

12-12-2021, COTR Texarkana

Title: God Controls the Hands of Time

Purpose: Create a sense of confidence that God is ordering time toward a predetermined purpose and provoke people to make the most out of our limited time.

Truth for Today: God is orchestrating time; therefore, we should use time wisely.

Text: Luke 2:1-7

Topic: Christmas, Time, Sovereignty

God Controls the Hands of Time

I. Introduction

A. Pic Charlie Brown is counting the days until Christmas. CB knew he couldn't make time go faster or slow it down. He was bound by time just like we are.

B. Similarly, there was a countdown in heaven before Jesus was born. [Luke 2:1-7 (NIV) **In those days** Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world...] Pic.⁵ Caesar Augustus, the 1st emperor in the Roman Empire, was the most powerful man in the world when Jesus Christ was born yet he was a pawn in God's hand to fulfill God's purpose. He issued an order to fulfill a Biblical prophecy made 600 years earlier predicting the town Jesus would be born.⁵

C. Vs. 3 And everyone went to their own town to register. 4 So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth...to Bethlehem...5 He went there to register with Mary, who...was expecting a child. 6 While they were there, **the time came** for the baby to be born, 7 and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son.]

1. Pic. It's as if God has a giant clock advancing time to fulfill His purposes. As we enter the Christmas season, let's be mindful that God's unseen hand orchestrated time then and He's doing the same thing today. This should give us great confidence and hope, knowing our world isn't driven by luck or accident but God is in ultimate control of world events and is directing time to fulfill His purposes.

2. Today we'll talk about time (1) God is orchestrating time (2) The nature of time (3) We should use our time wisely.

D. Title: God Controls the Hands of Time

E. Truth for Today: God is orchestrating time; therefore, we should use time wisely.

II. God is orchestrating time

A. God created time. [Genesis 1:1-5 (NLT) In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth...3 Then God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. 4 And God saw that the light was good. Then he separated the light from the darkness. 5 God called the light "day" and the darkness "night." And evening passed and morning came, marking **the first day.**] The creation of time is part of the creation of the universe. The measurements and divisions of time

came about as God separated day from night and created the sun, moon, and stars to mark the days and the years.¹

1. God is eternal, not bound by time. [Psalm 90:4 (NCV) **To you, a thousand years is like the passing of a day**, or like a few hours in the night.] Because of His foreknowledge, only God knows and foreordains events in time. [Mark 13:32 (NLT)...no one knows the day or hour when these things will happen...**Only the Father knows**. Acts 2:23 (NLT) **But God knew what would happen, and his prearranged plan was carried out when Jesus was betrayed**...you nailed him to a cross and killed him.] God sees all things in time from a perspective of eternity, He sees the end from the beginning. Humans, however, are trapped in time, and sometimes can't discern the meaning of time in their own day. [Luke 12:54–56 (NLT) Jesus turned to the crowd and said, “When you see clouds beginning to form in the west, you say, ‘Here comes a shower.’ And you are right...56 You fools! You know how to interpret the weather signs of the earth and sky, but **you don't know how to interpret the present times**.”²

B. There are two words in the NT that emphasize two dimensions of time. *Chronos* refers to the chronological measurement of time. [John 7:33 (NIV) Jesus said, “I am with you for only a **short time**, and then I am going to the one who sent me.] *Kairos* refers to the spiritual significance of an era. [Mark 1:15 (NIV) “**The time has come**,” he said. “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!”]¹

C. God orders time and world affairs; therefore, we can trust that God is in control. E.g., Abraham, [Ge. 18:14 (ESV) Is anything too hard for the Lord? **At the appointed time** I will return to you, about this time next year, and Sarah shall have a son.” Ge. 21:2 (ESV) Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age **at the time** of which God had spoken to him.] Psalm 105:19 (NLT) **Until the time came to fulfill his dreams**, the Lord tested Joseph's character.] There were other events surrounding the birth of Christ indicating God was orchestrating time. An angel to Zechariah, the father of JB, the forerunner of Jesus, [Luke 1:20 (NIV) And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true **at their appointed time**.” Luke 1:57 (NIV) **When it was time for Elizabeth to have her baby**, she gave birth to a son.]

1. God's unseen hand orchestrated time then and He's doing the same thing today. Though the future may look uncertain, we can trust Him because He is in control.

III. Observations about the nature of time

A. The days are long, but the years are short. [James 4:14 (NLT) How do you know what your life will be like tomorrow? **Your life is like the morning fog—it's here a little while, then it's gone.**]

1. Pic Christmas when I was a boy. We'd go in the woods and cut a cedar Christmas tree, but nana had an artificial tree. When my kids were little, we'd go to a Christmas tree farm and cut a tree. One day we started going to Loews and then I got an artificial tree. Where'd time go? The days are long, but the years are short.

2. [Psalm 39:4 (NLT) “**Lord, remind me how brief my time on earth will be.** Remind me that my days are numbered— how fleeting my life is.]

B. God is never late but rarely early. [Acts 12:1–7 (NLT) ...King Herod Agrippa...2 had the apostle James killed...3...he also arrested Peter...6 **The night before** Peter was to be placed on trial...7 **Suddenly**...an angel of the Lord stood before Peter...“Quick! Get up!” And the chains fell off his wrists.]

1. Why didn’t God rescue Peter earlier? Nobody likes the anxiety of waiting till the last moment for change but, often God acts this way. While we’re waiting, our faith can get stronger and our dependence on God alone for help grows deeper. That’s a good thing. Maybe that’s why God is never late but rarely early.

C. Opportunities/ open doors from God are often time sensitive; go through them before they close. Context, Saul was blinded by a heavenly light, Acts 9:9-17 (NIV) For **three days** he was blind, 10 (NLT) The Lord spoke to him in a vision, calling, “Ananias!” ...11 The Lord said, “**Go**...to the house of Judas...ask for a man...named Saul. He is praying to me **right now**...13 “But Lord...14 he is authorized by the leading priests to arrest everyone who calls upon your name.” 15 But the Lord said, “**Go**...” Opportunities/ open doors from God are often time sensitive. If we don’t act, the door may close, and God will ask someone else. Imagine the eternal impact of Ananias’s choice.

D. Our time on earth is limited. [Psalm 90:9–12 (NIV) All our days pass away under your wrath; we finish our years with a moan. 10 **Our days may come to seventy years, or eighty, if our strength endures**; yet the best of them are but trouble and sorrow, for they quickly pass, and we fly away.12 (NCV) **Teach us how short our lives really are so that we may be wise.**]

1. The average life expectancy for women in USA is 81 years and for men 77 years.³ Picture The oldest person in the world recently died, World's Oldest Person, Francisca 'Lola' Susano, Dies at 124 in The Philippines ⁴

2. Since our time on earth is limited and uncertain, we should use time wisely.

IV. We should use our time wisely with the right people and the right priorities.

A. Spend time with the right people and avoid the wrong people. [Psalm 26:4 (NLT) I do not spend time with liars or go along with hypocrites.] [1 Cor.15:33 (NCV) 33 Do not be fooled: “Bad friends will ruin good habits.”]

1. Spending time with the right people makes our life better; spending time with the wrong ones makes it worse. Story 4 people robbed DeLaughter’s grocery in Maud stealing an ATM machine and beef jerky. My best guess: probably went to school together, got in trouble together and drink beer and smoke pot together. Maybe they went in for a burger and saw someone getting money from ATM. Now they’ll be in jail together. E.g. Chr. friends active in church vs. only go Sunday.

a. Contrast: Another group of kids in HS. They went to Fields of Faith together and go to youth group together. One heard pastor Cole talking about a mission’s trip and they decided to go together.

B. Spend time on the right priorities, Ephesians 5:15–16 (ESV) **Look carefully then how you walk**, not as unwise but as wise, 16 **making the best use of the time**, (*NKJV redeeming the time*) because the days are evil.

1. What is “the best use of time”? Using our time to serve the Lord and fulfill God’s purpose for our life. Nothing else is more important. Most people live life to have fun. It’s great to enjoy life, but it’s temporary. Serving the Lord has eternal value.

2. Focus on reaching a lost world before it’s eternally too late. Their eternal soul hangs in the balance. Salvation of the lost is why Christ was born. [Luke 10:2 (NIV) He told them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out **workers** into his harvest field.] We work in God’s harvest field by sharing our faith, doing missions, buying Bibles, helping the poor, teaching kids, etc.

V. Conclusion

A. In 13-14 days, we’ll celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, the savior of the world. This Christmas let’s remember: (1) Though our world seems like it’s spinning out of control, it’s not. God is still in control. He’s orchestrating time to fulfill His plan.

(2) Time, measured by our life, is God’s gift to us. What we do with the time we have left is our gift to God. [Psalm 39:4 (NLT) “Lord, remind me how brief my time on earth will be. Remind me that my days are numbered— how fleeting my life is.]

VI. Response

A. Prayer

B. Souls

VII. Bibliography/ Resources: Logos Bible Software and Library, Platinum Edition, was used to prepare this message.

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