

A GOD FOR ALL TIMES

Pharaoh was not the only one to learn of the power contained in the name "I Am". We could not believe that the translators hired by King James could have made such an error in grammar. So we read it again. Jesus had definitely said to His disciples in John 8:58, "Before Abraham was, I am." In one simple sentence, Jesus made a statement about the true nature of His divinity that was absolutely mind boggling. To paraphrase, He said that before Abraham existed, He currently existed at the same time He was speaking with His disciples. He had just told His disciples that He had the ability to be in two places, not at the same time, but in two different time periods. They missed it, just as we missed it the first ten times we read it. This time it captured our imaginations and our hearts.

Think back to another time when God had attempted to reveal His timeless nature to His people. He had just commissioned Moses in the wilderness to go before the most powerful ruler in the world. He was to announce the end of the free labor that had built the mightiest nation on earth. For some odd reason, he was nervous. He wanted proof of an authority greater than himself to take into the presence of the Pharaoh. In Ex 3:14, God's reply was to tell Pharaoh that his God's name was "I am". That He was a God whose existence was defined by the present tense alone. In other words, there was no past or future tense in the existence of God. To creatures such as ourselves, whose lives are defined by the beating of our hearts, such an existence is nearly beyond our comprehension. In order to try to understand this, let us imagine for a moment, what it would be like to be God.

Let us create a world of only two dimensions. On a flat sheet of paper, we will draw an irregular shape that represents the limits of our created world. Within this world, we will draw two-dimensional dots and bring them to life to populate our world. They will be free to move about within the confines of our outline. However, because they are also only two-dimensional, they will not be able to cross it. They are not even aware that such a dimension as "up" exists. We, on the other hand, are able to seemingly magically enter and leave their world in a way that they cannot comprehend. Because we are "up", and there is no way that they can understand that dimension, we are as gods to them. We can change the confines of their world or reach into it and change their lives at will. Should one of our creatures suddenly be given thickness, his comprehension of what constitutes reality would drastically change. No longer would he be limited by the world for which he was created.

Although we do not understand it, we do realize that there is a fourth dimension of time. To accurately define where anything on the earth is in relation to the rest of the universe, we must know when it was at a given set of coordinates. As the earth moves through space, where an item is located one minute may be 1000 miles from where it is located one minute later. We also know that time is relative and can be manipulated by circumstances and by velocity. For us, time begins with the beating of our hearts and ends when it stops. We covet it, measure it, desire more of it, and squander it. We just cannot define, understand, or manipulate it.

God can! He clearly moves through time as easily as we move through space. Rather, He occupies all of time, and interacts with our world at any point or points in time that He chooses. Such a being transcends our understanding. No wonder the scriptures say that the wisdom of man is the foolishness of God. Or that His ways are not searchable. If our understanding of this attribute is correct, the possibilities are endless. No wonder He knows the beginning and end of all things. Prophecy would become just a matter of the spirit of God moving upon the consciousness of the prophet and allowing him a quick glimpse into another time period of God's

existence. Restoring health would be a simple matter of substituting a time when the supplicant was healthy for the present time of need. Small wonder that the woman at the well could say, "Come see a man who told me all things".

We are products of our times. Our generation was termed the "me" generation, and perhaps, rightly so. When we were first told, and understood, that a man named Jesus had died for us, our thoughts were along this line. "That was a long time ago. He didn't know us. We didn't know Him. If He chose to do that, what is it to us?" Yet, if He could exist at the same time with the disciples and with Abraham, then He exists at the same time with the disciples and with us. Which means that right now, He is hanging on the cross and deciding, for our sake, not to come down. Right now, the same God that was moved by needs in the New Testament is touched by the feeling of our infirmities.

We have a promise in the scriptures that we will be glorified as Christ was. Sometime between the time He told Mary that she could not touch Him at the tomb and when He allowed Thomas to touch Him, something happened to the body of Christ. What was mortal and bound by time became immortal to dwell in eternity. We believe that we will also become immortal and timeless when we are glorified in resurrection. But even here on this earth, when we enter into the spirit of God, we can get a brief glimpse, we can see darkly, what it would be like to no longer be bound by time. When we, the new body of Christ, are touched by His glory, our comprehension of what constitutes reality drastically changes. No longer are we limited by the world for which we were created. We are new creatures in Christ and a whole new dimension is added to our lives. Regardless of how old we are when we enter His body.

He is a God for people of all ages. Literally!

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What do you think Jesus was really saying when He said, "Before Abraham was, I am?"
2. What do you think Moses thought when God told him to tell Pharaoh that he had been sent by the "I Am?" He obviously was satisfied by the answer.
3. It has been said that the ultimate measure of time is the space between one heartbeat and the next. When they cease, so does time. Do you feel this is accurate?
4. If Jesus knew who He really was, and His real purpose for coming, do you think time had any significance for Him? Do you think His ascension to His Father, before He reappeared to His disciples changed His perception of time? Given the fact that He ate with them, was He still human then?
5. Do you feel that the example of a world populated by dot creatures paints a fair picture of the vast differences between ourselves and God?
6. Do you think that man will ever circumvent the restrictions that God has placed upon us with time. When? In eternity? Do you think our new bodies will have hearts?
7. What other manifestations of the power of God can be explained by the concept of a God who is timeless?
8. Are there any incidents in the scriptures, or even apparent contradictions, that could be explained by such a mastery over time? How about Jesus vanishing from the midst of a crowd as they were pushing Him over a cliff, or appearing in a locked room with His disciples?
9. If Jesus is actually dying on the cross for you right this instant, would that become a consideration as you face temptations and decisions? If He is currently in agony watching how you live your life, does that make you feel more or less worthy of His death?

10. Does eternity stretch backwards as well as forwards from the time of death or the rapture? If we become timeless like Christ, glorified as He was, will we be able to experience the past in person?
11. Have you ever been totally lost in the presence of God and unaware of the passing of time? Did it change your perception at all of what constitutes reality?