

Title: The Gift of Time**[Slide 1]****Text: Genesis 1:3-5, 14-19****What Time Is It?****Time:**

It takes a whole lot of things to make an airport work. You have to have runways, taxi ways, a terminal, boarding gates, parking lots, a host of people doing everything from helping you check in to giving your plane permission to take off and land. But the most important thing in the entire operation is something that everyone takes for granted: Time.

Can you imagine an airport that didn't have clocks or any other way to tell what time it is? Imagine walking into the airport and looking up at the Departure screen. Sure enough, there's your flight, alongside all the other dozens of flights leaving BTV. To the right of each flight number is the gate number and destination. But no indication whatsoever as to when the flight is going to leave.

No departure time means that you have no idea when to get to the airport or go through security. It means that you have no idea when your plane is arriving from its previous destination, and no idea as to when it will leave Burlington.

Imagine trying to make this work from the control tower. One minute there are no planes in the sky. Then all of a sudden 20 show up out of nowhere. Total chaos!

We can build all the jets we want and all the fancy airports to service them. We can sell 3 million tickets a day and fill the skies with flyers. But not unless we know how to tell time.

No way to keep track of Time = no *shalom*.

What time is it, anyway?

In fact, people have been trying to find out *what time it is* for thousands of years. Ancient peoples have left us massive and astonishingly accurate monuments which they constructed in order to tell time. One of the oldest is Newgrange in Ireland. Newgrange was a gigantic stone mound built 5000 years ago. It has an opening that allows the rising sun to shine down a long horizontal shaft on the shortest day of the year. Whatever else its purpose, Newgrange served as a clock and calendar, offering a fixed point of time in the year.

For them, being able to tell time was the very foundation of making a world that worked. It meant knowing how old you were, when a baby would be born, when to plant the next season's crops, and a host of other things. Without knowing the time and the season, life would not be possible in this world.

Time and Creation:

How important is being able to tell time? Well, without it we simply wouldn't know where we are in this world. We would be trapped in a forever Present, with no way to understand or measure the past and no way to anticipate the future.

Knowing what time it is in our lives allows us to change, to grow, to be transformed by God's Presence. The past can truly be the past; the future can be the future; and we can grasp the importance of making the present count.

No wonder, then, that God's first act of making His world functional was to create Time and ways to keep track of it. Time is God's first gift to His Creation.

Telling Time

Light and Darkness:

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Time, according to Wikipedia, is "the indefinite continued progression of existence and events that occur...from the past through the present to the future." Time just goes on happening, in other words. So, in order to "tell time" we need a way to measure it, or chop it up into pieces.

When God set out to give us the gift of Time, the first thing He did was provide a way to divide Time into distinct periods:

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Genesis 1:3-5 NIV

And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.

*God saw that the light was good, **and he separated the light from the darkness.***

God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." And there was evening, and there was morning – the first day.

Remember, just one verse earlier in the Genesis Creation Story we were told that there was nothing but darkness. Now God creates light, in order to make Time measurable. He creates a *separation* which makes it possible for us to know when a particular period of time starts and stops. In fact, there are two such periods – one filled with light and one filled with darkness. Put the two together – "day" and "night" – and you come up with one Day.

Every device that humans have created to tell time does much the same thing: it chops up the unending river of Time into distinct units or periods. It might be a pendulum on a grandfather clock. It might be a circuit opening and closing in a digital watch, but in each case, in order to tell time, we need to divide it into equal, measurable parts.

And that is what God did, according to Genesis 1:3-5.

Day 4:

Chopping Time up into little bits is just the beginning of being able to tell Time. You also have to have a way of keeping track of all those little bits! And that's where clocks come in. Not only do they chop Time up into equal parts, but they also let us know how many of those little parts have gone by.

The Creation Story tells us not only that God made Time measurable, but that He also gave us ways to keep track of Time. To find out how, we have to jump ahead to Day 4 in the story.

Just a note here on how the Creation Story works:

- Days 1-3 introduce three functions that God builds into His world.

- Day 1, as we have seen, introduces Time.
- Days 4-6 introduce three functionaries that make these functions work.
- For instance, water functions as a great source of renewable energy. But in order to harness that energy, you must have a “functionary.” You need something to put that energy to work, like a turbine or water wheel. Only when you put the two together does the water become truly functional.
- The same is true in the Creation Story: God provides some basic functions; but He also provides things to harness or “govern” these functions. Put the two together and the world works.

God’s Clocks:

So just what are the time-telling things that God built into His world?

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Genesis 1:14-18 NIV

And God said, “Let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark sacred times, and days and years, and let them be lights in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth.”

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And it was so. God made two great lights – the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. God set them in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth, to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness.

God saw that it was good. And there was evening, and there was morning – the fourth day.

God gave the sun, the moon and the stars the function of serving as a grand clock – measuring everything from the hours of the day to the months of the year. It was in this way that the sun “governs” the day and the moon “governs” the night. This “governing” or “ruling” describes the sun and moon making Time truly functional for humans.

It was around 1500 B.C. that the Egyptians figured out how use the sun to divide daytime into 12 equal segments. Using the stars, they accomplished the same thing with nighttime, giving us our 24 hour day. In other words, they found a way to put to work what God had already provided: sun, moon and stars as God's Clock.

The Gift of Time

A Journey in Time:

Our earthly life is more than anything else a *journey in time*. It doesn't matter where we're born or what language we speak. It doesn't matter whether we're rich or poor. We all have a birth-day: a moment in time when we come into this world. And we all have a day when we graduate from this world into eternity. In between is our *journey in time*.

God gave us the gift of Time so that we could take this journey. We are not doomed to endlessly reliving the same moment in time – like the movie "Groundhog Day." No, we're on the move.

From darkness to light:

Being able to journey in time means that we can change and grow. It means that we can experience God's love and forgiveness. It means that we can hope. It means that we can become God's New Creation. It means *shalom*. No matter how we started out or how lost we became on our life journey, God made it possible for us to be transformed. As Paul wrote to the Ephesians:

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Ephesians 5:8-10 NIV

For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord.

He goes on to urge them to buy back Time itself -- to redeem the time – as the key way of bringing God's good order and rule into a broken world.

And that makes our time very precious – not just to us, but to God Himself. He has chosen to work *in time, even in our time*.

God's Gift of Time:

Imagine it: God walks with you every moment of your journey in time. He's not in a hurry; He's never late. He shares every tick of the clock, every rising of the sun, every passing of the year. Paul writes:

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2 Corinthians 6:2 NIV

For [God] says,

"In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you."

I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation.

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Now! Right now! God is present to show the way, to set you free. To save you. To make your journey succeed. Now is the time of God's favor. And when is God's "now"? Actually, God's "now" is always right in front of us, because He Himself is always here *in our journey in Time*. But we must make the choice to let God into our time, or better yet, to see that our time is actually God's Time – God's gift to us.