

Pleasant Springs Church

12-Week Study · A Quantum Case For God

WEEK 10 OF 12

Time and the Eternal God

Relativity, spacetime, and the God who inhabits eternity

THE BIG IDEA

Time, Einstein showed, is not absolute. It runs slower for fast-moving observers and slower in stronger gravitational fields. Two clocks that started together can end up disagreeing if one has traveled differently. Time is a *dimension*, woven with the three of space into a single fabric called spacetime. Scripture has always insisted that God is not in time at all — that he *inhabits eternity*, that one day is as a thousand years to him, that he is the Alpha and the Omega, the *I AM*.

Until the early twentieth century, time was assumed to be absolute. There was one universal clock; everyone, everywhere, agreed on what time it was. Einstein's special relativity (1905) and general relativity (1915) destroyed that assumption. Time, it turns out, runs differently for different observers depending on their motion and their position in a gravitational field.

This is not a thought experiment; it is engineering. Your GPS satellites have to be corrected for relativistic effects every day, or your phone's location would drift by several miles within hours. The clocks on those satellites tick *faster* than the clocks on the ground — by approximately 38 microseconds per day — because they are in weaker gravity. Time is real, but it is not absolute. It is a dimension woven into the same fabric as the three spatial dimensions, a fabric Einstein called **spacetime**.

If time itself is a created dimension — part of the structure of the universe rather than an absolute background against which the universe runs — then time itself *began* at the Big Bang. Augustine had said as much, fifteen hundred years earlier. God did not create the universe *in* time; he created time *with* the universe. God is therefore not *in* time at all. He is on the outside of every clock. Scripture has been telling us this from Moses to John.

SCRIPTURE

Pleasant Springs Church

12-Week Study · A Quantum Case For God

Isaiah 57:15 · He Who Inhabits Eternity

Septuagint (LXX) / Greek New Testament

Τάδε λέγει Κύριος ὁ Ὑψιστος, ὁ ἐν ὑψηλοῖς κατοικῶν τὸν αἰῶνα, Ἅγιος ἐν ἀγίοις ὄνομα αὐτῷ...

English Standard Version

For thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: 'I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit.'

Psalms 89:4 LXX (= Ps 90:4) · A Thousand Years As One Day

Septuagint (LXX) / Greek New Testament

ὅτι χίλια ἔτη ἐν ὀφθαλμοῖς σου ὡς ἡ ἡμέρα ἢ ἐχθές ἥτις διήλθε, καὶ φυλακὴ ἐν νυκτί.

English Standard Version

For a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday when it is past, or as a watch in the night.

2 Peter 3:8 · One Day Is As a Thousand Years

Septuagint (LXX) / Greek New Testament

Ἐν δὲ τοῦτο μὴ λανθανέτω ὑμᾶς, ἀγαπητοί, ὅτι μία ἡμέρα παρὰ Κυρίῳ ὡς χίλια ἔτη, καὶ χίλια ἔτη ὡς ἡμέρα μία.

English Standard Version

But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

John 8:58 · Before Abraham Was, I AM

Septuagint (LXX) / Greek New Testament

εἶπεν αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς· ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, πρὶν Ἀβραὰμ γενέσθαι ἐγὼ εἰμί.

English Standard Version

Jesus said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.'

Revelation 1:8 · The Alpha and the Omega

Septuagint (LXX) / Greek New Testament

ἐγὼ εἰμι τὸ Α καὶ τὸ Ω, ἀρχὴ καὶ τέλος, λέγει Κύριος ὁ Θεός, ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ᾔν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος, ὁ παντοκράτωρ.

English Standard Version

I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.

Pleasant Springs Church

12-Week Study · A Quantum Case For God

Exodus 3:13–14 · I AM Has Sent Me

Septuagint (LXX) / Greek New Testament

¹³καὶ εἶπε Μωυσῆς πρὸς τὸν Θεόν... τί ἐρῶ πρὸς αὐτούς; ¹⁴καὶ εἶπεν ὁ Θεὸς πρὸς Μωυσήν λέγων· ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ ὢν· καὶ εἶπεν· οὕτως ἐρεῖς τοῖς υἱοῖς Ἰσραὴλ· ὁ ὢν ἀπέσταλκέ με πρὸς ὑμᾶς.

English Standard Version

¹³Then Moses said to God... ‘what shall I say to them?’ ¹⁴God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM.’ And he said, ‘Say this to the people of Israel: I AM has sent me to you.’

1 Timothy 1:17 · The King Eternal

Septuagint (LXX) / Greek New Testament

τῷ δὲ βασιλεῖ τῶν αἰώνων, ἀφθάρτῳ, ἀοράτῳ, μόνῳ σοφῷ Θεῷ, τιμὴ καὶ δόξα εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων· ἀμήν.

English Standard Version

To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

Hebrews 13:8 · The Same Yesterday, Today, and Forever

Septuagint (LXX) / Greek New Testament

Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς χθὲς καὶ σήμερον ὁ αὐτὸς καὶ εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας.

English Standard Version

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

THE BIBLICAL CASE

‘I AM’ in Greek — The Tense That Has No Tense (Continued)

When Moses asks God for his name at the burning bush, God answers *ehyeh asher ehyeh*, which the Septuagint translates *ego eimi ho on* — *I am the one who is*. The verb has no past, no future, no tense at all in the ordinary sense. It is pure present being. A thousand years later Jesus picks up the same name in John 8:58 (*before Abraham was, I AM*) and his hearers pick up stones. They understand exactly what he is claiming. The name *I AM* is the divine signature of the One who stands outside the clock. Hebrews 13:8 carries the same name forward: *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever* — not because he doesn’t change with time, but because, for him, there is no *with time*. He is the King of the ages (1 Tim 1:17), not the king *within* them.

Augustine Knew

Pleasant Springs Church

12-Week Study · A Quantum Case For God

In *Confessions* Book XI, Augustine wrestled with the question, *What was God doing before he created the world?* His answer is one of the most important sentences in theology: *the question is malformed, because «before» presupposes time, and time itself is a creature. God did not exist in time before he created. God created time.* Fifteen centuries later, Einstein's general relativity made the same point in equations: time is part of the structure of the universe, not an independent backdrop. Augustine got there first — by attending closely to the doctrine of creation.

I AM — The Tense That Has No Tense

When Jesus says *before Abraham was, I am*, he deliberately collapses the past tense Abraham would have occupied (*genes-thai*, «to come to be») with the present tense reserved for God (*ego eimi*, «I AM» — the divine name from Exodus 3:14). The Jewish hearers understood exactly what he was claiming and picked up stones to kill him. Jesus is saying: *I do not live on the timeline you live on. I am the one whose name is «I AM» — the eternal present.* Revelation 1:8 says the same thing in different words: *the one who is and who was and who is to come.* Three tenses, one being.

Living Inside a Created Clock

If time is part of the created order, then God's promises about the future are not predictions made from inside the timeline (he might be wrong) but reports from outside the timeline (he cannot be wrong). His «forever» is not *a very long time*; it is *not time at all*. Eternity is not «time stretched out forever.» It is the fullness of being God who does not have to wait for anything. When scripture says God has loved you with an everlasting love (Jer 31:3), it is not saying the love started a very long time ago. It is saying the love does not have a starting moment at all, because God does not have starting moments.

THE CONVERGENCE

Modern physics has demonstrated that time is a dimension — part of the created structure of spacetime, not an absolute backdrop. Scripture has always said God is not *in* time. He inhabits eternity (Isa 57:15). To him a thousand years is one day (Ps 90:4). His Son says *before Abraham was, I AM*. Augustine knew this in the fifth century. Einstein confirmed it in the twentieth. The Bible has been saying it since Exodus 3.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Does it change anything for you that time itself is a created thing — that God did not exist in time before creating?

Pleasant Springs Church

12-Week Study · A Quantum Case For God

2. Read Revelation 1:8 aloud. What does it mean to you that God is «the one who is and who was and who is to come»?
3. If God is not in time, can he hurry? Can he be late? What does that mean for your prayers about urgent matters?
4. What promises of God have felt slow to you? In light of 2 Peter 3:8, what might be a more honest way to read God's timing?
5. If Jesus is the *I AM* — the eternal present — what does it mean that he became flesh and entered the timeline with us?

CLOSING PRAYER

*Eternal God, the high and lofty One who inhabits eternity, you are not slowed by our delays or rushed by our urgencies. With you a thousand years are as a day, and a day as a thousand years. Forgive us when we have grown impatient with your timing, when we have suspected you of being late, when we have tried to make the universe move on our clock. Teach us to wait well. Teach us to trust the One who declares the end from the beginning, who promises that his Word will not return void, and whose Son became flesh in time so that we might pass through time into the life that has no end. Through Jesus Christ, the Alpha and the Omega. **Amen.***

Week 10 of 12 — A Quantum Case For God, a Pleasant Springs Church discipleship series. The complete 12-week study, and every other lesson, is at ps-church.com/discipleship/quantum-case-for-god