

## “Time”

There are many characteristics that make a clear distinction between “man” and “beast.” Obviously, and perhaps most importantly, man was created *“in the image of God,”* Genesis 1:26, and is thus distinguished from the animal kingdom. From the same passage, it should also be noted that man was given *“dominion”* to *“rule over”* all the animals that God fashioned and placed upon the earth. But one of the often-overlooked distinctions between humans and the lower forms of life God created is the concept of “time.”

Certainly many animals have a sense of the changing seasons. They respond according to their divinely instilled natures by making various “timely” preparations. Some build shelters, others fly or migrate to different climes as a natural response to the passing of time and the changing seasons. But what animals lack in comparison to humans is the ability to appreciate time: to gauge and calculate it year-by-year, decade-by-decade, and century-by-century. They do not possess the ability to truly *“redeem the time”* as Paul commanded (cf. Ephesians 5:16ff) by using it to combat “evil” and prepare for eternity. Animals only know how to prepare for the coming season, not eternity. They just have no concept of time in that way. Indeed, “eternity” is a difficult concept for us humans! When everything in our world seems to be so bound and controlled by time, we have problems comprehending a “timeless” existence.

But thankfully, we don’t have to fully grasp “eternity” to prepare for it. So how do we prepare for a timeless existence? Through the proper use of our *given time* of course! Please note these points and passages in that connection

- **James 4:13-14** *“Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.” Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away.”* The point? **We must understand that “time” is not guaranteed.** Therefore the time we have is “now” and must be used wisely. Maybe in this sense at least, we should be more like the animals by not worrying so much about *“tomorrow,”* Matthew 6:25-26.
- **Acts 24:25-25** *“But as he was discussing righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix became frightened and said, “Go away for the present, and when I find time I will summon you.”* We often say that we will do some particular thing, “When I find the time.” **Time is really not “found” at all– it can only be appropriated.** We all have the same amount of time: 24 hours every day that we continue to live. We just appropriate it differently. When we become too much like the animals, we expend all our time just living. There ceases to be a higher purpose to our existence beyond survival and carnality.
- **Galatians 4:4** *“But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law...”* There is a “fullness” of time that is determined by God. It is He who determines the *“right time”* (Romans 5:6) for death, or for any other happening. **We do not know what the “right time” is for our life, or lives, to end– but God does.** Whether the cessation of time for each of us as individuals, or collectively at *“the end of all things,”* God alone has the prerogative of determination. But we do know this: it will be neither too soon nor too late– it will be the “right time.” We must, therefore, be ever prepared.
- **Galatians 6:9** *“Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.”* We typically lose heart in our doing good when we think it isn’t “paying enough.” **The “due time” of reaping our rewards is not now. It is when “time” is no more.** We live in an “instant gratification” world. Thus we often

become impatient God. We don't understand why seemingly "bad things" keep happening to happening to us "good people." God never promised that this life and time was either fair or rewarding. "This life" is not even about "this life" at all. It's about the rewards of the "next life." So don't *lose heart* in your *doing of good* when you feel you're not being rewarded in a *timely* fashion. The time of reward is not yet "*due*."

If we'll read and understand what God tells us about "time," we'll be much happier and productive in our "*time upon the earth*," and will be rewarded with a *timeless* future in heaven with Him that is far beyond our present time-bound comprehension. (Philip C. Strong; Southport Church of Christ; 7202 Madison Ave, Indianapolis, IN 46227; online at [southportcofc.org](http://southportcofc.org); email to [mrpcstrong@hotmail.com](mailto:mrpcstrong@hotmail.com))