

1.2.3 Time

The concept of time was created for humanity by God in Genesis 1:14-19. However, God is love, spirit and light (1 John 4:8, 16; John 4:23-24; 1 John 1:5) and therefore, exists in/at the speed of light. According to Albert Einstein's "Theory of Relativity," at the speed of light there is no time, just eternity or infinity. This coincides with Moses' statement about God in Psalm 90:2. As a result of this revelation, the purpose of time rests within God's creation according to Ecclesiastes 8:5-6 and Proverbs 16:4. It may be further developed from the Bible that time had a beginning (Gen 1:14), is linear (proceeding since its creation in a line, not a circle—Luke 2:4; 3:23-38; 17:22-30; 21:7-28; Matt 28:18-20; Acts 1:1-11), is finite, quantifiable and measurable (Gen 1:14; 8:22; Gal 4:10), is part of the space-time continuum (Dan 2:20-22, 28-45; 9:1-2, 24-27; 12:8-13; 2 Cor 12:1-4; Rev 1:9-19; 4:1-2), and will cease when its purpose is completed at the end of time (Gen 8:22; Rev 21:1-6a).

The Old Testament biblical concept of time is communicated in Hebrew primarily by the word *et*, which can mean linear time but more often is associated with specific events and is translated *kairos* in Greek (Van Gemeren 1997, 3:564-6). *Yom* is also used in Hebrew to communicate a unit of time, most often day or today (Van Gemeren 1997, 2:419-23). In Greek, the New Testament biblical concept of linear or chronological time is communicated primarily by the word *chronos* (from which is derived the word chronology, the study of time). This concept of time is understood quantitatively and measured by successive objects, events or moments (Zodhiates 1992:1487). However, when God steps into time (or eternity coincides with time), it becomes *kairos* time, meaning "season, opportune time, or time of accomplishment." This concept of time is understood qualitatively and is affected by influence or period of accomplishment. The plural form of *kairos* is translated "seasons" and means times at which

certain foreordained events take place (Zodhiates 1992:805). Specific examples of this plural form used in Scripture are “times of the Gentiles” in Luke 21:24 and “times and epochs” in 1 Thessalonians 5:1.

The primary example of *kairos* time is the Incarnation, spoken of as being in “the fullness of time” by Galatians 4:4. Examples of *kairos* time from the Old Testament are the following: God walking with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden before the Fall (Gen 1:27 – 3:24); Enoch’s rapture to heaven (Gen 5:21-24); Noah’s covenant with God (Gen 8:20 – 9:17); God confusing the people at the Tower of Babel (Gen 11:1-9); Job’s conversations with God (Job 38 – 42:9); Abraham’s covenant with God (Gen 15, 17), three visitors (Gen 18) and the sacrificing of Isaac (Gen 22:1-18); Jacob wrestling with the Angel and being renamed Israel (Gen 32:24-32); Moses talking with God in the burning bush (Exod 3 – 4:16), during the Exodus (Exod 5 – 15), atop Mt. Sinai (Exod 19 – 31), and in the pillar of cloud and fire (Exod 40:34-38); Joshua talking with the Captain of the Lord’s Army (Josh 5:13-15); Elijah’s rapture to heaven (2 Kgs 2:1-13); and the visions of Ezekiel and Daniel. More examples from the New Testament include the following: Jesus’ baptism, transfiguration, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, and in the future—the day of the Lord, the Second Coming and the Millennium. The Garden of Eden, Jesus’ life on earth and the Millennium all show God’s intent for *kairos* time and *chronos* time to coexist (Hebert 2006c:24-6). This treatment of time is borne out by Andre Lamorte’s article “The Concept of Time in Prophecy” (1957). In that article, he wrote of “biblical time” (linear, and focused on the eternal person of Jesus Christ), as compared to the Hellenistic concept of time prevalent at the writing of the New Testament (cyclical/circular, and focused on humanity’s temporal experience).

There are other theological definitions of time based on its Old Testament, Hebraic understanding. One example is expressed by Gerhard von Rad (1961); he views time as tied into specific chronological “salvation acts” by *Yahweh* in forming Israel’s history (including remembrances in the form of weekly Sabbaths and the annual Feasts) and prophetically looking into the future toward new and different “salvation acts” God will do for Israel after judging Israel for its sins. This look toward the future takes on an eschatological flavor, but only in terms of what God will do salvifically in the experience of future Israel. Another example is given by Claus Westermann in his book *A Thousand Years and a Day: Our Time in the Old Testament* (1962), which is based on the Psalm of Moses (Ps 90:1-4). This view expresses time as the concept of one thousand years of history in the Old Testament leading up to the one day of the crucifixion of Messiah Jesus (vii-ix). A final example is addressed by Walther Eichrodt, who in his *Theology of the Old Testament* expresses time threefold in terms of God dealing with the chosen people through covenants; God dealing with the world through signs, wonders and nature; and, finally, God dealing with man individually (1961 and 1967). These concepts of time are definitely tied to the Old Testament view of Hebrew time, but fail to address the change of perspective brought about by Daniel’s prophecies—specifically, the future timelines laid out for the Gentiles in Daniel 2, 7, 8, 10, and 11 and for the Jews in Daniel 9 and 12.

There are also other theological definitions of time based on its New Testament eschatological understanding. First, there are views related to people living in a present that is shaped by the future of the coexistence of temporal time and eternity; Baukham and Hart call it “a Christian shape to time” (2000:72). Then, there are views that separate temporal (created) time from the Creator’s divine eternity. These views encourage theologians to allow God to fit the *eschaton* (the end of time/history and the beginning of a “new heaven and a new earth”) into

His divine time for humanity and not to try to spatialize time and eternity (Van den Brom 2000:167). Schwöbel puts it a different way, “to heed the psalmist’s words ‘My times are in thy hands’ (Ps 31:15).” This allows humanity’s time to have “its ground in the time of God” (2000:240-1). However, both these categories of views deal with the intersection of *kairos* time with *chronos* time only at the point of the *eschaton*.

This New Testament thought of time builds on the Old Testament views, takes the prophecies of Daniel into account and addresses the dichotomy of *kairos* and *chronos* time. However, it only addresses time at the *eschaton* and not as coexisting with eternity in a cohesive, consistent and continuing manner. Therefore, the understanding of *kairos* and *chronos* time, coexisting in a historical-prophetic, linear and eschatological manner (with a future end in sight) is how the concept of time will be addressed by this thesis. The specifics of biblical time, as it relates to salvation history and the kingdom of heaven/God will now be addressed.

1.2.4 Biblical Time, Salvation History and the Kingdom of Heaven/God

Biblical time is centered on the purposes of God in relation to humanity and is communicated through the concepts of “Salvation History” and the “Kingdom of heaven (God)” (Ervin 1984:2-3). The concept of “salvation” existed in the mind of the Triune God of the Bible (represented by the plural Hebrew name for God, *Elohim* in Genesis and alluded to by Old Testament Theophanies/Christophanies, mentions of the “Spirit of God,” and Ps 110; Prov 30:4; and Isa 63:7, 9-10) “before the foundation of the world” (Eph 1:4), or even the creation of Adam and Eve (who were made in the very “image of God,” without sin and considered to be “very good,” versus “good” for the rest of creation—Gen 1:26-31). However, salvation history is set into context and begins immediately after the Original Sin (the Fall) in Genesis 3:15. Here, the promise of the virgin birth of the Messiah, literally translated “her seed” in the Septuagint

(Hamilton 1990:199), is found within the curse to the serpent: “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and *her seed*; *He* shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise *him* on the heel” [emphasis added] (Keil and Delitzsch 1949:102; Esses 1974:19-20; Ryrie 1978:12; Gangel and Bramer 2002:44). Thus, the orthodox doctrines of the Trinity and the need and promise of the Messiah (Christ in Greek) are outlined from the beginning of biblical time in Genesis.

Salvation history, in the person of Jesus Christ, is then foreshadowed throughout the entire Old Testament through themes in each book, for example: the seed of the woman in Genesis, the Passover lamb in Exodus, the high priest in Leviticus, etc. Salvation history is then interwoven throughout the entire New Testament and again represented by themes in each book, for example: messiah in Matthew, wonderworker in Mark, Son of Man in Luke, Son of God in John, the Holy Spirit working among men in Acts, etc. (Roberts 1975). Salvation history is also addressed by God with specific “salvation acts” on behalf of the children of Israel in the Old Testament as follows: the Exodus out of Egypt and through the Red Sea; the protection, provision and leading for forty years in the wilderness; the conquering and resettling in the promised land of Canaan; the deliverance from surrounding nations during the time of the judges and kings; and the post-exilic return and rebuilding of the nation of Israel. Again, salvation history is specifically addressed in the messianic prophecies of the Old Testament prophets, then confirmed and sealed by the New Testament writers, while all the time looking toward the consummation of history and salvation at the *Parousia* or Second Coming/Advent of Jesus Christ.

In Hebrew, the phrase kingdom of heaven is rendered *malkut shamayim*, (Van Gemeren 1997, 2:956-63; 1997, 4:160-6) and in Greek, *basileia ton ouranon* (Zodhiates 1992:325-7).

Again in Greek, kingdom of God is rendered, *basileia tou theou* (Lattke 1984:72). The kingdom of heaven is viewed as the spiritual realm or the supernatural realm where God is and rules sovereignly (McDonald 2007:chap. 3). The kingdom of heaven concept is also addressed as *olam habbah*, the age to come, by both Jesus and Paul. This is the antithesis of *olam hazzeh*, this present age (Ladd 1974:364, 68). Both of these concepts were derived from the Old Testament prophets' understanding of history (as outlined by Section A.4 of the Introduction above). *Olam* can also be translated world or universe. The ancient rabbis spoke of two *olamot* or worlds: this world and the next, the world to come. *Olam habbah* speaks of either the afterlife or life in messianic times (Green 1999:23-4). Jesus spent much of His time on earth teaching about the kingdom of heaven and that the kingdom came through Him (Young 1998:146, 199-202, 207-8, 220-1). The kingdom of heaven (viewed through an eschatological lens) is the kingdom come through Jesus' First Coming, but not fully yet, until His Second Coming (*Parousia*) – (This is further amplified by the eschatological Christologies mentioned in section 1.2.2 above; the collection of essays written in *The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus*, edited by Bruce Chilton (1984); the sections on The Kingdom of God in Ladd's *A Theology of the New Testament* (1974); and Geisler's *Systematic Theology, 4 Church/Last Things* (2005)).

In the Old Testament, time is viewed as prophetic and looks forward to the kingdom of heaven being restored by the coming of the Messiah (kingdom coming). In the New Testament, time is viewed as apocalyptic (kingdom initiated by Jesus, but not fully realized until His *Parousia* at the *eschaton*—the end of all things). Apocalyptic time is previewed by Jesus' apocalyptic discourse on the Mount of Olives (Matt 24; Mark 13; Luke 21). However, apocalyptic time did not actually begin until after the completion of the atonement by the resurrection of Jesus (prophetic fulfillment of the Old Testament Messiah and beginning of the

kingdom by Jesus). Apocalyptic time also looks forward to the *Parousia* of Jesus and the complete fulfillment of the kingdom of heaven on earth by the millennial reign of the Lord Jesus Christ as outlined by Revelation 11:15; 19:11 – 20:4 (Ervin 1984:1-3). Therefore, it follows that when exegeting eschatological portions of Scripture, one must determine whether the context is prophetic eschatology or apocalyptic eschatology. The Gospels are set in prophetic eschatological time; whereas, the rest of the New Testament is set in apocalyptic eschatological time (Ervin 2002:5).

In this thesis, the concept of *chronos* time will be used to mean historical-chronological-prophetic time that began with the creation of the sun, moon, and stars on the fourth day in Genesis 1:14-19 and will end with the creation of a new heaven and new earth in Revelation 21-22. Therefore, the year AD 2009 (or CE) corresponds to the year 5769 per the Jewish calendar; to the year 6013 per the best combined estimate from the Julian, Gregorian and Bishop Ussher's calendars (Butt 2006:19; *World Book* 2001, 1:31; 3:29; *Hebrew Date Converter* 2007); and to the year 6009-6010 per Michael Rood's newly discovered *Astronomically and Agriculturally Corrected Biblical Hebrew Calendar* (2007). Biblical time (both prophetic and apocalyptic eschatological), in conjunction with the concepts of salvation history and the kingdom of God (or the age to come), will be viewed as *kairos* time and brought into focus with how they intersect with and in *chronos* time.