

Eternity

ODCC 01/11/09 (x.pages)

Text: Ephesians 1:1-14 & 3:1-12

Introduction

1. As per usual I am not going to be able to do this passage of Scripture the justice it deserves. I can only draw on a few ideas because of our time restraints and also because of the complexity of the subject.
 - a. And so I want to speak today on eternity. Though the word “eternity” is not used, vv 9-10 say, *“And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfilment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.”*
 - b. “When the times will have reached their fulfilment” is another way of saying, “At the end of time.”
 - c. Another Scripture is Revelations 10 which says, *“And the angel...swore by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven...and the earth...and the sea...that there should be **time no longer.**”*
2. I am not an expert in these things but I have taken a keen interest on time and eternity and you will find several books in my library – though I hardly understood them.
 - a. But I do hope I can portray something of eternity to you today.
 - b. Having said that, eternity is not something anyone understands very well and among scientists and philosophers there are also extreme differences of opinion.

Various ages (or seasons)

1. According to our Bible – and that is our authority – time had a beginning. The very first verse in the Bible says, *“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”* (the heavens implies the universe).
 - a. So time had a beginning and as we’ve already pointed out, it will also have an end.
 - b. Our text also implies that there **periods or seasons**, just as a year is not 365 days marked off on a calendar but rather the seasons with dry and wet, hot and cold, and new buds and flowers on a tree followed by fruit, etc., etc. (or the **stages of a person’s life**, baby, toddler, puberty, adolescent, young adult, middle age, old age, etc.).
2. We don’t have time to explore this but the OT is broken up into periods of time and these include the covenants that God made: • Adamic • Noahic • Abrahamic • Mosaic • Davidic. If you count that that’s 5 but within those periods there are overlaps and other “seasons”.
 - a. The season we are living in is usually referred to as the “Age of Grace” or “The Church Age”
 - b. Paul speaks of this Grace in our text and in v 9 he speaks of “the mystery of God’s will” and then in chapter 3 he comes back to both subjects and says, *“Surely you have heard about the administration of God’s grace that was given to me for you, that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation...In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God’s holy apostles and prophets.”*
 - c. So we are living in the season of God’s grace or in the time of God’s favour.
3. This season began effectively with the birth of Christ. When Jesus was born the angels came praising God and saying, *“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.”* ...
 - a. ... And it will end when “the times will have reached their fulfilment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ” (Eph 1:10).
 - b. When the times will have reached their fulfilment or when all the seasons have been completed!

Time

1. We must not think that time is something which is going to go on and on. As Christians we must remind ourselves constantly of the fact that there is a God who created everything and who ultimately controls everything.
 - a. We may not understand; we cannot understand His thinking or His purposes, etc., the Bible clearly portrays Him as **in charge**.

- b. Not only that but everything in the world, in the history of the world, in the events of the world, in the society of the world (society includes thinking, behaviour, morals, attitudes, etc.), God is the overseer – not the instigator – but the one who superintends the ages.
 - c. And like a fisherman draws in his net, God is drawing in the net of time and at the right time will bring everything to a conclusion.
2. Time is a kind of motion – it moves and doesn't stop for anything. The future is ahead, it becomes the present, the present is left behind and becomes the past and cannot be revisited.
 - a. Even if you sit quietly in a room for an hour and do nothing, nothing has not happened. Your heart has beaten approx. 4,800 times. you've breathed in and out approx. 720 times. In your quiet hour an estimated 8,000 people died and 9,000 babies were born.
 - b. You can also take a moment of time and not matter how many times you divide it you will always have a piece of time. You can't do that with material substances because you'll end up with two atoms and when you divide those you'll have one atom and when you divide the atom you no longer have substance.
 3. Time is relative – so said Einstein's theory of relativity (too complicated to explain). Where there is more gravity, time goes slower.
 - a. There are some black holes where the gravity is so powerful that scientists say that there is hardly any time.
 - b. Time also slows down the faster you go. *Illustration:* If two boys, Fred & Herman, are both 10 years old and Fred wins a 6 month trip to outer space travelling at the speed of light. Fred sets off and marks of 6 months on a calendar, i.e. 182 (days in 6 months) x 24 (hours in a day). When Fred gets back he'll be a boy who has aged only 6 months but his friend Herman would have recently turned 50, have a family, and his oldest daughter expecting her first child. Herman is about to become a grandfather while Fred is almost young enough to be his grandchild.
 - c. What I'm trying to show is that even in our universe, time is not the same everywhere, it is different and even as it is different so it is limited.
 4. Eternity is not time. Time (and space) only exists in the universe. Imagine that the universe is a bubble – God created the bubble. Time exists in the bubble. God exists outside of the bubble. At some point God will burst the bubble.
 - a. What happens when God bursts the bubble? Time and space will be no more.
 - b. When time is no more then yesterday, today and tomorrow are the same, and here and there are the same.
 5. We can't understand that because we live in a time/space dimension. But if we can grasp something of the fact of eternity then it helps us to have faith about concepts which are beyond us.
 - a. Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.
 - a. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.

Conclusion

1. There are 2 things, in conclusion.
 - a. *First:* This is the church age. With all that is happening in the world and even as it seems that the church is losing influence, let us remember that this is the season of Jesus Christ and His Church.
 - b. Let us be people who pray and believe as we ask God to work through His Church.
 - c. *Second:* Our lives are short, time is limited so let us be people who make the most of the time we have. Let us daily commit our lives to God and ask Him to have His way each day.