealing with Israel. A final week of Daniel's seventy weeks is to come in the End Time; this time will be the worst season of Antichrist's time over Israel.

This End Time will be a time of great trouble on the earth. From one perspective the End Time will be the collision—the violent rushing against, hitting, or striking together—of the generations. But perhaps another word could also be used—a *collusion*. A *collusion* is a "secret agreement made for fraudulent or deceitful purposes." Both terms *collision* and *collusion* are appropriate for the great enigma of the End Time.

Before continuing the subject of *collusion*, let us briefly define the End

Time. On the Day of Pentecost, Peter revealed that the "last days" began at the first coming of Christ (Acts 2:16, 17). In Hebrews 1:2 the apostle Paul declares that God "hath in the these last days spoken unto us by his Son." These "last days" have continued for the past two thousand years.

However, the End Time is this present season of the "last days." We gain insight for this understanding from the Book of Daniel and the Olivet Discourse. Daniel reveals more about the Gentile kingdom powers and what will be in the time of the end leading up to the Antichrist, the final kingdom of the Gentiles. But Christ Himself unfolds the End Time in Matthew 24 in two segments—that of both the beginning and the end of the End Time.

It seems that the End Time began with the unveiling of deeper insight into the Second Coming (1850s–1860s) as well as an increasing global (*oikoumene*) consciousness throughout the world. Additionally, this time also witnessed increased dramatic changes in weather, governments, and the international concept of the Gospel (which only began to arise in the latter part of the 1700s, but especially was seen in the 1800s).

The Collision of Generations

The rise of the End Time of the "last days" has also seen greater changes occurring from one generation to the next. While each generation strives

for greater independence from the earlier ones, these generations come into greater conflict or collusion with one another.

Similarly, Noah lived 600 years until the Flood and then another 350 years; he straddled several generations during his days. What was the concept of *generation* before the Flood, and the number of years between a father, a son, and a grandson? The birth of Noah's children seems not to have come until God's declaration of judgment 120 years before the Flood. If true, Noah was 480 years old at the birth of his firstborn. Shem was 98 years old when the Flood came; two years after the Flood he begat Arphaxad (though we do not know if this was the first child from Shem's loins). One important declaration was that Noah was "perfect in his generations."

Today's differing generations are occurring quicker—100, 70, or even 40 years. Proverbs 30:11–14 speaks of the collision of several generations living together but distinctive in their heart's manifestation.

There is a generation that curseth their father, and doth not bless their mother. Who would conceive that such a generation would rise in the earth? The cursing of a parent was visited with the same punishment as the blaspheming of God—the death penalty. So near does the one sin approach to the other; the rebel against his parent is ready

to stretch out his hand against God Himself.

There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness. Such a generation portrays itself to others as being righteous, while conceit within controls them. Yes, their pretense of being truly religious hides a course of wickedness.

There is a generation, O how lofty are their eyes! and their eyelids are lifted up. This generation is a proud and insolent generation. They advance themselves, despising all others in comparison to themselves. Their countenance and carriage reveal the pride of their hearts.

There is a generation whose teeth are as swords, and their jaw teeth as knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, and the needy from among men. This generation is one of extortionists and cruel oppressors, who grind the faces of the poor. They are a monster of iniquity, given to murderous work.

All of these generations have no tears of repentance, no desire for God, no desire for a changed and bettered life.

The End-Time Collusion of Generations

Both political and technological leaders are now exemplifying generations that have arisen bottled and burped by the world system while maintaining some individuality as separate

generations. Now we are witnessing a collision of four generations (and perhaps even more).

The first-generation *baby boomers* represent the generation of children born after WWII. That generation is basically the older group who are now in control of the money and much of the leadership in the world today. For many years they were the biggest, most free-spending market the planet had ever known. What they wanted filled the shelves of the stores, and what fills the shelves is our history. They wanted to dance, so rock 'n' roll arose to satisfy them. They wanted to open their minds, so LSD was popularized. They did not want to go to war, so the draft was abolished.

Then came *Generation X* (or *Gen X*) representing the generation born after the baby boomers (roughly from the early 1960s to early 1980s). This generation is often perceived as disaffected and directionless. They have been in a revolt against the baby boomers; a revolt against their parent's revolt.

Following *Generation X* came the *Millennials* (or *Generation Y*). The fluid birth dates of this generation are typically from the early 1980s to the early 2000s. This generation witnessed the explosive rise of communication through the advent of the cell phone. (It was projected that by 2000, cellular devices would number 10 million. Today, worldwide there are over 7 bil-

lion people and over 7 billion devices. In Russia there are 2 per capita; in America 1.3.)

Generations today are changing rapidly. The patterns of the past are not the patterns of the future. Man himself is ever changing. One of the reasons for our failure to understand the constant mutation of the generations is that we tend to get stuck in the patterns of the past. We must know the patterns of the present to face the needs of our times. In the past we had time to change with the flow of change; now change is happening so fast, it is more difficult to keep up with the change.

The Present Generation

Today, we have come to another generation called *Generation Z* (or *Gen Z*). The dates given for *Generation Z* range from the mid-1990s through the second decade of this century, although precise years vary according to the source. At over 2 billion individuals, *Generation Z* is the most populous generation of all time. In common with Millennials, *Generation Z* is comfortable with technologies that are more difficult for older generations. And *Gen Z* has grown up in the current environment of ubiquitous mobile communications. The younger members of the cohort may not remember any other environment. As of 2015 in the USA, 77 percent between ages 12 to 17 owned cell phones. Not sur-

prisingly, texting is this generation's preferred communication, followed by social media interaction. We have moved from digitalization to datafication. One of the subtle keys to this particular generation is the concept of "behavior": the behavior of the data, the behavior of the device, and the behavior of those who make up the generation. Thus, you change what you believe by changing how you behave.

The characteristics of Generation Z as a cohort of youth within the USA is in contrast with earlier generations. There is more racial diversity, less traditional (nuclear) family backgrounds, more single-parent and same-gender parent families, less confidence in the current economic system, more time spent online, more use of the phone (rather than TV) for entertainment, and greater probability of having friends from various ethnic, religious, and racial groups. In the workplace, Gen Z demands greater flexibility and the capacity to work remotely, collaboratively, and seamlessly across their various technological devices. Making a meaningful contribution to the world is also important to this generation. They are less tolerant of authoritarian environments such as hierarchical corporate culture. Gen Z is more concerned with behavior through technology than just technology itself.

We build the lens through which we see the world, and with that lens we

determine its value. What is it that has allowed us to create what we have? What is the capacity of connection? The present generation calls it "hyperconnectivity." It changes the way we think about the world. Although we all use the same technology, their concern is more about how we use it, how we think, and how we behave. We have come to a time when technological devices are so affordable, so usable, so pervasive, and so needed to exist in our generation. What will be next after Gen Z? Demographers suggest a coming *Generation Alpha*.

Conclusion

It must be acknowledged that all these generations are falling away further and further from any God-consciousness. In Acts 2:40, we read after the greater burden of Peter's message on the Day of Pentecost, "And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation." The Greek word for *words* here is *logos*, meaning, "the very expressions, thoughts, concepts within the mind." When the first message of the full gospel was preached by the church, it imperatively included the "more words," attesting to that current generation. "He earnestly testified and exhorted" (imperfect active); he kept on exhorting, "Be saved" [aorist passive, or be ye saved!]. From what were they to be saved? They were to be saved from that perverse,

crooked (the opposite of orthodox or straight) generation! It was a generation or generations in collusion to take the truth and pervert it, twist it, and make it froward; they were taking such words and thoughts and setting them against the good and the righteous. Remember, this was the generation that crucified the Lord! They were hurrying on to their destruction. And the apostle Peter was warning that those who would not perish with them *must* come out from them and be separated from them!

Oh, dear Reader, the collision of our present generations is like that of Sodom and Gomorrah; they are about ready to burn up! This is a wicked and evil generation; it is a collision and a collusion of several generations given to intensifying wickedness. According to the Scriptures, salvation must also be understood as being saved from a “present evil world” that is affecting not only the individual but the whole of society. All that the New Testament says about the present evil world and the course of this world is clearly defined! Evil is ever changing its form from age to age.

But we continue to read in Acts 2:41, “Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.” For such deliverance from the present generations, we must forsake wicked and profane

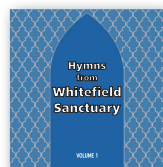
persons in their ungodly courses. We must acknowledge that the whole world lies in wickedness. God Himself must save us from this generation, for this is our generation. Biblical separation is imperative in our day and time as part of our deliverance.

May God grant us wisdom to live in this collision and collusion of these present generations. May we be as Noah: “Noah was a just man and perfect in *his generations*, and Noah walked with God” (Gen. 6:9; *emphasis added*). §

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