

Leo's Lance

A Look at the Concept of Time

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What is time? Some guy said, "Time is like your wife, something you just take for granted." You may take time for granted, but not your wife. "She knows she was taken for better or for worse, but she will not be taken for granted!" Seriously, what do we know about time?

Human beings are creatures of "time," and we in America are particularly preoccupied with it. While doing mission work in India a few years back I discovered that not all people are as controlled by the clock as we are. When we set a time for a meeting over there, whether a church service or a meeting with a lawyer to clear up some legal matters our meetings seldom took place within an hour of the time we set.

Later we noticed these people weren't wearing wristwatches, and had no clocks on the wall of every room in their house. But in retrospect, they didn't seem to care much about "being on time." They seemed to feel if they got there on the right day it was good enough.

This set me to thinking about time... What is it? Where did it come from. What is the significance of it? Have you ever given it any thought?

Once again I have involved myself in a subject which is bigger than I am, and much to large for the space I have to explain it in, but I will endeavor to keep this within reasonable "time," (I mean, space) limits.

Since we don't know where else to start lets look at the biblical view of time. Wayne Jackson, in his book, *The Biblical Concept of "Time,"* said, "The concept of time has been problematical for philosophers. There is even considerable controversy among biblical scholars as to precisely how "time"

is employed in the divine scheme of things." We will follow some of Jackson's reasoning.

He observed the Scriptures make a distinction between the "temporal" and the "eternal." In describing God, the psalmist declares; "...From everlasting to everlasting, you are God..." (Psa 90:2). Everlasting implies the timelessness of God. Yet in the same context, of man it is said: "The days of our years are threescore and ten years..." (v. 10). Time clearly does not relate to God and man in the same way.

Eternity is endless, but time is measured by a "beginning" and an "end." The Bible opens with these words: "In the beginning God created..." (Gen. 1:1). Jesus said, "From the beginning of creation, male and female made He them" (Mk. 10:6).

By way of contrast, in some sense there will be an end. In the Parable of the Tares, Christ said the "harvest" represented the "end of the world" (King James Version). (Mt. 13:39). In connection with his teaching about the future resurrection the apostle Paul used these words, "Then comes the end..." (1 Cor. 15:23, 24). Perhaps the best explanation is to say "time is parenthesis in eternity."

Jackson said, "Clearly there is a span, an era, between the 'beginning' and the 'end,' which for lack of a better expression, is called 'time.' Carl F. H. Henry characterized time as 'the divinely created sphere of God's preserving and redemptive work, and the arena of man's decision on his way to an eternal destiny'" (p. 524).

For the sake of "time" (Space) in this article we are skipping over much of Jackson's very interesting theological discussion of time, and

proceeding to the discussion of the nature of time.

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

For instance: It is common for materialists to assert, in attempting to explain the origin of the material universe, that, given enough time, inorganic matter might create itself. A similar view is entertained with reference to the beginning of biological life. Some years ago, Dr. George Wald of Harvard University penned an article titled, "The Origin of Life," which appeared in the prestigious journal, *Scientific American*. Wald argued that it is possible that "life" spontaneously generated itself. How was this miracle accomplished? Hear him (try to) explain it.

"However improbable we regard this event [the accidental origin of life], or any of the steps which it involves, given enough time it will almost certainly happen. . . . Time is, in fact, the hero of the plot. . . . Given so much time, the 'impossible' becomes possible, the possible becomes probable, and the probable virtually certain. One has only to wait: time itself performs the miracles" (p. 49).

This is an absurdity which defies all logic. How can mere "time" provide the process by which the inorganic is transformed into the organic? There is not a shred of evidence that such ever has happened or that it could happen. Time may facilitate, but it cannot create.

If the concept of Darwinism were true, and nature's "evolutionary powers" were continuously refining earth's biological creatures, one might anticipate that species would be getting progressively vigorous. After all, evolution's major principle is supposed to be development by means of natural selection, i.e., the "survival of the fittest." The fact is, however, the whole record of earth's history is a sad scene of degeneration. This is indicated by both the biblical record and in the geologic record.

According to the Genesis account, prior to the Flood the patriarchs lived much longer than we do. Adam was 930 when he died, and Methuselah was 969.

A pattern of degeneration is seen in the fossil record relating to both plants and animals.

"The fossils, regarded as a whole, invariably supply us with types larger of their kind and better developed in every way than their nearest modern representatives, whether plants or animals" (Price, p206).

This fact is not even disputed. Several examples illustrate it. Some ancient locusts had a wingspan of over seven inches; dragon flies had bodies more than a foot long, with wings spanning two feet. There were frogs in the ancient world close to ten feet long. The mammoth was twice the weight of the largest modern elephant and a third taller. The great Canadian geologist, Sir William Dawson, declared that the geological record reveals, "degeneracy is the rule rather than the exception:" (Price, p. 211).

Some speculate that "given enough time" man will overcome his physical ills and human longevity will once again span centuries. That is

fantasy. Three thousand years ago the human lifespan was seventy to eighty years (cf. Psa. 90:10). Even in our modern America, the healthiest nation on the planet, we have not been able to expand these figures. "Time" has been impotent to heal us.

Contemplating the fact that time in only quantitative, and not qualitative, we must make the following observation. Many people, observing that the guilt of their religious and moral misdeeds appear to assuage with the passing of time, labor under the illusion that the calendar somehow has redemptive power. This is not the case. No amount of "time" can atone for sin. One eventually may be able to live with his sin in a more comfortable fashion -- after all the conscience can be seared (1 Tim. 4:2) -- but responsibility for the evil remains. Remember God is not controlled by time as we are and He doesn't forget.

"Time" cannot pay off the debt of sin. It can't handle a problem of this nature. "Time" never remedied a single sin in the several thousand years of pre-Christian history. This is evidenced by the fact that evil required the death of the Son of God; and Jesus' sacrifice was for "all" (1 Tim. 2:6).

An important point comes from this matter: "Time" does not have the ability to alter true morality. It is common to hear folks argue that whereas abortion was once viewed with horror, now such is accepted because we are living in a different "time." Capricious divorce, in an earlier age, was disdained; now is commonplace. Sexual scandal on the part of public officials used to be severely censured; Now, who cares? -- so long as the economy is healthy.

Many believe. . . "Time changes everything. . ." But there are things which time cannot change; and moral responsibility is one of them.

While time has no power within itself to change things, it can provide the opportunity for other forces to work effectively.

God has built within the biological mechanism remarkable recuperative abilities. But, unlike the case of a miracle -- which produces an instantaneous effect -- in the providential order of things, time is required for the body to heal. Too, time soothes many wounds of the heart which, in the event of tragedy, may seem unbearable initially.

There is one more aspect of time which intrigues us. It facilitates the acceleration of knowledge on the part of human beings. We differ from all other biological organisms in that we accumulate knowledge with the passing of each generation. We can accomplish things today (such as, space travel, transplant surgery, computer technology) which our ancestors never dreamed of centuries ago.

By way of contrast, your dog or cat or your monkey has no greater intellectual capacity than did his ancestors of two million years ago. This implies two things:

(1) Humans are unique; they are not mere animals. They have intellectual powers unparalleled in nature.

(2) We have a serious responsibility to use our knowledge wisely, -- in the service of God. There is a high price to pay when we do not!

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Most of the material in this article came from <https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/437-the-biblical-concept-of-time>.

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- Latest News:** A list of recent articles including 'Tickets for Beauty and the Beasts to be Sold Beginning Oct. 22', '2012 PBJOS Slated for Tuesday, Wednesday', 'Kaci Fairchild', 'Cowboys Dominate Stats, But Fall to Ravens 31-29', 'Rogers, Packers Hand Texans 1st Loss of Season', 'Texas HS Volleyball, Football Polls', 'A&M Outlasts Louisiana Tech, 59-57', and 'TCU Downs Baylor 49-21'.
- Weather:** A section for AccuWeather.com showing 'Sunny 78°F' and a forecast for the next few days.
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