

## The Fourth Dimension

There is a hymn, very well known in some quarters, which begins, “When the trumpet of the Lord shall sound and time shall be no more ....”. You may know it. The hymn is usually sung to such a jolly tune that we can easily sing it with so much gusto that we don’t quite take in the meaning of the words. The basis of the hymn is assurance, so the tune is not particularly inappropriate, but it always helps to think about the words we’re singing. They may or may not accord with God’s revelation to us, and we should always test everything we can.

What is that bit about “... time shall be no more ....”? Is such a thing really possible? Can we get our heads around such a concept?

Using the word ‘dimension’ in its geometric and everyday sense rather than in its more specific algebraic or scientific usage, we are quite familiar with the idea of three dimensions (3D). An object which is 3D has length, breadth and height, *i.e.* it takes up space. For us, positions or places in space are not absolute, but relative to one another. Nevertheless, we are quite happy with the universe having three dimensional space, and that movement within it is very common. There is a sense, though, in which we are all prisoners in space. It is not possible for us to physically leave space and be, as it were, outside it. While we are alive in this mortal body, we have to be located somewhere in space.

A common expression that may come from the lips of a person working flat out being asked to accomplish a series of tasks even more rapidly is, “I’m sorry, but I can’t be in two places at the same time!” The wisdom of such a statement is almost self-evident. What lies behind it is that not only do we

find ourselves prisoners of space, but we are also prisoners of time. Time is a fourth dimension in the sense we are using the word. To us it progresses steadily at the same rate, second by second, day by day, year by year. The intervals of time in common use are not fundamental to the rest of the universe, but are convenient for us being related to the motions of our solar system. Much as we would love to on occasions, we can’t stop or go backwards in time. It’s a case of steadily forwards only with no brakes and no accelerator.

We find ourselves limited by, and restricted within, these four dimensions. Can we imagine the absence of space or the absence of time? The Bible is very clear in its teaching about time and space. They were both created by God, and both will be wound up when time has run its course. In the meanwhile, God Himself is not limited by either. Space, time and everything within them are transitory, but were brought into being for divine reasons. When they have served God’s purposes, they will cease to exist, being succeeded, and were probably preceded, by other realities. Those purposes are clearly expounded in Scripture, and references to some of them are to be found elsewhere on this website.

Let us use an analogy to try to make our situation clearer. Consider a fish in a lake. Living in an aquatic environment, its knowledge and experience will be limited to the lake and all within it, assuming that the fish has not developed such powers as to be able to survive out of water. What does the fish know about cacti confined to the desert? If it assumes that cacti do not exist because there are none in its lake, would that make its assumption factually correct? Understandable it may be, but correct? No!

Being confined to space and time, we are in a similar position to the fish confined to its water. If a person is so foolish as to say God does not exist because He does not share our limitations, he or she would be no more correct than our hypothetical fish was about cacti. What does a tadpole know about hopping about on dry land, or a caterpillar about flying, yet we know both things can occur after a process of metamorphosis. The Bible teaches that it is the same for us. We also will undergo a change because the death of our earthly body will be followed by the emergence of our heavenly, or spiritual, body. This transformation is a mystery to us, but there is a fair amount of detail revealed in the fifteenth chapter of the book called 1 Corinthians in the New Testament of the Bible, if you want to follow up this truth further.

So then, we must not make the mistake of thinking space always was and always will be, nor must we assume the same for time. These may appear infinite in all directions to us, but that's only because we can't imagine anything without them. Yet beyond space are Heaven and Hell, and beyond time is eternity. We cannot appreciate any of these until we experience them after we have been changed. At that point, in the day of judgment, we shall be divided for eternity – taken up to join God in Heaven or consigned to Hell with all that is evil. Then everyone will know the truth and the reality of the spiritual world, and every knee shall bow to God.

There are those who might regard time as being finite with some scepticism. There is an instance in the Bible, quoted at least three times in the New Testament, of a similar circumstance where all the sceptics were proved wrong, and were destroyed by drowning. We know that Noah was 'a

preacher of righteousness', and God forewarned him that He was going to flood the world. Noah was commanded to build an ark to a particular specification to preserve life on Earth. Possibly, rain was an unknown phenomenon at that time. The water cycle as we know it did not operate straight after the creation. Instead, the ground was watered by a mist, springs or streams issuing from the earth. Certainly, floods were unknown. You can imagine the response to Noah's predictions, and you know the rest. The flood seemed highly improbable to those outside Noah's family, but that didn't stop it happening. It is wise for us to learn from history. Devastating consequences can follow unbelief.

When time terminates, what will be your destiny? None of us knows how much time we have left here in this life, so it behoves each one of us to settle the issue regarding God's purposes for us while we still have the opportunity to make the vital choice to serve, honour and obey Him. No matter how we think we may stand on these issues, the Bible says to each and every one of us:

**Make your calling and election sure.**

If the meaning of this injunction is not clear to you, hopefully you may find a degree of enlightenment, either directly from Scripture or elsewhere on this site.

Before we leave this topic of the fourth dimension, let us tackle something controversial. Did God create the world in six days as we know them? Reference to the creation in six days is found right at the beginning of the Bible in the book of Genesis.

There are those who affirm that the 'days' should be interpreted as periods of time, perhaps spanning millions of years. I can

see where they are coming from, given science as we know it, but they are assuming that time is fundamental and that it has always progressed at the same rate since it began. That surely needs proof before this view can be considered the only possible explanation.

There are also those who affirm that the days at the beginning of Genesis are literal days as we know them.

The truth is that we don't really know, not having been present on the occasion. The last thing that we must let happen, though, is that such a diversity of opinion should cause strife and dissension between one Christian and another. Every Christian should share a common love for one another which predominates over all our individual diversities. We need to agree to differ on such issues without there being any ill feeling.

Where do I stand regarding the length of those 'days'? Well, the Creator of all things, including such things as space and time, has such awesome power that nothing is impossible for Him. If it was His will to create what we see as evolution requiring millions of years in the space of one literal day, I am certainly not going to say it couldn't be done. I do have a slight leaning towards the six literal days, but only on the grounds of the explanation given in the ten commandments for every seventh day being a day of rest. There is no doubt about the length of days in the fourth commandment, therefore it would not surprise me to find that the length of the days during creation were of the same twenty-four hour length that we are familiar with today.

You are most welcome to believe otherwise. We shall know the truth fully at the last day, and that may surprise us all.

While here on earth, I serve the same Lord and Saviour as all my fellow Christians, and wish to keep with you the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. May God shower you with every blessing.