

Chapter 8e

The following is a very deep and comprehensive analysis on the subject of time, eternity, and God. It is not easy or light reading material. However, it contains a lot of extremely valuable information and data for those who want to swim into deep water with this subject.

Taken from: <http://ldolphin.org/time.html>

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The Complexities of Time

Introduction To Time

This essay touches briefly on various aspects and dimensions of time. To a scientist, time is a relatively simple matter, but when one gets into the Bible time has qualitative and subjective aspects---there is much more to consider. The Bible contrasts time and eternity as well. God is outside of time. He is,

"...the high and lofty one, who inhabits eternity." (Isaiah 57:15)

Time as we know it was **created** by God---it is part of the **creation**. (Note A) However the created universe consists of a physical, material world and a spiritual realm---the latter is called in the New Testament "the heavenly places." In the heavenlies time has quite different properties than we usually think about in regard to the physical, material world. Man was created to live in both worlds (the material and the spiritual) at the same "time" and a study of time and eternity (a much neglected subject) carries a number of surprises. The physical universe has been drastically affected by the fall of Lucifer and his angels, and by the fall of man. This means we now live in a damaged, deteriorating "old creation." Time itself has been altered by the fall.

Is The Age of the Universe Indeterminate?

Virtually all modern geology and astronomy textbooks today take it for granted that the solar system is at least four or five billion years old, and it is now assumed such great ages are gospel truth. Anthropologists take it for granted that man is at least several millions of years old. But only in the past 200 years or so has Western science come to believe in a very old universe as opposed to a recent creation. The assumption of a very old universe has become such an ingrained paradigm that jokes are routinely made in classrooms and textbooks about Archbishop Ussher's alleged assignment of the date, day, and hour of creation in 4004 BC. The Bible actually opens with the statement "In the beginning God..." without making any reference to date and time. In both Hebrew and Greek, the idea of "the beginning" means the "indefinite distant past." This is not to suggest that man's early history fades into obscure mists of

mythology as we go backwards in time, but that God has not revealed all that we would like to know about the exact "time" of the creation of all things.

Like Genesis, the Gospel of John opens with the words, "**In the beginning** was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." It is declared in Scripture that God always was, always will be, and is unchanging---"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever." (Hebrews 12:8) The "beginning" referred to in John's gospel is actually an early point in time than the "beginning" of Genesis One. John says "the Word was with God" prior to the creation of the universe, and in fact all things were brought into being through the Word.

As far as archaeology and recorded history are concerned human civilizations appear to be only of the order of thousands, not millions, of years old. The Bible is an exceptionally accurate document, and there is no ancient document for which we have better manuscript authority (or evidence), or into which more man-years of intense scholarship have been invested in recovering the original text. The Old Testament genealogies have very few gaps in them (if any at all!) and are actually quite complete so that one can estimate the time of Adam, the first man, as occurring only a few thousand years before Christ.

The internal structure of the Bible makes it difficult to place the creation of Adam more than a few thousands of years in the past. Sadly, for many secular scientists this fact is considered sufficient reason for them to ignore the Bible altogether as a relevant source of reliable information on any subject. However, a Biblical world-view must in the long run be consistent with scientific data---properly interpreted. The God of the Bible is the God of truth and in the end truth from all possible sources must harmonize.

It may be, however, that the actual age of the universe is indeterminate. I believe this to be the case because God has apparently hidden from us the key evidence we need to unravel the past back to the time of creation. Twice the Bible makes important statements (consistent with each other) that suggest the fundamental nature of time, and many aspects of the actual course of history, presently escape our understanding to a large degree. Solomon says,

**"I have seen the business that God has given to the sons of men to be busy with. He has made everything beautiful in its time; also he has put eternity into man's mind, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end."
(Ecclesiastes 3:10-11)**

Just as we cannot figure out God's ways and understand precisely how He works, (Romans 11:33), so also we may not notice events that are actually crucial to His plans and programs. And we may mislabel other events in history as important when actually they turn out to be unimportant in the long run. Most of Israel totally missed the many prophetic fulfillments that took place during the First Advent of their Messiah, Yeshua (Jesus), for instance. Only afterwards did His followers figure out what actually had been happening in God's plan as revealed in the Old Testament.

Our knowledge of what actually happened in the past is inadequate; the details of what was important and what was not are obscured in the mists of time. It is most difficult for historians to reconstruct what actually happened in the past. (History books are always being rewritten). Likewise, we cannot predict what events will unfold tomorrow with any real certainty, nor set a date for the return of Christ. Yet we are restlessly preoccupied with time and frustrated when we cannot unravel its secrets with all the precision a modern atomic clock can give us.

When Jesus left His disciples forty days after His resurrection, ascending into the cloud, (that is, through the space-time gateway of the Shekinah glory cloud into the heavenly places) from the

Mount of Olives in Jerusalem, His disciples were anxious for word of His return. Jesus told them,

"...It is not for you to know the times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority." (Acts 1:7; compare with Matthew 24:36).

This scripture clearly implies that all attempts to set dates for the next World War and the second coming of Jesus are wasted effort. The ages past are *also* difficult for us to unravel and must remain full of mystery. The tapestry of the past has many folds, and we easily lose track of most of them in our feeble attempts to trace history backwards.

Modern secular science is built on the assumption that the laws of physics have never changed. Therefore we can make measurements say for 50 or 100 years and derive theories which can then be extrapolated backwards in time to the beginning of all things. This approach to science is known as "uniformitarianism" about which we are specifically warned in the New Testament in the Apostle Peter's remark about the world-wide flood in the days of Noah,

"First of all you must understand this, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own passions and saying, '**Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things have continued as they were from the beginning of creation.**' They deliberately ignore this fact, that by the word of God heavens existed long ago, and an earth formed out of water and by means of water, through which the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished.

"But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist have been stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. But do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow about his promise as some count slowness, but is forbearing toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and the works that are upon it will be burned up. Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of persons 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 kindled and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire!" (2 Peter 3:3-12)

Whether we like it that way or not, arguments about the age of the universe may be irreconcilable. There is evidence both for a recent creation, and there is also evidence for an ancient universe. It is our stereotypical thinking about the nature of time that causes us the problem. We view time as an absolute, and as a single dimension measured by a fixed master clock. In reality time is multidimensional and we are trapped in one-dimensional linear time (because of the fall). We are unable to see the broader perspective of eternity. Our vision is too narrow and needs some stretching.

The Old Testament View of Time

The Hebrew concept of time found in the Old Testament is concerned more with the **quality** of time as it relates to hail, rain, summer, and harvest or to "evil days" or "prosperous times." Clock or calendar time certainly is tracked in the Old Testament. Believing Jews as well as Christians believe the Old Testament is an accurate account of actual historical events and real people. The

Hebrew calendar and clock are based on a lunar calendar. The "day" (*yom*) is one rotation of the earth on its axis, the month is one revolution of the moon about the earth, and the year the time required for the earth to travel around the sun. The Jewish year, as defined in the Old Testament, was divided into feasts and festivals marking the seasons of an agricultural society.

Gregorian		Hebrew		Muslim	
Month	No. Days	Month	No. Days	Month	No. Days
January	31	Tishri	30	Muharram	30
February	28 (29)	Heshvan	29 (30)	Safar	29
March	31	Kislev	29 (30)	Rabi' I	30
April	30	Tebet	29	Rabi' II	29
May	31	Shebat	30	Jumada I	30
June	30	Adar	29 (30)	Jumada II	29
July	31	Nisan	30	Rajab	30
August	31	Iyar	29	Sha'aban	29
September	30	Sivan	30	Ramadhan	30
October	31	Tammuz	29	Shawwal	29
November	30	Ab	30	Dhul Qa'ada	30
December	31	Elul	29	Dhul Hijja	29 (30)

The Old Testament teaches by means of stories, by personal examples from the lives of individuals, and by case histories of God's dealings with men and angels. Scripture uses poetic images, dreams, visions and providential arrangements of circumstances to indicate God's invisible workings in human affairs from behind the scenes of history. The Hebrew year cycles around seed time and harvest and commemorative feasts and festivals. These call to mind the redemptive deeds of God and his blessings upon his chosen people Israel.

The feasts of Israel have great symbolic import both for the nation of Israel and for the church. Many details concerning these feasts are given in the Torah,

The LORD said to Moses, "Say to the people of Israel, The appointed feasts of the LORD which you shall proclaim as holy convocations, my appointed feasts, are these. Six days shall work be done; but on the seventh day is a sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation; you shall do no work; it is a sabbath to the LORD in all your dwellings. "These are the appointed feasts of the LORD, the holy convocations, which you shall proclaim at the time appointed for them.

In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month in the evening, is the LORD's passover. And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread to the LORD; seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall have a holy convocation; you shall do no laborious work. But you shall present an offering by fire to the LORD seven days; on the seventh day is a holy convocation; you shall do no laborious work."

And the LORD said to Moses, "Say to the people of Israel, When you come into the land which I give you and reap its harvest, you shall bring the sheaf of the first fruits of your

harvest to the priest; and he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, that you may find acceptance; on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it. And on the day when you wave the sheaf, you shall offer a male lamb a year old without blemish as a burnt offering to the LORD. And the cereal offering with it shall be two tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil, to be offered by fire to the LORD, a pleasing odor; and the drink offering with it shall be of wine, a fourth of a hin. And you shall eat neither bread nor grain parched or fresh until this same day, until you have brought the offering of your God: it is a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.

"And you shall count from the morrow after the sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven full weeks shall they be, counting fifty days to the morrow after the seventh sabbath; then you shall present a cereal offering of new grain to the LORD. You shall bring from your dwellings two loaves of bread to be waved, made of two tenths of an ephah; they shall be of fine flour, they shall be baked with leaven, as first fruits to the LORD. And you shall present with the bread seven lambs a year old without blemish, and one young bull, and two rams; they shall be a burnt offering to the LORD, with their cereal offering and their drink offerings, an offering by fire, a pleasing odor to the LORD. And you shall offer one male goat for a sin offering, and two male lambs a year old as a sacrifice of peace offerings. And the priest shall wave them with the bread of the first fruits as a wave offering before the LORD, with the two lambs; they shall be holy to the LORD for the priest. And you shall make proclamation on the same day; you shall hold a holy convocation; you shall do no laborious work: it is a statute for ever in all your dwellings throughout your generations. "And when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field to its very border, nor shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest; you shall leave them for the poor and for the stranger: I am the LORD your God."

And the LORD said to Moses, "Say to the people of Israel, In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall observe a day of solemn rest, a memorial proclaimed with blast of trumpets, a holy convocation. You shall do no laborious work; and you shall present an offering by fire to the LORD." And the LORD said to Moses, "On the tenth day of this seventh month is the day of atonement; it shall be for you a time of holy convocation, and you shall afflict yourselves and present an offering by fire to the LORD. And you shall do no work on this same day; for it is a day of atonement, to make atonement for you before the LORD your God. For whoever is not afflicted on this same day shall be cut off from his people. And whoever does any work on this same day, that person I will destroy from among his people. You shall do no work: it is a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings. It shall be to you a sabbath of solemn rest, and you shall afflict yourselves; on the ninth day of the month beginning at evening, from evening to evening shall you keep your sabbath."

And the LORD said to Moses, "Say to the people of Israel, On the fifteenth day of this seventh month and for seven days is the feast of booths to the LORD. On the first day shall be a holy convocation; you shall do no laborious work. Seven days you shall present offerings by fire to the LORD; on the eighth day you shall hold a holy convocation and present an offering by fire to the LORD; it is a solemn assembly; you shall do no

laborious work. "These are the appointed feasts of the LORD, which you shall proclaim as times of holy convocation, for presenting to the LORD offerings by fire, burnt offerings and cereal offerings, sacrifices and drink offerings, each on its proper day; besides the sabbaths of the LORD, and besides your gifts, and besides all your votive offerings, and besides all your freewill offerings, which you give to the LORD.

"On the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the produce of the land, you shall keep the feast of the LORD seven days; on the first day shall be a solemn rest, and on the eighth day shall be a solemn rest. And you shall take on the first day the fruit of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook; and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days. You shall keep it as a feast to the LORD seven days in the year; it is a statute for ever throughout your generations; you shall keep it in the seventh month. You shall dwell in booths for seven days; all that are native in Israel shall dwell in booths, that your generations may know that I made the people of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God." Thus Moses declared to the people of Israel the appointed feasts of the LORD. (Leviticus 23)

The Hebrew Concept of Time

by Ronnie Littlejohn

I KNOW we have all been struck by the importance of time and by its elusive, puzzling character. We wonder whether we will have "enough time" to do everything we want to do with our lives. And we complain that time "drags by" when we are bored. Myth and poetry often personify time. The figure of Father Time is familiar to us.

When early philosophers asked about time, they sensed that it had something to do with change. But how can something change? How can something be one way at one time and some other way at another time, yet still be the same time? They wondered whether the past could be changed or the future predicted. They even speculated about time travel in which one might visit the past or the future.

The Book of Ecclesiastes is unique among books of the Bible, and especially the Old Testament, in presenting anything like a direct statement on time (Eccl. 3:1-8). But though this familiar passage says there is a season and a time for everything under heaven, it certainly does not tell us what the nature of time is; nor does it respond to the other questions philosophers in Western history have advanced.

Why is this? The answer lies in a deep difference between the way the Hebrews understood time and the way the Greeks thought about it. The Hebrew mind thought in concrete terms and did not engage in the sort of abstract speculation we know so well from the Greeks. Just as the Hebrews did not speculate about famous Greek questions such as What is truth? or What is justice? neither did they offer arguments or theories about the question What is time?

Understanding the Hebrew view of time requires that we do some detective work. Since there is no passage in the Old Testament that speaks about time, we must find out what the Hebrews thought about time by taking a more indirect approach.

When we study the Old Testament, we find that time is derivative for the Hebrews. That is, the understanding of time in the Old Testament came from how it described the events of human life and God's interaction with people. For example, time was measured from harvest and agricultural occurrences. Ruth and Naomi arrived in Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest (Ruth 1:22). Or, time was referenced to the sacred events of God's interaction in Israel's history. Time was related to an event that took place and how that event was related to something else that had occurred. Time was not an abstract something over and above events. Herein lay the basic difference between the Hebrews and the Greeks.

This difference may be seen by correcting our language. The Greeks might say, "Time is the medium for God's saving acts." The Hebrews might say, "Time is the sequence of God's saving acts." For the Hebrews, there was no time that existed as a substance or force or dimension, as the Greek sentence implies. There were only real events that occurred, and men measured and marked life by their relationships to these. Unlike a modern American, a Hebrew would not say, "I don't have enough time" as though time were like so many coins in a pocket or so much liquid in a glass. Hebrews did not engage in discussions about whether time really existed or if they could "feel" time. The reason is clear. Time was not a thing or object for the Hebrews of the Old Testament.

The Old Testament has no general word for "time" in the abstract sense at all. Neither does it have special terms for past, present, and future. The most common word for "time" means the moment or point at which something happened, or will happen, for example, "Behold, about this time tomorrow, I will send a very heavy hail" (Ex. 9:18, NASB).

We cannot understand the Hebrew notion of time if we carry over our Western scientific or philosophical interpretations and questions. The Hebrews simply did not ask the same questions or make the sort of speculations the heirs to the Greeks advanced.

Actually, the Greek notion of time still leads us down many philosophical dead ends and into many practical problems as well. Time has been the subject of some real arguments lately. Stephen Hawking, the Cambridge cosmologist, posed a paradox when he entitled his best-selling book *A Brief History of Time*. By definition, the word *history* refers to something that has endured for some period in time. This implies that time has endured in time, which has endured in time, which has endured in time, and so on. This is going down a dead end. Such a paradox would not occur to the Hebrews because, for them, things did not happen "in time." Things happened and the happenings were time.

Here is another example. The Hebrews did not speculate about duration--as in How long is the present? Many Western philosophers out of the Greek tradition found this question troubling. It occupied philosophers from Augustine to Henri Bergson. But the Hebrews avoided such fruitless speculations even though they definitely used temporal concepts. First Kings 11:4 refers to the time "when Solomon was old," but the writer did not wonder about when it was that Solomon started to *become old*, or at what point he became old, as though he was not old the day previous and then suddenly he was old. The Hebrews were not interested in all this theorizing. I do not mean that this lack was a deficiency, only that it was a difference. We certainly should not think that the Hebrew idea of time is necessarily inferior to the Greek simply because the Greek was more concrete.

Another way of seeing this difference is to notice that the Hebrews developed no idea of eternity as timelessness. This was a Greek notion. The Hebrews had no idea that there could be life and experience without time. For them, life was time, or better "to live was time." There

was no time where there were no life events, and no life events where there was no time. In the Old Testament, life was humanity's form of existence (Job 1:21; Ps. 90:3-12) and this was time.

One could characterize the difference between how the Hebrews understood time and how we do by saying that time for us is "chronological" and time for them was "qualitative." In the Old Testament, events and persons were differentiated and arranged, not by their position in chronological sequence to each other, but according to the impact of their occurrence.

The Hebrews were impressed by the weightiness or significance of things and people, not by how many ticks on a clock went by while doing something. This explains why when scholars study the Old Testament, matters that are revealed by their research to be widely separated with reference to time (our definition) can, if their content coincides, be identified and regarded as simultaneous by the Old Testament (because of their view of time). The worshiper experienced past acts of salvation, such as the exodus, as contemporary and happening right then, even if the exodus occurred in the past.

Our perception of the passage of time can change with the blink of an eye. Time stands still; time flies. Time drags on. Where did the time go? I just need a little more time! We had a great time! If only I had the time

There is a growing sense in modern America that we are losing time. How can we take back control over time? Possibly paying attention to the Hebraic concept of time might be a way for us to regain control. For example, we sometimes notice the difference between spending too much time making a living (paid employment, household chores, personal maintenance) and not taking time for living. But for the Hebrews, the way we live (making a living) is time itself. We may only choose how we live or how we "time." So, we must be careful how we live.

One of our major problems in modern America is that we are too busy spending time on unimportant things and events and we have become too busy for the truly important, but not necessarily urgent, matters in life. For example, while conversing with a loved one, we will quickly answer the telephone and spend several minutes on the call even though the call may be totally unimportant. The perceived urgency of a ringing phone overrides the more important activity that does not have a need for urgency attached. When we engage in this kind of behavior, we are showing what we think really matters. We could improve life if we change our paradigm of time. But how can we?

Time for the Hebrews was about effort and achievement. People did things. They wrote, played, traveled, slept, dreamed, performed ceremonies, went to war, and prayed. God did things too. Time consisted of the story of these events, and it had no existence beyond these. To make the most of time probably meant something like living your life so that others mark their lives and tell their stories in reference to your actions. In the Hebrew mind, the real question was not, "What is the best use of my time right now?" but rather, "What is the best use of my life right now?"

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The Old Testament gives us a record of patriarchs and races, nations and kings. It is a selective record narrowing down to focus on the bloodline leading to the Messiah. Israel is at stage center, all directions are measured from Jerusalem, and the relationship between the Israelites and their

God determines their prosperity or adversity in the land (*eretz yisrael*). The historical record of the Old Testament reveals national deterioration and repeated failures by men, but persistent, gracious intervention by God who sovereignly works out His grand strategy down through the ages. Israel typifies God's dealings with the nations. From Israel the Messiah has already come once, and through Israel will come the ultimate salvation of the nations when Messiah returns.

The Old Testament does not often speak at all about the affairs of other nations unless they impinge on events concerning Israel. Little is said about earthquakes, natural disasters, wars, the rise and fall of empires and nations, storms, or cosmic events---unless such happenings relate directly to Israel. In addition, the purpose of the Biblical record is mostly moral and ethical. Because He is a personal God who makes covenants, Yahweh is evidently much more interested in helping men to know Him and to understand themselves than He is in teaching us details of science or all the fine points of history.

Concerning the Old Testament, Paul plainly says in First Corinthians, 10:11, that "These things happened to them (to the Old Testament fathers) as types, but they were written down for our instruction, upon whom the end of the ages has come." In his letter to Romans, (15:4), Paul also wrote, "Whatever things were written in former times were written for our instruction, that through patience and the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope."

Interruptions in Time Recorded in the Bible

The Hebrew language has no verb tenses in the usual sense familiar to us who speak English. In the Jewish way of thinking, the quality of an event or happening becomes more important than the minutes or hours (the measure) the event occupies in our familiar four dimensions of length, width, height and time.

For example, in the Old Testament there is Joshua's "long day," (which occurred about 1420 BC). On that day, the sun conveniently stood still for about a whole day, so Joshua could finish an important battle against the Amorites. (The battle is described in Joshua Chapter 10.) The LORD also conveniently arranged an exceptionally heavy hailstorm at the same time, suggesting that something radical happened to the earth's normal weather patterns at the same time. What actually took place in nature would be, to us, of enormous scientific importance to learn more about. However, the Bible makes the stopping of the earth's rotation on its axis and the fall of enormous, deadly hailstones incidental to the main purpose of the narrative which was recorded to show how God can use supernatural means to deliver His people. Conceiving in the mind the possibility that God actually stopped the earth's rotation and coordinated simultaneously all the forces and effects that would have been accompanied such a happening staggers the imagination---we simply don't know what actually happened except that the record says the length of one particular day was stretched by divine intervention.

Some day perhaps we will discover some supporting evidence for an unusual historic event such as a large meteor striking the earth, or a great volcanic explosion, or a close-passage of the planet Mars, which would correlate conclusively with Joshua's Long Day. The idea that God should interrupt the normal flow of time for a moral reason may strike us as "unreasonable," and, of course, explaining how He does it, (the laws of physics being what they are), is not an easy task.

Critics have felt the earth would fly apart instantly if its rotation were ever stopped or even slowed. But this assumes that God lacks sufficient power to coordinate and control all related forces such as tides and stresses in the crust.

About 714 BC King Hezekiah faced the crisis of early death and asked God for help, (2 Kings 20). He granted the king fifteen more years of life. As a sign, God caused the sun dial in the palace to move backwards "ten steps." Perhaps the reversed motion of the sun dial was caused by some sort of wobble in the earth's rotation? Who knows? God doesn't bother to tell us, apparently it isn't important for us to know how it happened.

The Hebrew idea of continuous present tense is found in the **covenant name** of God (one of many names for God in the OT). This is the God who revealed Himself to Moses at the burning bush in Sinai saying, "I am Who I am. Tell Pharaoh, 'I AM' has sent you." This could be translated equally well as "I Will be Who I Will Be." The name YHWH (Yahweh, or Jehovah) is simply derived from the verb "to be." God is the great "I AM" in the sense that each of us is a little "i am." In reading the Gospel of John it is helpful to note that Jesus used the term "I am" a number of times in the sense of the meaning of Yahweh. For instance He said, "...before Abraham was, I am." (John 8:58) Jesus was much more aware of the eternal dimension than we are. He dwelt in eternity in some sense the whole time he was present on earth as the Man Christ Jesus. Thus, some of the accomplishments by Jesus at points in time while He was on earth sent ripples into eternity which changed both the past and the future! As God is eternal and outside of time, so our human spirits are also eternal. However, our bodies are fallen, subject to death, and not yet redeemed. It is the fact that our spirits live in bodies that places us in contact with the physical world and limits our experience of time.

To illustrate how the verb tenses in English can be changed from past to future as far as Hebrew is concerned, consider the prayer of Habakkuk in Habakkuk Chapter 3,

A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet, according to Shigionoth. O LORD, I have heard the report of thee, and thy work, O LORD, do I fear. In the midst of the years renew it; in the midst of the years make it known; in wrath remember mercy. God came from Teman, and the Holy One from Mount Paran. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise. Selah His brightness was like the light, rays flashed from his hand; and there he veiled his power. Before him went pestilence, and plague followed close behind. 6 He stood and measured the earth; he looked and shook the nations; then the eternal mountains were scattered, the everlasting hills sank low. His ways were as of old. I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction; the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble. Was thy wrath against the rivers, O LORD? Was thy anger against the rivers, or thy indignation against the sea, when thou didst ride upon thy horses, upon thy chariot of victory? Thou didst strip the sheath from thy bow, and put the arrows to the string. Selah Thou didst cleave the earth with rivers. The mountains saw thee, and writhed; the raging waters swept on; the deep gave forth its voice, it lifted its hands on high. The sun and moon stood still in their habitation at the light of thine arrows as they sped, at the flash of thy glittering spear. Thou didst bestride the earth in fury, thou didst trample the nations in anger. Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people, for the salvation of thy anointed. Thou didst crush the head of the wicked, laying him bare from thigh to neck.

Selah Thou didst pierce with thy shafts the head of his warriors, who came like a whirlwind to scatter me, rejoicing as if to devour the poor in secret. Thou didst trample the sea with thy horses, the surging of mighty waters. I hear, and my body trembles, my lips quiver at the sound; rottenness enters into my bones, my steps totter beneath me. I will quietly wait for the day of trouble to come upon people who invade us. Though the fig tree do not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation. GOD, the Lord, is my strength; he makes my feet like hinds' feet, he makes me tread upon my high places.

This passage can be read either as a record of God's great and mighty deeds in the past, which the prophet recalls---or the passage can be read as predictive of God's mighty acts in the future. Either past or future meanings are correct. God *has delivered* his people Israel by great acts in history on their behalf. And, God *will deliver* Israel in the future by even greater deeds and mighty works. In any case, there is reason for God's people to hope for their salvation in those times when things get worse before they get better. Habakkuk lived in one of those times when there is little on the immediate horizon to give one hope.

Subjective Time

Various dimensions of time (which we usually don't stop and think about) are known to us in our daily experience. First, there is **subjective time**, which is the appearance of time to our sense of consciousness. Subjective time cannot be measured by a stop watch, but this type of time varies over wide limits. Sometimes we perceive a sequence of events around us as happening in a flash. Sometimes time seems to drag on "forever"---while the clock on the wall may tick off only minutes. Many of us remember how time appeared to move very slowly during childhood. A single summer day seemed to last forever, and the interval between Christmases and school vacations was an "eternity." Later in life, some of us look back and see that decades have passed almost as if they were but months. Carl Jung noted that in the second half of life it seemed as if all the events in the past are equidistant from the present. An event that took place 40 years ago may flash back into our consciousness as if it had happened yesterday. In sudden accidents some have reported that their whole lives flashed before their eyes in great detail, in a what was really only a few seconds or less on the clock. When we dream at night what seems to be many hours of time is shown by REM (Rapid Eye Movement) sleep patterns to be only minutes of elapsed time. When we are bored not only does time drag on with seemingly endless monotony, the "quality" of our conscious experience is low. On the other hand when life is exciting and fulfilling, the forward movement of time is more obvious and the "quality" of the moment is greatly magnified. I have come to believe that subjective time has been greatly affected (negatively) by the fall of man. Therefore for God's people heaven will not only be life that last forever, it will also be life of immensely restored quality and enjoyment.

God's final judgment of all of us will no doubt reveal that what we considered important and precious was often rubbish in the eyes of God. Conversely, small forgotten moments we thought nothing of may be elevated and rewarded when God's records showed we uttered a helpful word of comfort to someone in need, or gave aid from a right motive.

Biological time has to do with wildlife migratory patterns, animal hibernation, biorhythms, jet lag, circadian (24-hour) patterns and menstrual cycles---numerous phenomena in nature that are loosely coupled to dynamical time (that is, to months and seasons). Although such biological time clocks are mysterious and still not well understood, they are probably closer to the way God keeps time, if we remember that the Jewish calendar is based on the lunar month, the cycle of harvest, and the motion of the earth, moon, planets, and stars. Seen in this light, the scientist's way of keeping time---with precision quartz clocks and atomic resonators is actually somewhat arbitrary and less "absolute" than God's heavenly clocks and calendars.

See also: [God and the Quality of Time](#)

Linear Time and Cyclical Time

The Hebrew view of time also includes the concept that time moves from event to event in a line---not a straight line, to be sure, but towards a goal. The goal is always the future, yet the goal intended by God is always to be fulfilled in history. Bible prophecies frequently have both an immediate and a long-term fulfillment, for example. In the Bible, sins are seen to have consequences that follow inevitably, moral choices lead to measurable results for good or for ill, and history proceeds towards the definite outworking purposes of God.

"Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is easy, that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life, and those who find it are few." (Matthew 7:14, 15)

A consummation of the ages lies ahead, for which all else has been but a shadowy preparation. In both ancient Greek culture, (among the Pythagoreans, Stoics and Neoplatonists), and in Hindu culture (especially during the Vedic period, 1500-600 BC), one runs onto the concept of circular, or cyclical time. This is sometimes symbolized by the **uroboros**, the snake chasing his own tail. In this view of time, the beginning leads back around to the end, and the cycle starts all over again. The Babylonians, ancient Chinese, Aztecs, Mayans, and the Norse had cyclical calendars. In pantheistic religious systems of thought the universe is often depicted as going through great long epochs of rebirth, growth, decay, and destruction. The Hindu cycles, for example, range from 360 human years, to 300 trillion years (which is the lifetime of the gods before their rebirth). Reincarnation---which has no basis in the Bible at all (see Hebrews 9:27)---springs from such an Eastern pantheistic point of view. Augustine was among the first to insist on linear time as opposed to cyclical, since he observed that many important events in the Bible clearly happened one time only. Since clocks were not well-developed until the 14th Century, it was perhaps easier for the ancients to imagine events in history as recurring since the four seasons and patterns of the stars in the heavens were cyclical.

The Bible depicts the human race as having a definite clear beginning, a history which has been accurately recorded by God, and an approaching day of judgment when all men will be evaluated justly by their Creator. The fact that "books are to be opened" on judgment day means God keeps track of detail (by means of his "recording angels")---even if we do not ourselves keep good record books. God even pays attention to the numbering of the hairs on our heads. He will see to

it that truth and justice ultimately prevail no matter how grim things seem to us at the moment (1 Cor. 4:5). A good example of the work of a recording angel is to be found in Ezekiel 9:2ff.

Dynamical Time and Atomic Time

The "clock" for measuring time given us in the Bible can be called "dynamical time" because this clock is based on the motion of the earth on its axis (defining the day), the period of the moon as it revolves around the earth establishing the lunar month (used in the Jewish calendar), and the time it takes for the earth to make one trip around the sun, which defines the year.

Planetary alignments, constellations, comets, meteors, special stars, and other events in the heavens are ordained by God for marking out unusual events. This time-keeping mechanism which relies, essentially, on Newton's law of gravity is described in Genesis One as something God put into place on the Fourth Day of creation:

"And God said, 'Let there be lights [Hebrew *ma'or*] in the firmament of the heavens to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, and let them be lights in the firmament of the heavens to give light upon the earth.' And it was so. And God made the two great lights, the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night; he made the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of the heavens to give light upon the earth, to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, a fourth day." (Genesis 1:14-19)

Most common clocks keep dynamical time. But also in common use today are "atomic clocks." In fact our present precision time standards are set to atomic time rather than a dynamical time standard. Atomic time would be locked in step with dynamical time if the velocity of light were an absolute, fixed constant. As discussed elsewhere, (see [On The Constancy of the Speed of Light](#)), a careful statistical analysis of all the measured values of the velocity of light, c , shows that c has decreased during the past 300 years, and thus atomic clocks have slowed down with respect to dynamical clocks. When the velocity of light first began to be measured it appears that the annual decrease in velocity was very rapid. In fact it has been suggested that the initial value of c when the universe was new may have been as much as one to ten million times higher than its present value.

It is not possible for c to be a variable without forcing a select group of other constants to also vary. Otherwise the universe would be unstable and serious inconsistencies would occur in many equations of physics. The evidence available at the present time suggests that c , Planck's constant h , the rest mass of the electron in the atomic frame of reference, and radio-active decay rates are not fixed. The gravitational constant G is fixed, as is macroscopic mass and most other physical properties affecting life on earth, however. It seems probable that the reason c has decreased is because of an increasing permeability of free space (one of the "metric" properties of space). This would result, for example, from a shrinkage of the original universe after it was "stretched out" by God to its maximum diameter on the Second Day of creation.

The observed decrease in the velocity of light originally studied in detail by Australian scientists Barry Setterfield and Trevor Norman follows a steeply decaying curve leveling off to nearly zero change in recent years. Their model is shown below.

[Chart: Comparison of Atomic Time and Dynamic Time.](#)

Since it is quite possible that the velocity of light has decreased by a factor of perhaps 10 million or more, the long geological ages now in vogue, which follow the atomic clock, would actually be compressed by this amount according to the dynamical time scale of ordinary history.

[Chart: Conversion of Geological Ages in Atomic Time to Dynamic Time.](#)

Time's Arrow in Physics

Many physical phenomena can be described very satisfactorily by mathematical equations. Usually these (differential) equations involve mass or similar measurable properties of the physical world, and the dimensions of length, width, height and time. From a strictly mathematical point of view it does not matter if time is positive or negative---most equations of physics are time reversible.

However it is not so in real life, because of something which is called "Time's Arrow." The real world we live in is governed by an important principle known as the Second Law of Thermodynamics. The Second Law can be stated in several forms, but basically it refers to the tendency of things to rot, rust, decay and fall apart with the passage of time. As we use energy, the total amount of available energy available to do additional work decreases inexorably.

Orderly systems proceed to break-down in the direction of chaos, and the "information content" of things decreases with the passage of time. Both outside energy and outside organizing intelligence are required to bring order out of chaos.

In the case of living organisms, it is the genetic code which instructs cells to build themselves into orderly organisms, but this is accomplished at the expense of an overall decrease in the total available energy of the universe.

In physics this principle is often stated as "Entropy always increases." Entropy is a measure of the unavailable energy in a system or the state of disorder. Technically speaking this law of entropy applies to what is known as "closed systems." However if a sufficiently large circle is drawn around most any system one can think of the law applies without exception. The earth and its atmosphere do not comprise a thermodynamically closed system because of energy input from the sun, for example. However by drawing a circle around the solar system, one has a closed system.

Incidentally it can be shown that energy from the sun alone is not sufficient to decrease the overall entropy of earth or to drive biological organisms in the direction of increasing complexity. (See for instance, Charles B. Thaxton, Walter L. Bradley and Roger L. Olsen, *The Mystery of Life's Origin* (Philosophical Library; New York, 1984). This point is widely misunderstood among secular scientists today. It is wrongly taught that energy inputs alone are sufficient for living systems to self-organize out of simple molecules, given enough time. The above authors, and other scientists as well, have shown by careful calculation that programming information from a source outside a system is required, in addition to energy, for the molecules of life and living cells to be assembled.

In conclusion, physical processes known to science require that time move from the past through the present and into the future irreversibly. "Linear," "one-dimensional" time is the time frame of the physics of the macroscopic world. This view of time is consistent with the progression of the ages in the Bible. See also: [The Mystery of Time's Arrow](#)

Time in the New Testament

The New Testament appeals to reason, to the conscience, and to the rational mind to communicate the same truths that are found in the Old Testament in story form. Someone has suggested that the Old Testament appeals to the right side of the brain and the New, to the left side. Bible teacher and former corporate executive and scientist Chuck Missler often says,

"The New Testament is in the Old Concealed,
and The Old Testament is in the New Revealed."

The basic message of God's love and actions in history is really the same, but it is presented in two differing formats in the two halves of Scripture. The New Testament message is addressed not only to the Jews but to the pagans, the Goyim, the entire non-Jewish world. When the New Testament was written down in the First Century, AD, Greek and Roman culture and government dominated much of the ancient world. The original language now changed between the two Testaments without warning from Hebrew to Koine Greek.

The Greek language of the New Testament refers to time as measured in *chronos* and *kairos*--- times and seasons. The meanings of the Greek New Testament words for times and seasons add more to an understanding of the complex nature of time in our universe. Chronos (Strong's Concordance Number 5550) means quantity of time, space of time, duration, succession of moments, length of time, or a bounded period of time. To understand this word, it is helpful to read the passages of the New Testament where chronos is used. These include Matthew 2:7, Luke 4:5; 8:27; 20:9, Acts 20:18, Romans 16:25, and Mark 2:19. Kairos refers to the quality of time or season, the epoch characterized by certain events, the decisive quality of happening, an opportune time, or a fortuitous moment.

The renowned Bible scholar Archbishop Trench wrote,

"The 'seasons' are the critical epoch-making periods foreordained of God, when all that has been slowly, and often without observation, ripening through long ages is mature and comes to birth in grand decisive events, which constitute at once the close of one period and the commencement of another. Such, for example, was the passing away of the old Jewish dispensation; such, again, the recognition of Christianity as the religion of the Roman Empire; such the conversion of those outside; such the great revival which went along with the first institution of the Mendicant Orders; such, by still better right, the Reformation; such, above all others, the second coming of the Lord in glory."

Kairos (Strong's Concordance Number 2540) is used in such passages as Romans 5:6, Galatians 6:10, Matthew 13:34, 26:18, Revelation 12:12, I Peter 1:11, and Luke 4:13. In the New Testament we have expressions like "times of refreshing" (Acts 3:19), "times of ignorance" (Acts 17:30), and "the times of the Gentiles" (Luke 21:24).

Greek also uses the word *aion* for age, usually referring to an indefinite period of time marked by certain moral or spiritual characteristics. The plural *aionios*, denotes the eternal or everlasting in the New Testament. For example "life eternal" (*aionios zoe*) in John 17:3 refers to an ever-increasing knowledge of God. This word and its derivatives and compounds is very common in the New Testament and can be searched by looking up Strong's Concordance Numbers 165 and 166.

Times of Stress

To illustrate the importance the Bible places on the content and quality of an interval of time within history, the expression "times of stress" occurs in one of the most interesting passages in the New Testament, Paul's second letter to 2 Timothy 3:1-5. Our understanding of the message is enriched by looking up the individual Greek words in this passage in a lexicon. The passage in question reads as follows:

"But understand this; that in the last times there will come times of stress. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, inhuman, implacable, slanderers, profligates, fierce, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding the form of religion but denying the power of it. Avoid such people."

An analysis of the details of this passage will be found in a separate discussion, [Times of Stress](#)

The "Last Days"

The entire New Testament uses the term "last days" to refer to the entire 2000 year interval between the first and second advents of Christ. Christ was born "late" in history as God measures time---see Galatians 4:4. He will return after recurring cycles of stress have plagued mankind. These cycles will come with repeated frequency and intensity as the age draws to a close---cycles compared in Scripture to the birth pangs of a woman about to give birth to a child. They will also be less and less local and more and more global. For example, only in our century have we had "World" Wars. The present world economy is another example. A recession in one nation these days affects the world economy creating a crisis not easily corrected by any individual sovereign nation.

It is not possible for us to anticipate where and when the next "time of stress" will befall us, nor can we tell what form it will take. Thus, we cannot plan ahead very well, so we must take one day at a time as Jesus advised us in the Sermon on the Mount, "...Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." (Matthew 6:34) (KJV) During these times of stress, the real character of human beings surfaces, raw, ugly sores open in society, and the situation becomes dangerous and violent. Astrologers explain that such times are at least partially caused by "unfortunate" aspects and alignments of the planets.

For a discussion of the use of the term "last days" in the New Testament see [Are These the Last Days?](#) by Ray C. Stedman.

The term "the Day of the Lord" appears frequently in the Bible. The Day of the Lord is an extended period of time, not just a 24-hour day, and is to be contrasted with the times in which we now live which we might call "the Day of man," or "man's day." See [The Day of the Lord.](#) For a chart of Bible prophecy and the end of the age see [Chart of the End of the Age.](#)

The Mysterious Flow of Time

Although time is measured in history in terms of clocks and calendars, it is also articulated into seasons. These periods of time bend, stretch, and unfold as God periodically moves the course of history in a different direction. Often, at the last minute, God postpones the final consummation of events, withdraws impending judgments, or even blesses us unexpectedly just when it seems

to us that we are at a point of no return in our personal lives or when we think the sky is about to fall on our heads bringing an end to the world as we know it.

God is outside of time. He is an eternally self-existing, self-defining, living Being. Since he created time as we know it, we can think of past, present, and future are eternally present before His eyes.

God's actions **in eternity** can affect past, present, and future (as experienced by mankind), simultaneously. A certain action of God completed in the past can have on-going and lasting results. Other activities of God, such as His expressions and grace and mercy towards us all, continue day after day. Certain events, such as the "appointed" hour we die or the Day of Judgment, are fixed in the future, predetermined by God. Since God is more concerned with the quality of time than the quantity or measure of time, we can all expect to experience time differently in eternity depending on the quality of our lives during our present training on earth. Since God is outside of time, past, present and future are always present before Him. Consider the case of a sudden airplane disaster where all the passengers and crew have but moments to cry out to God in a hundred or more sudden, separate, desperate prayers. God has all of eternity to hear even the shortest of these prayers, to review all the lives and facts and His own timetables for history---He knows every heart, every motive, all the facts and He has all the time in the world to take a myriad of data into consideration before answering or denying each one of those prayers! He can take His time, all the time He needs, and yet not fail to answer every one of these simultaneous prayers, each with justice, compassion, and certitude. He does not need to make split-second decisions as we do, He is never caught off guard, and when He does act He can accomplish the impossible in a flash. An example of this sudden and complete action by God will be in the coming resurrection of the dead as described in First Corinthians,

"Lo! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed."

Some have attempted to estimate the time duration of a "twinkling of the eye." It is surely no more than milliseconds in our time frame.

There are many references in the Bible to "appointments" on God's calendar indicating that there is a divine plan for the ages in effect at all times. The age prior to the one in which we now live carries the title "times of ignorance." Speaking in Athens the Apostle Paul declared to the crowd,

"The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all men life and breath and everything. And he made from one [man, Adam] every nation of men to live on all the face of the earth, **having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their habitation**, that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel after him and find him. Yet he is not far from each one of us, for 'In him we live and move and have our being'; as even some of your poets have said, 'For we are indeed his offspring.' Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the Deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, a representation by the art and imagination of man.

"The **times of ignorance** God overlooked, but now he commands all men everywhere to repent, because **he has fixed a day** on which he will judge the world in righteousness by

a man whom he has appointed, [Jesus] and of this he has given assurance to all men by raising him from the dead." (Acts 17:24-31)

Time Disrupted by the Fall

The universe was created for man---in science this is called the "anthropic principle." It is also evident from the opening chapters of the Bible. An empty universe inhabited only by God and the angels makes little sense to most of us. God does not "need" a universe, nor does he need man to add to His Being. He is fully sufficient and complete in all His attributes so our creation adds nothing to His essential nature. The universe was made as a home for man, and man was made for fellowship with God (see Isaiah 45:18). Man was placed in charge of the creation as Hebrews Chapter 2 recalls. God pronounced nature "good" and valuable to Him before He placed man on earth. Intuitively it is unattractive to imagine that the universe sat empty for aeons before man arrived on the scene---as evolutionary thought teaches was the case. According to Genesis, God proceeded to create the universe step by step in an orderly way, and when He had the ecosystem prepared, He made man (last of all) and placed him squarely in the center of things to understand and to rule over what had been created. [Man has since lost his dominion over the creation---but that is another story. God has a restoration plan underway].

The notion of an originally upright, unflawed universe also suggests that the moon and planets may have once been more beautiful, more pristine, and more "inhabitable" than they are now. I myself happen to believe that some sort of cosmic disaster has already occurred throughout the solar system and that there is ample evidence now of destructive forces at work in the physical universe that were not put there by God. The Biblical view also contradicts the notion that man is improving and society is advancing morally and socially. Rather, it is the grace of God which makes life bearable and prevents mankind from self-destruction.

The original creation was "good" (unmarred, flawless) at the end of creation week. Then the angels fell and later man fell. The fall of man resulted in a "curse" on the physical world, a curse which has not yet been lifted. [Actually there are at least five significant curses named in Genesis that effect the world we live in today]. The fall of man and the fall of Satan seems to have made fundamental changes in certain laws of physics and biology as well. The nature of **subjective** time, i.e., the "quality" of time as we experience it has changed since creation. Also, man in his present condition is constrained to a rather limited "one-dimensional" time frame whereas before the fall, our first parents enjoyed a multidimensional quality of time much richer than we can even begin to imagine.

Before the fall, our first parents in their innocence and purity were in a very real sense enjoying a quality of life moment by moment that is unknown to us at the present time.

Incidentally the role of the angels in the government of the physical universe as well as in the affairs of men is confirmed by a verse in Hebrews,

"...For it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come, of which we are speaking." (2:5)

The implication of this verse is the age we now live in **is** governed by the angels---the age which is to come will not be governed by angels, but by the redeemed of mankind who are in Christ the Lord.

A Glimpse into Eternity

The Biblical view of time found in the New Testament is that time in the heavenly places, that is in the spiritual world, is multidimensional. For example, in the Book of the Revelation we see scenes taking place on earth in human history and scenes in the heavenly places going on at the same time. Time in heaven apparently moves in the forward direction as it does on earth. For example Revelation 8:1 describes a period of silence in heaven lasting "about half an hour." But time in heaven has a quality and a pace different from time on earth.

A good example of an event occurring in "eternity" is found in the Gospels: one day Jesus stepped up to the top of Mount Mizar, a minor peak on the slopes of Mount Hermon, above Baniyas (ancient Caesarea Philippi) in northern Israel and was transfigured before His frightened disciples, Peter, James, and John. Appearing with Him (about 30 AD) were Moses (from about 1400 BC) and Elijah, (who was translated into heaven without seeing death about 850 BC). All were alive and well, as if contemporaries, oblivious to the years that had separated them by our way of reckoning time.

This incident (recorded in Luke 9:28-36; Matthew 17:1-8; and Mark 9:2-8) shows that all the usual rules and constraints of time (as we commonly think of them) were momentarily lifted. Thus, it was not only possible for men from ancient times to appear alive in the presence of the disciples of Jesus, but also for Jesus to assume His glorified body all at the same "time." Luke's account is as follows:

"And he said to all, 'If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake, he will save it. For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself? For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God.'

"Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. And as he was praying, the appearance of his countenance was altered, and his raiment became dazzling white. And behold, two men talked with him, Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem. Now Peter and those who were with him were heavy with sleep, and when they wakened they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. And as the men were parting from him, Peter said to Jesus, 'Master, it is well that we are here; let us make three booths, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah'---not knowing what he said. As he said this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, 'This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!' And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silence and told no one in those days anything of what they had seen." (Luke 9:23-36)

Another example of the multiple dimensions of time and eternity will be helpful to the reader. Consider the various time frames that are involved in the writing, printing, and reading of a book, for example, a mystery novel. Perhaps the author took a year to write the manuscript, but drew from many years of personal experience and from his own reading of history. Suppose six

months elapse before the book is on the market and reaches the reader. The reader then begins the book, and after a period time of intermittent reading, finishes it. (The reader can even skip ahead to the end, if he wishes, to see how it all turns out). Internal to the book is the time frame of the story, which may include flashbacks in the lives of some of the characters. After reading the book, it goes on the library shelf, but the reader retains a summary version, condensed in his memory. He is free to recall the book, or read it again. In this example one can count half a dozen, or more, different time frames all co-existing!

Time As Experienced in a Resurrection Body

After His resurrection, Jesus further demonstrated the capacities of His resurrection body by appearing and disappearing at will among His disciples, in the days between the resurrection and the ascension. From such records in the Gospels, we can conclude that resurrection bodies are equipped for multidimensional space and time travel. Jesus ate food and could be touched and felt, in His resurrection body. He did not return in a ghost-like, shadowy form. In his two letters to the Corinthians, the Apostle Paul clarifies the nature of the resurrection. Physical death is the point a believer steps out of the time frame of human history. When a person leaves time and enters eternity. Once in eternity one bypasses intermediate (future) times to arrive at the resurrection at the exact same instant all other believers do, in fact "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye."

First note carefully the wording the Apostle uses in describing the resurrection body as already in existence in eternity:

"For we know that if the earthly tent [Greek *skenos* = "tent"] we live in is destroyed, we have [now] a building [Greek: *oikos* = building] from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Here indeed we groan, and long to put on our heavenly dwelling, so that by putting it on we may not be found naked. For while we are still in this tent, we sigh with anxiety; not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. So we are always of good courage; we know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. We are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord." (2 Corinthians 5:1-5)

The resurrection of Christians who have died during the past two thousand years immediately precedes the catching up of living believers at a yet-future event called the "rapture of the church" [see separate essays on the "appearing" and the "coming" of the Lord]. This appearing [*parousia*] of the Lord Jesus for His church is an event in eternity which intrudes into our time frame at some particular date on God's appointment calendar,

"But we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning those who are asleep, [died] that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel's call, and with **the sound of the trumpet** of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first; then we who are alive, who are left, shall be caught up together with them in the

clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.

"But as to the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves know well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. When people say, 'There is peace and security,' then sudden destruction will come upon them as travail comes upon a woman with child, and there will be no escape. But you are not in darkness, brethren, for that day to surprise you like a thief. For you are all sons of light and sons of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness. So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. For those who sleep sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. But, since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us so that whether we wake or sleep we might live with him. Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing." (1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11)

In this passage three distinct events occur: (1) a great shout from the Lord Jesus which summons the dead back to life, (2) the Archangel's {Michael's} call to Israel, and the sound of a trumpet to summon those believers alive at that moment of history. That same trumpet and the immediate transformation of living Christians at the rapture is described in 1 Corinthians 15:

"Lo! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For **the trumpet will sound**, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable nature must put on the imperishable, and this mortal nature must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory.' 'O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?' The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain." (15:51-58)

In the experience of the Christian, one's personal death corresponds exactly with the Second Coming of Christ, though this event will also happen on earth at the definite date and time in recorded human history. This is what Paul meant when he said to be absent from the body was to be at home with the Lord, not as a spirit, but in a resurrection body along with everyone else who knows God. This can be seen at the Martyrdom of Stephen in the book of Acts.

"Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth against him. But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; and he said, 'Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God.' But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together upon him. Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him; and the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. And as they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' And he knelt down and cried with a loud voice, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them.' And when he had said this, he fell asleep." (Acts 7:56-8:2)

As Stephen died he saw heaven opened and Jesus *standing* at the right hand of God. Throughout the New Testament Jesus is ordinarily pictured as *seated* at the right hand of God. Evidently He stands to receive His bride, the church, at the rapture. Thus all Christians get to heaven at the same moment. In one sense, then, heaven is now empty. There is no value in praying to the Virgin Mary or St. Jude since they aren't there yet! But as will be seen shortly, there is another sense in which all believers are already in heaven.

Who is Presently in Heaven?

Not only has Jesus Christ been raised from the dead, He is now seated in heaven at the right hand of God in a new resurrection body. All authority and power in the universe has been placed into His hands, (Matthew 28:18). Therefore heaven is certainly not empty. The angels are there and the splendor and glory of God is unchanged and undiminished.

"As I [Daniel] looked, thrones were placed and one that was ancient of days took his seat; his raiment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames, its wheels were burning fire. A stream of fire issued and came forth from before him; a thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; the court sat in judgment, and the books were opened...I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed." (Daniel 7:9-14)

When an individual enters into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as Lord, he or she is immediately spiritually regenerated and becomes identified with Jesus Christ in his death, burial and resurrection. This is the meaning of baptism---being "placed into" Christ, into the Body of Christ. Paul says in Romans,

"Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the sinful body might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. For he who has died is freed from sin. But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. For we know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him." (Romans 6:3-9)

Paul elaborates on this in Ephesians,

"And you he made alive, when you were dead through the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience. Among these we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of body and mind, and so we were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), **and**

raised us up with him, and made us sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God---not because of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." (Ephesians 2:1-11)

Although our spirits and souls are made new if we know Jesus Christ personally, our bodies are not yet redeemed. It is our present mortal physical bodies (connecting us by the five senses) which link us to the "old creation." In spirit we already have been "raised" from the dead, we are dwelling in the heavenly places---we are already seated with Christ at the right hand of God. If we had our resurrection bodies "put on" instead of our old earth-tents, we would immediately perceive that we all had arrived in heaven together. Hebrews Chapter 12 describes our present dwelling in heaven:

"For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire, and darkness, and gloom, and a tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and a voice whose words made the hearers entreat that no further messages be spoken to them. For they could not endure the order that was given, 'If even a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned.' Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, 'I tremble with fear.'

"But you **have come** to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to a judge who is God of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks more graciously than the blood of Abel. See that you do not refuse him who is speaking. For if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less shall we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven. His voice then shook the earth; but now he has promised, 'Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heaven.' This phrase, 'Yet once more,' indicates the removal of what is shaken, as of what has been made, in order that what cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe; for our God is a consuming fire." (Hebrews 12:18-29)

So in one sense as all the above passages tell us, all believers are presently dwelling in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. But in another sense the only man who is now in heaven is Jesus. Mary is not there yet, nor Jude the half-brother of Jesus, nor the Apostle Paul, nor my grandmother. The resurrection has not yet taken place. And there is no "waiting room" where our loved-ones are now in a holding pattern standing-by for heaven either.

When the resurrection does occur we shall all arrive there at exactly the same time. This is explained in more detail in the appended sermon on Time and Eternity by Ray C. Stedman.

Rewards Beyond this Life

Eternal life---which is the free gift of God to all those who receive Jesus Christ as Lord---is a kind of time dimension characterized not only by endless duration, but by very high quality. God's time has richness, variety, freedom from boredom and endless diversity. Living in

fellowship with Him who is Life is not only liberating but exciting beyond the power of language to describe. Eternity does not mean timelessness, except perhaps for those in hell.

"O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! 'For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?' 'Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?' For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory for ever. Amen." (Romans 11:33-36)

Notes and References

Note A. "God is neither time-bound nor space-bound, for He existed *before* the Universe existed, before the creation of space or matter or time. Einstein put the nature of the relationship between these three realities this way:

If you don't take my words too seriously, I would say this: if we assumed that all matter disappeared from the world, then *before relativity*, one believed that space and time would continue to exist in *an empty world*. But, according to the Theory of Relativity, if matter and its motion disappeared, there would no longer be any space *or time* [emphasis mine].

"Long before Einstein, Augustine * had perceived the real equation of time with matter. He saw that space and matter are co-existent, and he held that God created time when He created the Universe.

* Augustine, *City of God*, Bk. XI, chap. 6: "Beyond doubt, the World was not made in Time, but *with* Time." As a matter of fact, the Jews themselves anticipated Augustine, though with somewhat less precision and sophistication. [See Louis Ginsberg, *Legends of the Jews*, Phil., Jewish Publ. Assoc. of Amer., 1955, Vol. V, p. 6, note 14, quoting from *Bereshith Rabbah 3:7* and *Koheleth 3:11*]. It is also noted here that the Jewish philosopher, Philo, accepted the view held by his contemporaries. He adopted the concept that time came into being when the universe was created [see Philo, *On Creation*, Vol. 1, Loeb classical Library, Harvard, 1971, p. 21].

"Time began *with* the creation of matter. Of God Himself, Augustine said this: 'Thy years stand together at the same time...Thy years are one Day, and Thy day is not like our sequence of days but is today.'" *

* Augustine, *Confessions*, Bk. XI, chap. 13, § 16.

(Above comments from the Arthur Custance Library, <http://custance.org/>).

1. To establish an accurate calendar of events, the Chronology-History Research Institute (PO Box 3043; Spencer, Iowa, 51301) is undertaking computer dating of the Bible. This group has issued several important books and publications and has a helpful newsletter, *It's About Time*, .
2. A valuable compilation of more than forty calendars, ancient and modern, is found in Frank Parise, ed., *The Book of Calendars* (Facts on File; New York, 1982). The number of days in the year in all ancient calendars was 360. This was changed in 701 BC for reasons that are still disputed by Bible scholars. See Chuck Missler's briefing package *Signs in the Heavens* available

from [Koinonia House](#), PO Box D, Couer d'Alene, Idaho 83816-0347. Chuck has an excellent briefing package available on the Jewish Feast Days as well.

3. Among contemporary creationists, Donald E. Patten has written a number of provocative books and articles on catastrophic happenings in ancient times. See his *The Biblical Flood and the Ice Epoch* (Pacific Meridien Press; Seattle, 1966); *The Long Day of Joshua and Six Other Catastrophes* (ibid., 1973); and Six Volumes of which he is the editor, *A Symposium on Creation* (ibid., 1977). Patten is controversial and many of his ideas have been disputed or challenged. Gerardus D. Bouw, PhD., *Geocentricity*, (Association for Biblical Astronomy, 4527 Wetzel Avenue, Cleveland, OH 44109, 1992) discusses Joshua's long day and other unusual events recorded in the Bible.

4. The late Arthur Custance wrote a series of scholarly "[Doorway Papers](#)" some years ago that were later published by Zondervan Press (1976). Some of his books relevant to this essay include *Journey out of Time, Time and Eternity*, and *Two Men Called Adam, and The Seed of the Woman*. His entire library is now online. Published originally by Doorway Publications, %Evelyn M. White, 38 Elora Drive, Unit 41, Hamilton, Ontario, L9C 7L6, Canada.

A wonderful classic book on God, time and eternity is Nathan R. Wood, *The Trinity in the Universe*, 1978, Reprint, Kregel Press, Grand Rapids, MI. Biblical concepts of Time and Eternity are eloquently discussed by C.S. Lewis in his *Mere Christianity* (Macmillan Publishing; New York, 1960); and by Ray C. Stedman in *Authentic Christianity* (Multnomah Press; Portland, 1975). The latter book is available from Discovery Publications, 3505 Middlefield Road; Palo Alto, CA 94306. Ray Stedman attributes much of his understanding to the scholarly work of Dr. Arthur Custance.

5. Richard Morris's, *Time's Arrow* (Simon and Schuster; New York, 1980), is a very good book on this subject. Morris includes a good bibliography.

6. Kenneth Jon Rose, *The Body in Time* (John Wiley and Sons, 1988) is a well-written book on biological clocks especially as related to the human organism.

7. [The Concept of Absolute Time in Science and Jewish Thought, by Professor Herman Branover and Professor Ruvin Ferber](#)

8. The following quote will introduce a very fine recent book on science and religion:

'I AM'

There is an old Texas aphorism: 'Time is how God keeps things from happening all at once.' Perhaps for God things do happen all at once, and 'time' as we know it is only an approximate description.

As long ago as the fourth and fifth centuries the Christian philosopher Augustine of Hippo gave a great deal of thought and prayer to the subject of time. Like Aristotle and Islamic natural philosophers, Augustine concluded that time begins with the running of the universe. He made a sharp cut between the things that exist in time and space and what is outside time and Augustine began with the question 'What was God doing before He created Heaven and Earth?' and decided that the question has no meaning because words such as 'before' and 'after' and 'then' can't apply where time as we know it doesn't according to Augustine, time as we know it is part and parcel of this creation, not something that applies to God.

The timeless present tense in which Augustine proposed that God exists is difficult to imagine or describe. Augustine wrote: 'Who shall lay hold upon the mind of man, that it may stand and see that time with its past and future must be determined by eternity, which stands and does not pass, which has in itself no past or future.' Augustine doesn't say, you will notice, that eternity lasts for ever, though that's how most of us think of eternity. Eternity lasts no time at all. Eternity 'stands and does not pass' and 'in eternity nothing passes but all is present.'

In this model of reality, you can't talk about a 'time' before time was created, any more than you can talk about it Hawking's no-boundary universe. There was never a 'time' time didn't exist. 'There can be no time apart from creation.. Let them cease to talk such nonsense,' wrote Augustine.' What he proposed instead of 'such nonsense' was that God, existing in an eternal present, creates chronological time for the benefit our human minds and existence.

What would it be like if events were not ordered in chronological time? If God knows everything in the universe that ever happened and ever will happen in the same way (except infinitely more detail) that I know what's happening right now the room with me, in what way would that affect God's power to affect this universe? What meaning could cause and effect have in such a setting? What would happen to 'predictability'? Where events are not filed chronologically, is there some other filing system? Those are questions we have no hope of answer but we can speculate a little.

Our chronological framework forbids knowledge of the future. That's a prescription one wouldn't have in a timeless situation. It wouldn't be at all surprising to find God knowing the future---it would all be NOW to God. That makes problems for us, because it is difficult to think of ourselves as having free will if someone knows the future and knows what we are going to decide. However, I know what I did yesterday. I decided to push on this chapter rather than to write some long-overdue letters. It would never occur to me that this knowledge, which I have on Wednesday, in any way obliged me to make that yesterday, on Tuesday. True, I can't change my mind about it now. Is it my knowledge about what I decided yesterday that makes it impossible for me to change that now? Why necessarily conclude it is that?

We cannot assume it is knowledge of the past that robs us of the ability to change it. Why should we assume that knowledge of the future robs us of our ability to change the future? Why, in any instance, should knowledge of an outcome determine that outcome? In our framework of chronological time, knowing the future *would* seem to determine the future, and certainly the psychological situation of knowing and having free will at the same time would not be one we could cope with---a good argument for why that possibility isn't allowed in our creation. But why should this necessarily hold for God in a regime where time as we know it doesn't exist at all? It isn't difficult to imagine a situation in which I have free will and God might know every last detail of what I'm going to do for the rest of my life. seventeenth-century Afghan writer expressed it, 'All the pages not yet written He has read'---and yet I can write on them anything I choose.

The biblical description of God's activity in the world makes a great deal more sense if Augustine's model of time is the correct one: God's ability, as described in the Old Testament, to plan a period of thousands of years, taking into account all the spanners that his Chosen People are going to throw into the works; the blame that falls on Judas, though Judas' betrayal of Christ fulfills prophecy; puzzling incidents in which Christ apparently overlooks the fact that his disciples are constrained by chronological point of view and has to re-explain in a way that make sense to them; Christ's statement 'Before Abraham was born, I am,' and all the incidents of prophecy, great and small. None of it seems so bizarre if God is seeing it and intervening in the whole of 'history' at the same instant, not constraining our free will but taking advantage of our choices and mitigating the consequences. The oddness from our point of view merely the oddness with which this perfectly feasible activity was up in our chronological time, where it doesn't mesh and we no vocabulary to describe it.

We, of course, have no idea whether this is the way time works---or the way God works. We do know that we can't yet understand time. It remains one of the great mysteries. We suspect that chronological arrow of time as we know it is a broken symmetry, because the underlying laws of physics don't in general an arrow of time themselves. With few exceptions, they are reversible. If a law allows a sequence of events to occur, it also allows a time-reversed version of the same sequence---the film run backward. Nevertheless, in most of nature, events occur in a time-directed manner and the film is never run backward. Once again, as in the case of galaxy clusters, it's to determine whether what we observe is really a broken symmetry or something more fundamental. The best judgment sent indicates that chronological time is only a part of a more fundamental reality.

Kitty Ferguson, *The Fire in the Equations: Science, Religion, and the Search for God*, pp. 225-227. (Wm B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1994)

original material, 1987; revised April 18, 1995, October 14, 1995, August 14, 1996, April 9, 1999. June 11, 2001.

A Quote from C.S. Lewis: It is a very silly idea that in reading a book you must never "skip." All sensible people skip freely when they come to a chapter which they find is going to be no use to them. In this chapter I am going to talk about something which may be helpful to some readers, but which may seem to others merely an unnecessary complication. If you are one of the second sort of readers, then I advise you not to bother about this chapter at all but to turn on to the next.

In the last chapter I had to touch on the subject of prayer, and while that is still fresh in your mind and my own, I should like to deal with a difficulty that some people find about the whole idea of prayer. A man put it to me by saying "I can believe in God all right, but what I cannot swallow is the idea of Him attending to several hundred million human beings who are all addressing Him at the same moment." And I have found that quite a lot of people feel this. Now, the first thing to notice is that the whole sting of it comes in the words *at the same moment*. Most of us can imagine God attending to any number of applicants if only they came one by one

and He had an endless time to do it in. So what is really at the back of this difficulty is the idea of God having to fit too many things into one moment of time.

Well that is of course what happens to us. Our life comes to us moment by moment. One moment disappears before the next comes along; and there is room for very little in each. That is what Time is like. And of course you and I tend to take it for granted that this Time series--this arrangement of past, present and future--is not simply the way life comes to us but the way all things really exist. We tend to assume that the whole universe and God Himself are always moving on from past to future just as we do. But many learned men do not agree with that. It was the Theologians who first started the idea that some things are not in Time at all: later the Philosophers took it over: and now some of the scientists are doing the same.

Almost certainly God is not in Time. His life does not consist of moments following one another. If a million people are praying to Him at ten-thirty tonight, He need not listen to them all in that one little snippet which we call ten-thirty. Ten-thirty--and every other moment from the beginning of the world--is always the Present for Him. If you like to put it that way, He has all eternity in which to listen to the split second of prayer put up by a pilot as his plane crashes in flames.

That is difficult, I know. Let me try to give something, not the same, but a bit like it. Suppose I am writing a novel. I write "Mary laid down her work; next moment came a knock at the door!" For Mary who has to live in the imaginary time of my story there is no interval between putting down the work and hearing the knock. But I, who am Mary's maker, do not live in that imaginary time at all. Between writing the first half of that sentence and the second, I might sit down for three hours and think steadily about Mary. I could think about Mary as if she were the only character in the book and for as long as I pleased, and the hours I spent in doing so would not appear in Mary's time (the time inside the story) at all.

This is not a perfect illustration, of course. But it may give just a glimpse of what I believe to be the truth. God is not hurried along in the Time-stream of this universe any more than an author is hurried along in the imaginary time of his own novel. He has infinite attention to spare for each one of us. He does not have to deal with us in the mass. You are as much alone with Him as if you were the only being He had ever created. When Christ died, He died for you individually just as much as if you had been the only man in the world.

The way in which my illustration breaks down is this. In it the author gets out of one Time-series (that of the novel) only by going into another Time-series (the real one). But God, I believe, does not live in a Time-series at all. His life is not dribbled out moment by moment like ours: with Him it is, so to speak, still 1920 and already 1960. For His life is Himself.

If you picture Time as a straight line along which we have to travel, then you must picture God as the whole page on which the line is drawn. We come to the parts of the line one by one: we have to leave A behind before we get to B, and cannot reach C until we leave B behind. God, from above or outside or all round, contains the whole line, and sees it all.

The idea is worth trying to grasp because it removes some apparent difficulties in Christianity. Before I became a Christian one of my objections was as follows. The Christians said that the eternal God who is everywhere and keeps the whole universe going, once became a human being. Well then, said I, how did the whole universe keep going while He was a baby, or while He was asleep? How could He at the same time be God who knows everything and also a man asking his disciples "who touched me?" You will notice that the sting lay in the *time* words: "*While* He was a baby" --"How could He *at the same time*?" In other words I was assuming that Christ's life as God was in time, and that His life as the man Jesus in Palestine was a shorter

period taken out of that time--just as my service in the army was a shorter period taken out of my total life. And that is how most of us perhaps tend to think about it. We picture God living through a period when His human life was still in the future: then coming to a period when it was present: then going on to a period when He could look back on it as something in the past. But probably these ideas correspond to nothing in the actual facts. You cannot fit Christ's earthly life in Palestine into any time-relations with His life as God beyond all space and time. It is really, I suggest, a timeless truth about God that human nature, and the human experience of weakness and sleep and ignorance, are somehow included in His whole divine life. This human life in God is from our point of view a particular period in the history of our world (from the year A.D. one till the Crucifixion). We therefore imagine it is also a period in the history of God's own existence. But God has no history. He is too completely and utterly real to have one. For, of course, to have a history means losing part of your reality (because it had already slipped away into the past) and not yet having another part (because it is still in the future): in fact having nothing but the tiny little present, which has gone before you can speak about it. God forbid we should think God was like that. Even we may hope not to be always rationed in that way. Another difficulty we get if we believe God to be in time is this. Everyone who believes in God at all believes that He knows what you and I are going to do tomorrow. But if He knows I am going to do so-and-so, how can I be free to do otherwise? Well, here once again, the difficulty comes from thinking that God is progressing along the Time-line like us: the only difference being that He can see ahead and we cannot. Well, if that were true, if God *foresaw* our acts, it would be very hard to understand how we could be free not to do them. But suppose God is outside and above the Time-line. In that case, what we call "tomorrow" is visible to Him in just the same way as what we call today." All the days are "Now" for Him. He does not remember you doing things yesterday, He simply sees you doing them: because, though you have lost yesterday, He has not. He does not "foresee" you doing things tomorrow, He simply sees you doing them: because, though tomorrow is not yet there for you, it is for Him. You never supposed that your actions at this moment were any less free because God knows what you are doing. Well, He knows your tomorrow's actions in just the same way--because He is already in tomorrow and can simply watch you. In a sense, He does not know your action tin you have done it: but then the moment at which you have done it is already "Now" for Him. This idea has helped me a good deal. If it does not help you, leave it alone. It is a "Christian idea" in the sense that great and wise Christians have held it and there is nothing in it contrary to Christianity. But it is not in the Bible or any of the creeds. You can be a perfectly good Christian without accepting it, or indeed without thinking of the matter at all. (C.S. Lewis, **Time And Beyond Time**, from *Mere Christianity*)

Ray C. Stedman on Time and Eternity

The Best Is Yet To Be

Well, what is it, that is coming? Like a good chef, Paul has been whetting our appetites and stimulating our anticipation by veiled references to some breathtaking experience yet to come. But now he grows specific. In chapter five he describes the weight of glory in more explicit terms:

"For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we haw a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Here indeed we groan, and

long to put on our heavenly dwelling, so that by putting it on we may not be found naked . For while we are still in this tent, we sigh with anxiety; not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life." (2 Corinthians 5:14)

"A building from God" . . . "a house not made with hands" . . . "our heavenly dwelling," what do these expressions refer to? They are obviously set in direct contrast to "the earthly tent we live in" which is clearly the present body of flesh and bones. But before we take a closer look at these phrases, note how definite and certain Paul is. See how he begins: "We know . . ." There is nothing uncertain about it at all.

Many today, as in the past, are trying to guess what lies beyond death. Some have supposed that the spirit of man departs, only to return in some reincarnation of life as another human being. The evidence used to support this is usually the testimony of certain persons (often given through a medium or in a hypnotic state) who apparently recall whole episodes from their previous existence. But it must be remembered that the Bible consistently warns of the existence of "lying spirits" or demons who have no compunctions about representing themselves to be the spirits of departed persons and who take delight in deceiving humans. Others have suggested that knowledge of such things is put beyond us, that the only proper approach to life is to view everything as tentative, nothing can be depended on for sure. But Jesus and the apostles never speak that way. Christ said that he came to tell us the truth, that we might know. The Apostle John underlines this point again and again, saying, "These things are written that you might know." So Paul says here, we know certain things about life beyond death.

Things We Really Know

Well, what do we know? First, says Paul, we know that we now live in an earthly tent. Twice he calls the present body a tent. Tents are usually temporary dwellings. Once I visited a family who lived in a tent in their yard while waiting for their new house to be finished. It wasn't very comfortable, but they were willing to put up with it until they could move into their real house. This is the case, Paul says, with Christians. They are living temporarily in tents. Further, he says that in this tent we both groan and sigh. Do you ever listen to yourself when you get up in the morning? Do you ever groan? It is quite evident that the apostle is right, isn't it? There is the groan of daily experience. Perhaps the tent is beginning to sag. The cords are loosening and the pegs are growing wobbly. There may also be the sigh of expectancy. "We sigh with anxiety," says the apostle, "not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed." No one wishes to be disembodied (unclothed), but nevertheless, we do long sometimes for something more than this body offers. We feel its limitations. Have you ever said when invited to do something, "I wish I could; the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak"? That is the sigh of anxiety, longing to be further clothed.

The Heavenly House

In contrast to this temporary tent in which we now live, the apostle describes the permanent dwelling waiting for us when we die. It is "a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. " This is the indescribable "weight of glory" which is now being prepared for us by the trials and hardships we experience. If the present tent is our earthly body, then surely this permanent dwelling is the resurrection body, described in 1 Corinthians:

"So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body." (15:42-44)

If the apostle can describe our physical body as a tent, then it is surely fitting to describe the resurrection body as a house. A tent is temporary; a house is permanent. When we die, we will move from the temporary to the permanent; from the tent to the house, eternal in the heavens. This resurrection body is further described:

"For this perishable nature must put on the imperishable, and this mortal nature must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory" (1 Corinthians 15:53-54).

When we compare this passage with the one we are considering in 2 Corinthians 5, we note that the word for "clothed" ("that we would be further clothed") is exactly the same Greek word as the one translated "put on" in 1 Corinthians 15 ("this perishable must put on the imperishable"). This present perishable body of ours must be clothed with imperishable life, and this present mortal nature must be clothed with immortality. It is at that time, says Paul, that "death is swallowed up in victory." Compare that with the statement of 2 Corinthians 5, "that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life." The two passages are clearly parallel and the "house not made with hands" is the resurrection body of 1 Corinthians 15.

Is There A Temporary Tent?

But this poses a serious problem with some. They say, "Well, if 'the building of God' is the resurrection body, then what does a believer live in while he is waiting for the resurrection body? Resurrection won't occur till the second coming of Jesus. What about the saints who have died through the centuries? Their bodies have been placed in the grave and won't arise until the resurrection; what do they live in during the interim?"

To this problem three widely varying answers have been posed. One is that departed saints have no bodies until the resurrection. They are with the Lord but as disembodied spirits, incomplete until regaining their bodies at the resurrection. But this view ignores Paul's words, "{We} long to put on our heavenly dwelling so that by putting it on we may not be found naked." And again, "We sigh with anxiety, not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed." Furthermore, the language of both 1 Corinthians 15 and 2 Corinthians 5 seems to imply an immediate donning of the resurrection body. There is no hint of any waiting period.

A second answer to the problem is that of soul sleep. This theory says that when a believer dies his soul remains asleep within the dead body. When the body is raised at the resurrection, the soul awakens. But because it has been asleep since death, it has no knowledge of the intervening time and no awareness of having been asleep. This concept solves the problem of the missing bodies but directly contravenes such Scriptures as the Lord's words to the thief on the cross, "Today shall you be with me, in Paradise," and Paul's declaration, "we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5 :8).

Still a third group proposes to solve the problem by suggesting that the "house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," is not the resurrection body at all but an intermediate body which God gives the believer to live in until the resurrection. Presumably, at that time, the intermediate body is dissolved and only the resurrection body exists. But it is difficult to square that with the

description, "eternal in the heavens. " Such a view also destroys the parallelism of 2 Corinthians 5 and 1 Corinthians 15. Since there is no hint anywhere in Scripture of the existence of an intermediate body, the view seems hardly tenable.

The Problem Disappears

The problem these strange answers propose to solve is really no problem at all. It arises only when we insist on projecting the concepts of time into eternity. We constantly think of heaven as a continuation on a larger and perfect scale of life on earth. Locked into our world of space and time, we find it very cult to imagine life proceeding on any other terms. But we must remember that time is time and eternity is eternity and never the twain shall meet. We experience something of the same difficulty in dealing with the mathematical concept of infinity. Many people imagine infinity to be a very large number, but it is not. The difference is that if you subtract 1 from a very large number, you have one less, but if you subtract 1 from infinity you still have infinity.

Dr. Arthur Custance, a Canadian scientist who is also a remarkable Bible scholar and author of a series of biblical-scientific studies called [Doorway Papers](#), has written something very helpful on this:

"The really important thing to notice is that Time stands in the same relation to Eternity, in one sense, as a large number does to infinity. There is one sense in which infinity includes a very large number, yet it is quite fundamentally different and independent of it. And by analogy, Eternity includes Time and yet is fundamentally something other. The reduction of Time until it gets smaller and smaller is still not Eternity. Nor do we reach Eternity by an extension of Time to great length. There is no direct pathway between Time and Eternity. They are different categories of experience." (Doorway Paper No. 37)

The thing we must remember in dealing with this matter of life beyond death is that when time ends, eternity begins. They are not the same, and we must not make them the same. Time means that we are locked into a pattern of chronological sequence which we are helpless to break. For example, all human beings sharing the same room will experience an earthquake together. While there are varying feelings and reactions, everyone will feel the earthquake at the same time. But in eternity events do not follow a sequential pattern. There is no past or future, only the present NOW. Within that NOW all events happen. An individual will experience sequence, but only in relationship to himself, and events will occur to him on the basis of his spiritual readiness. No two individuals need, therefore, experience the same event just because they happen to be together.

When Time Ends

All this may sound quite confusing, and it is true it contains great elements of speculation. But let us return to the Scriptures and the problem of what happens to the believer when he dies. Holding firmly to the essential point that time and eternity are quite different, then when a believer steps out of time, he steps into eternity. What was perhaps a far-off distant event in time is suddenly present in eternity if one is spiritually prepared for it. Since the one great event for which the Spirit of God is now preparing believers here on earth is the coming of Jesus Christ for his own, that is the event which greets every believer when he dies. It may be decades or even centuries before it breaks into time, but this particular person is no longer in time. He is in eternity. He sees "the Lord coming with ten thousands of his saints," just as Enoch did when he

was permitted a look into eternity, and at a time when he was the seventh from Adam and the population of the earth was very small (Jude 14).

Where The Ages Meet

But what is even more amazing is that in the experience of that believer he does not leave anyone behind. All his loved ones who know Christ are there too, including his Christian descendants who were not even born yet when he died! Since there is no past or future in heaven, this must be the case. Even those who, in time, stand beside his grave and weep and then go home to an empty house, are, in his experience, with him in glory. Dr. Custance carries this even further.

"The experience of earth saints is shared by all other saints, by those who have preceded and those who are to follow. For them all, all history, all intervening time between death and the Lord's return is suddenly annihilated so that each one finds to his amazement that Adam, too, is just dying and joining him on his way to meet the Lord: and Abraham and David, Isaiah and the Beloved John, Paul and Augustine, Hudson Taylor and you and I all in one wonderful experience meeting the Lord in a single instant together, without precedence and without the slightest consciousness of delay, none being late and none too early." (Doorway Paper No. 37, p. 28)

This truly astonishing quality of eternity is the reason Jesus could promise his disciples with absolute certainty, "And when I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also" (John 14:3). That promise not only applied to that generation of Christians, but would apply to all, directly and personally, through all the intervening centuries. This also explains the strange promise at the close of Hebrews 11.

Speaking of Abraham, Moses, David, Jacob, Joseph, and others the writer says, "All these, though well attested by their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had foreseen something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect"

To be "made perfect" is to be resurrected, so this passage specifically states that the saints of old will not be resurrected without us. Either they are disembodied spirits waiting for the resurrection (which we have already seen is not likely) or there is some way by which we can leave time one by one and yet participate together in one glorious experience of resurrection. The proper understanding of eternity supplies the answer.

Eternity Invades Time

There are other references in Scripture that present this same phenomenon of the apparent eclipse of time. For instance, in Revelation 13:8, Jesus is referred to as "the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world." Now the cross occurred at a precise moment of history. We know when the Lamb of God was slain. But the Bible says it occurred before the foundation of the world. How can an historical event which occurred at a certain spot on earth, in the biblical reckoning be said to have occurred before the earth was even made? The passage does not say that the Lamb was foreordained to be slain before the foundation of the world, but it says he was actually slain then. Surely it means that the cross was an eternal event, taking place both in time and eternity. In time, it is long past; in eternity, it forever occurs. So also would the resurrection, and in the same way, the second coming of Christ. When any Christian dies, he passes from the realm of time and space into timelessness, into the NOW of God when the full effect of these timeless events is experienced by him to whatever degree his spiritual state requires. But the Lord's return is an event yet to take place in historical time when the Church is complete and the

end of the age has come. Perhaps this is the meaning of the Lord's words: "Truly, truly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live" (John 5:25).

A problem passage for some, in this respect, has been Revelation 6:9-11 where John sees the souls of those who had been slain for the Word of God under the altar in heaven. They are crying out to God, "How long before thou wilt judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell upon the earth." In response they are told to be patient a little longer until the full count of martyrs is complete. This seems to indicate a sense of time in heaven and a need to wait for something in the future. How do we explain this in the light of what we have just seen regarding time and eternity? The explanation, of course, is that John, who sees all this, is still a man living in time and space on earth. It is necessary, therefore, that what he sees in heaven be communicated to him in the symbols and language of earth. This is a common phenomenon in the Book of Revelation. In the first chapter John sees Jesus in heaven. Does he really have long white hair and feet like burnished bronze and does a sharp sword come out of his mouth? No, clearly these are symbols which convey to John the power, wisdom, and glory of the Lord Jesus in his glorified, risen estate. The truth conveyed by the vision of the souls under the altar is evidently their identification with and concern for their brethren who are still on earth. They express themselves in terms of time and space in order that John (and we) may understand.

Can We Come Back?

Perhaps this also indicates a further condition of the eternal experience: those who have stepped out of time into eternity can, if they so choose, step back into time again, though remaining invisible. That is, of course, exactly what Jesus did repeatedly during his forty-day post-resurrection ministry. To those in eternity, time may be like a book on our library bookshelf. If we choose, we can pick up and browse through it at random. We can enter the time sequence found in the book at any place we desire, follow it through for as long as we like, and then lay it down to reenter (in consciousness) the time sequence in which we normally live. In similar fashion those in eternity may select some period of history which they would like to live through and step back into that time, living out its events, though invisibly. This, of course, is pure speculation and may not prove to be true at all, but it does at least fit the suggestion of Scripture that in a resurrected state we will be free from many of the limitations of our present body of flesh.

One thing is clear. Paul looked forward with keen anticipation to the day when he would put off his earthly tent and move into his heavenly dwelling. It would be, he says, a "spiritual" body, not meaning, as many have supposed, a body made up of spirit something rather ethereal and immaterial but rather a body fully subject to the spirit, designed expressly for the spirit. Now we must say, "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." Then we can say, "My spirit is willing and the flesh is equal to its demands. Let's go!" Perhaps a quote from C.S. Lewis will help understand this point.

"The command 'Be ye perfect' is not idealistic gas. Nor is it a command to do the impossible. He is going to make us into creatures that can obey that command. He said (in the Bible) that we were "gods" and He is going to make good His words. If we let Him---for we can prevent Him, if we choose---He will make the feeblest and filthiest of us into a god or goddess, a dazzling, radiant, immortal creature, pulsating all through with such energy and joy and wisdom and love as we cannot now imagine, a bright stainless mirror which rests back to God perfectly (though, of course, on a smaller scale) His own

boundless power and delight and goodness. The process will be long and in parts very painful; but that is what we are in for. Nothing less. He meant what He said." (*Mere Christianity*, p. 171)

Yes, something more is coming something so different from anything we have known up to now that it defies description. Yet it is something so splendid and glorious that, even whispered, it sends chills of expectation down the spine of the universe. Phillips' version of Romans 8:18-19 is beautifully expressive of this: "In my opinion whatever we may have to go through now is less than nothing compared with the magnificent future God has in store for us. The whole creation is on tiptoe to see the wonderful sight of the sons of God coming into their own."

(From *Authentic Christianity*, Chapter 9, by Ray C. Stedman, (Multnomah Press 1975). [Online edition.](#)

O God, Our Help in Ages Past

Author: Isaac Watts

Composer: Attr. to William Croft

Tune: St. Anne (Croft)

Scripture: Ps 90:1-5

1 O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast,
And our eternal home!

2 Under the shadow of Thy throne,
Thy saints have dwelt secure;
Sufficient is Thine arm alone,
And our defense is sure.

3 Before the hills in order stood,
Or earth received her frame,
From everlasting Thou art God,
To endless years the same.

4 A thousand ages in Thy sight
Are like an evening gone;
Short as the watch that ends the night
Before the rising sun.

**5 Time, like an ever-rolling stream,
Bears all its sons away;
They fly, forgotten, as a dream
Dies at the op'ning day.**

6 O God our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,

Be Thou our guard while life shall last,
And our eternal home.

Additional Notes:

[God, Time, and Eternity, by William Lane Craig.](#)

[What is Time, by Ray Stedman.](#)

Glenn Miller of the Christian Think Tank has two excellent articles on the nature of time. Glenn says, "The issue of trying to stand 'outside of time' ourselves to look at the relation of God to time (and hence, any type of plan) is intrinsic to the problem, in my opinion. Our vantage point is simply too limited. C. S. Lewis in *The Great Divorce*, reports this conversation between his "Teacher" George McDonald and the narrator:

"...all answers deceive. If ye put the question from within Time and are asking about possibilities, the answer is certain. The choice of ways is before you. Neither is closed. Any man may choose eternal death. Those who choose it will have it. But if ye are trying to leap on into eternity, if ye are trying to see the final state of all things as it will be (for so ye must speak) when there are no more possibilities left but only the Real, then ye ask what cannot be answered to mortal ears. Time is the very lens through which ye see—small and clear, as men see through the wrong end of a telescope--something that would otherwise be too big for ye to see at all. That thing is Freedom: the gift whereby ye most resemble your Maker and are yourselves parts of eternal reality. But ye can see it only through the lens of Time, in a little clear picture, through the inverted telescope. In is a picture of moments following one another and yourself in each moment making some choice that might have been otherwise. Neither the temporal succession nor the phantom of what ye might have chosen and didn't is itself Freedom. They are a lens. The picture is a symbol: but it's truer than any philosophical theorem (or, perhaps, than any mystic's vision) that claims to go behind it. For every attempt to see the shape of eternity except through the lens of time destroys your knowledge of Freedom. Witness the doctrine of predestination which shows (truly enough) that eternal reality is not waiting for a future in which to be real; but at the price of removing freedom which is the deeper truth of the two." (end of chapter 13).

I personally have to agree with this type of 'reverent agnosticism'-- we run into problems as soon as we try to conceptualize something/someOne 'outside' space and time. We are forced (in the Epistemic Bubble) to use metaphors as we approach the 'edges.' Consider this simple diagram:

In this 'view' of the relationship between God and time, God is 'outside' time, and indeed 'surrounds' it. All events in history are both 'foreknown' (from the left) and 'postknown' (from the right). A person standing, for example, at Event B would know the 'future' of those standing at Event A, just as I 'know the future' of when my newlywed mother will give birth to Glenn, her firstborn son. For such a view of God--in which all events of history are perceived in some 'Eternal Now' (as the philosophers call it) --concepts such as 'foreknowledge' become much less useful for discussing this problem of 'foreknowledge and the Plan'..."

[Why didn't God stop the process before it started, if He knew of the massive suffering that would befall His creatures??](#)

[Time keeping in the Ancient World](#)

Time and Eternity, by William Lane Craig, Crossway Books, Wheaton, IL 2001.

God, Eternity, and the Nature of Time by Alan G. Padgett, Wipf and Stock, Eugene, OR 1992.

Measuring Eternity, by Martin Gorst, Broadway Books, NY, NY 2001.

"...the problem [of time] is not a biblical or theological one - it is a philosophical one and arises only by derivation from statements the Bible makes about God. He is described as infinite, omniscient and omnipotent and yet able to permit man to choose. He is also subject to or bound by nothing, including time. The only way we can grasp all of this together is place time (containing all its implications of cause and effect) alongside everything else as something created. If created, time had a beginning and therefore God had to exist apart from it. It's worth noting that, although we're considering this issue from the perspective of 21st century science trying to reconcile observation with scriptural truth, it is not a new issue and one that has always occupied the minds of thoughtful men and women of God.

Consider Anselm (1033 - 1109 AD):

"Indeed You exist neither yesterday nor today nor tomorrow but are absolutely outside all time. For yesterday and today and tomorrow are completely in time; however, You, though nothing can be without You, are nevertheless not in place or time but all things are in You. For nothing contains you, but You contain all things." (Proslogion, Chapter 19).

Augustine (354 - 430 AD) puts it like this:

"If we are right in finding the distinction between eternity and time in the fact that without motion and change there is no time, while in eternity there is no change, who can fail to see that there would have been no time, if there had been no creation to bring in movement and change, and that time depends upon this motion and change, and is measured by the longer or shorter intervals by which things that cannot happen simultaneously succeed one another? Since God, in whose eternity there is no change at all, is the creator and director of time, I cannot see how it can be said that he created the world after a lapse of ages, unless it is asserted that there was some creation before this world existed, whose movements would make possible the course of time.

"The Bible says (and the Bible never lies): 'In the beginning God made heaven and earth.' It must be inferred that God had created nothing before that; 'In the beginning' must refer to whatever he made before all his other works. Thus there can be no doubt that the world was not created IN time but WITH time. An event in time happens after one time and before another, after the past and before the future. But at the time of creation there could have been n

"The world was in fact made WITH time, if at the time of its creation change and motion came into existence. this is clearly the the situation in the roder of the first six or seven days, in which morning and evening are named, until God's creation was finished on the sixth day..." (City of God, Book 11, Chapter 6)

Aquinas (1225 - 1274 AD) uses the Latin translation of Exodus 15:18, viz., "the Lord shall reign for eternity and beyond" as the basis for distinguishing between time and eternity as for several arguments he raises on the issue, probably reducible to the following in his words:

"The notion of eternity follows immutability, as the notion of time follows movement... Hence, as God is supremely immutable, it supremely belongs to Him to be eternal. Nor is He eternal only, but He is His own eternity; but no other being is its own duration, as no other is its own being. Now God is His own uniform being, and hence, as He is His own essence, so He is His own eternity... The 'now' that stands still, is said to make eternity according to our apprehension. As the apprehension of time is caused in us by the fact that we apprehend the flow of the 'now', so the apprehension of eternity is caused in us by our apprehending the 'now' standing still. When Augustine says that, 'God is the author of eternity,' this is to be understood of participated eternity. For God communicates His eternity to some in the same way that He communicates His immutability... God is not called eternal as if He were in any way measured, but the notion of measurement is there taken according to the apprehension of our mind alone... Words denoting different times are applied to God, because His eternity includes all times and not as if He Himself were altered through present, past and future." (Summa Theologica, First Part, Question 10).

As we move on through history we find the theme pretty much maintained and, ironically, it is probably because of the theological conception of time and eternity that relativity was conceived. Now, in an Einsteinian universe, time is one of 4 observable dimensions, and is a element of reality equal to height, breadth or depth. Thus, if space is something created, so is time, by default. If created, it must be inside of what God does rather than the other way around. This has been explained so much better by Lambert Dolphin and many others - I just wanted to make the point that there is nothing novel about the concept of God's existing outside of or apart from time but that it has always been a preoccupation of those who have been interested in his nature, to the extent that God's separation from time ultimately provided the framework for most of modern cosmological/cosmogenic thought."

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