
"How God Views Time"

Sermon Text: Isaiah 2:1-6 / Matthew 24:36-44
Mariner Sands Chapel

Dr. Gary Carr
December 1, 2019

This is a great time to think about time. Simply put, it is "duration." As we enter into this brief season we call "Advent," we are made aware of this period of waiting for four weeks until the celebration of the Christ Mass, the date of Christ's birth. Time is a precondition for change. The way we look at our calendars today is based upon this single event changing history when God became a baby boy. As the Apostle Paul writes in his letter to the Galatians, "In the fullness of time, God sent forth His son, born of a woman, born under the law." (Gal 4:4) If you want to understand how God views time, look at the ways He describes it in the Bible. Time is either a certain fixed point which we would consider a date of an event, or a period of duration we could call a "season." In our own culture we rely on a linear measurement of time in years, months, days, and so on. In the ancient near east, Hebrew culture measured time in cycles. More specifically, people experienced time moving forward in a spiral so that as the duration of time increased, events occurred in cycles at different levels.

This is how we can understand the book of Revelation describing the end times in a series of seven angels, or seven seals on a scroll. This is how we interpret Daniel's prophetic vision of the Lord's coming in seven cycles of seventy weeks. This is how we understand Jesus discussing the end times with His disciples in Matthew 24. God views time differently than we do. We are confined by time. We can only exist one moment at a time. But God is above time. He is eternal. He knows the future because He is present in the future. The natural periods of time we live by are those created and fixed by God. For example, Genesis reveals the creation of the world in seven days; the word used is "yom," which is the same word used for a 24-hour day. The Bible stresses the God-given content of human history. That is, God uses time to move things to a consummation of meaning, a God-given moment; a defining moment. Perhaps this is why we have to wait so much.

The birth of Jesus came at the fullness of time. So many major events collided at this one moment to bear witness on this day. Not only do we have many Hebrew biblical prophecies forecasting the event, we also see Roman government poised in the Middle East. The Persian government is aware of unique astrological events and have sent an official envoy to welcome a king. The Greek culture has influenced commerce so efficiently that most business communication uses one common language, Greek; one of the most accurate languages in history. We have Jews living in Israel that still know their lineage and ancient tribal origins from more than 1000 years in the past.

All this is to say that language, culture, government, religion all collide in this one magnificent moment to validate the birth. Yet, with all these world events converging together, the world was not yet ready to receive Him. And the world today is not ready for the Lord's coming again. God is sovereign in appointing these times, and no one, not Jesus, nor the angels knew the date when it would happen. Jesus tells us to keep watching, keep waiting, stay ready. The day is coming. And for now we wait, using godly wisdom to make the most of our time and be accountable to Him for how we spend our time. To live by God's time, live with the purpose of glorifying God and accomplishing what he has given you to do.