

## LIVING IN LIGHT OF ETERNITY

*PSALM 90:12: Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.*

*EPHESIANS 5:15-16: Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, <sup>16</sup> making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. <sup>17</sup> Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is.*

1. What does it mean to live in light of eternity?
2. How do these passages teach us to live in the moment?
3. How should we think about the past?
4. How should we think about the future?



We have a strange relationship to time. Some days seem to drag, while others pass all too quickly. There are moments we wish our lives away, and other moments we wish would never end. The last few months have had kind of a Groundhog Day quality about them. There is a lot of sameness in our daily routines, but the world around us is changing rapidly. When we finally lay our masks aside and venture out of our living rooms, we will find ourselves in a world that is dramatically different than the one we retreated from just a few short months ago.

When the Bible describes our relationship to time, it is seldom flattering. James describes us as “a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes (James 4:14). Moses compares us to “grass that springs up in the morning and by evening withers and dies (Psalm 90:4-5).” Even when time seems to stand still, it is slowly but surely slipping from our hands.

God, on the other hand, is eternal. He knows no beginning or end. Job tells us, “The number of his days no one can fathom.” God’s relationship to time is vastly different from ours. He is above every moment and in every moment. He is never an idle spectator. God is working in time—every moment and every millisecond, to accomplish his eternal purposes.

The fact that we live in the moment, and God is eternal should dramatically shape the way we think about God and the way we think about time.

## A DEFINITION

“God’s eternity may be defined as follows: God has no beginning, end, or succession of moments in his own being, and he sees all time equally vividly, yet God sees events in time and acts in time (Grudem, Wayne A., *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*. Zondervan 2004).”

1. What does it mean for God to see all time with equal vividness?
2. What does it mean for God to see events in real-time and act in real-time?
3. Why are each of these critical to our understanding of God?

## THE GOD WHO IS ABOVE AND BEYOND TIME

*ISAIAH 46:9–10: Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. <sup>10</sup> I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say, ‘My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.’*

*PSALM 90:1–4, 12: Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations. <sup>2</sup> Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the whole world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God. <sup>3</sup> You turn people back to dust, saying, “Return to dust, [children of man].” <sup>4</sup> A thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night.*

*2 PETER 3:8–9: But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. <sup>9</sup> The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.*

*EXODUS 3:13-14: Moses said to God, “Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ Then what shall I tell them?” <sup>14</sup> God said to Moses, “I am who I am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I am has sent me to you.’”*

*ISAIAH 41:4: Who has done this and carried it through, calling forth the generations from the beginning? I, the Lord—with the first of them and with the last—I am he.”*

*JOHN 8:56-58: Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad.” <sup>57</sup> “You are not yet fifty years old,” they said to him, “and you have seen Abraham!” <sup>58</sup> “Very truly I tell you,” Jesus answered, “before Abraham was born, I am!”*

1. What are some of the images the biblical writers use to describe the timelessness of God?
2. How does God’s name communicate his timelessness?
3. How does Jesus’ response to the Pharisees drive the point home in an even more dramatic fashion?
4. Dr. Michael Bird describes God’s timelessness from a theological perspective:

The question of God and time is a tad more complex than you might first think. If we say that God is “timeless,” that means he knows neither past nor future but is completely outside of a space-time limitation. God experiences all of time simultaneously, and there is no gap between God’s plan and his execution of it precisely because he stands outside of it. Or, we could say that God is “everlasting” in the sense that he exists within time at every single point so that he is spatially present within every space-time location. In either case, God’s experience of time is different from our own experience (*Evangelical Theology: A Biblical and Systematic Introduction*. Zondervan, 2013).

How does Dr. Bird’s explanation of God and time enrich (or perhaps confound) your appreciation of God’s relationship to time?

5. Why should God’s timelessness be a comfort to us?

## THE GOD WHO ACTS IN REAL-TIME

*ACTS 17:30–31: In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. <sup>31</sup> For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead.”*

*GALATIANS 4:4–5: But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.*

1. How does Paul’s sermon in Athens (Acts 17:30-31) describe God’s actions in the past, present, and future?
2. How does Paul describe God’s timing in sending his Son (Galatians 4:4-5)?
3. What do we learn about God’s timing from these passages?
4. How should we respond to what these passages teach us about God’s timing?
5. What is encouraging about the way the eternal God acts in real-time?