

# UNDERSTANDING THE TIMES

## Part 1: Seeing "The Big Picture"

Now these were the numbers of the divisions that were equipped for war, and came to David at Hebron to turn over the kingdom of Saul to him, according to the word of the LORD...of the sons of Issachar who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do, their chiefs were two hundred; and all their brethren were at their command. (1 Chr 12:23, 32 NKJV)

### Ten-Week Study on UNDERSTANDING THE TIMES

#### - Part 1: Seeing "The Big Picture"

- What does God see from His vantage point?
  - The **ATTRIBUTES** of God...*How God describes God* (18).
    - **Wisdom**: "Wisdom is the ability to devise perfect ends and to achieve these ends by the most perfect means." In other words, God makes no mistakes. He is the Father who truly knows best, as Paul explains in Romans 11:33: "Oh, how great are God's riches and wisdom and knowledge! How impossible it is for us to understand His decisions and His ways!" (1 Cor 1:24; James 1:5; Pro 28:26)
    - **Infinitude**: God knows no boundaries. He is without measure. This attribute by definition impacts all of the others. Since God is infinite, everything else about Him must also be infinite. (Gen 1:1; Jer 29:13; Rev 1:8)
    - **Sovereignty**: This is "the attribute by which He rules His entire creation." He is all-knowing and all-powerful. It makes Him absolutely free to do what He knows to be best. There is nothing God cannot control if He chooses. Remarkably, He has given man free will, and with that, responsibility for his choices in life. (Ex 18:11; Ps 115:3; Rom 9:15)
    - **Holiness**: This is the attribute that sets God apart from all created beings. It refers to His majesty and His perfect moral purity. There is absolutely no sin or evil thought in God at all. His holiness is the definition of that which is pure and righteous in all the universe. Wherever God appears, such as to Moses at the burning bush, that place becomes holy just for God having been there. (Ex 3:5-6; 1 Sam 2:2; Ps 99:2-3)
    - **Trinity**: Though the actual word is not used in the Bible, the truth of God revealing Himself in three persons is included. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all called God, given worship as God, exist eternally, and are involved in doing things only God could do. Although, God reveals Himself in three persons, God is One and cannot be divided. All are involved completely whenever One of the Three is active. (Gen 1:26; Matt 28:19; 1 John 5:7-8)

- **Omniscience**: “God possesses perfect knowledge and therefore has no need to learn. God has never learned and cannot learn.” Omniscience means all-knowing. God knows everything, and His knowledge is infinite. It is impossible to hide anything from God. (Ez 11:5; Rom 11:33; Heb 4:13)
- **Faithfulness**: Everything that God has promised will come to pass. His faithfulness guarantees this fact. He does not lie. What He has said in the Bible about Himself is true. Jesus even said that He is the Truth. This is extremely important for the followers of Jesus because it is on His faithfulness that our hope of eternal life rests. He will honor His promise that our sins will be forgiven and that we will live forever with Him. (Deut 7:9; Ps 36:5; 1 Cor 1:9)
- **Love**: Love is such an important part of God’s character that the apostle John wrote, “God is love.” This means that God holds the well-being of others as His primary concern. For a full definition of love, read 1 Corinthians 13. To see love in action, study the life of Jesus. His sacrifice on the cross for the sins of others is the ultimate act of love. God’s love is not a love of emotion but of action. His love gives freely to the object of its affection, those who choose to follow His son Jesus. (Deut 7:7-8; Rom 5:5, 8; 1 John 4:8, 16)
- **Omnipotence**: Literally this word means all-powerful. Since God is infinite and since He possesses power, He possesses infinite power. He does allow His creatures to have some power, but this in no way diminishes His own. “He expends no energy that must be replenished.” When the Bible says God rested on the seventh day, it was to set an example for us and our need for rest, not because He was tired. (Eph 1:11; Mark 14:36; Jer 32:17)
- **Self-existence**: When Moses asked who he was talking to in the burning bush, God said, “I AM THE ONE WHO ALWAYS IS.” God has no beginning or end. He just exists. Nothing else in all the universe is self-caused. Only God. In fact, if anything else had created Him, that thing would be God. This is a difficult concept for our minds since everything else we will ever encounter comes from something other than itself. The Bible says, “In the beginning, God.” He was already there. (Ps 90:2; John 1:1-5; Col 1:15-17)
- **Self-sufficiency**: The Bible says that God has life in Himself (see John 5:26). All other life in the universe is a gift from God. He has no needs and there is no way He can improve. To God, nothing else is necessary. He does not need our help with anything, but because of His grace and love, He allows us to be a part of advancing His plan on earth and being a blessing to others. We are the ones who change, but never God. He is self-sufficient. (Deut 10:14; Ps 121:4; 1 Cor 10:26)
- **Justice**: The Bible says that God is just, but it is His character that defines what being just really is. He does not conform to some outside criteria. Being just brings moral equity to everyone. When there are evil acts, justice demands there be a penalty. Since God is perfect and has never done evil, no penalty would ever be necessary; however, because of His love, God paid the penalty for our evil deeds by going to the cross Himself. His justice needed to be satisfied, but He took care of it for all who will believe in Jesus. (Gen 18:25; Rom 1:32; 1 Pet 1:17)
- **Immutability**: This simply means that God never changes. It is why the Bible says, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.” (Mal 3:6; James 1:17)

- **Mercy:** “Mercy is the attribute of God which motivates Him to be actively compassionate.” Since God’s justice is satisfied in Jesus, He is free to show mercy to all those who have chosen to follow Him. It will never end since it is a part of God’s nature. Mercy is the way He desires to relate to mankind, and He does so unless the person chooses to despise or ignore God at which time His justice becomes the prominent attribute. (Ps 6:4; Tit 3:5; 1 Pet 1:3)
- **Eternal:** In some ways, this fact about God is similar to His self-existence. God always has been and will forever be, because God dwells in eternity. Time is His creation. It is why God can see the end from the beginning, and why He is never surprised by anything. If He were not eternal, God’s promise of eternal life for those who follow Jesus would have little value. (Ex 3:14; Ps 102:12; Heb 13:8)
- **Goodness:** “The goodness of God is that which motivates Him to be kind, affectionate, tender-hearted, benevolent, and full of good will toward men.” This attribute of God is why He blesses His followers the way He does. God’s actions define what goodness is, and we can easily see it in the way Jesus related to the people around Him. (Ex 34:6-7; Ps 25:8; James 1:17)
- **Gracious:** God enjoys giving great gifts to those who love Him, even when they do not deserve it. Grace is the way we describe that inclination. Jesus Christ is the channel through which His grace moves. The Bible says, “The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” (Ps 145:17; Eph 4:7; Heb 4:16)
- **Omnipresence:** This theological term means “always present.” Since God is infinite, His being knows no boundaries. So, clearly He is everywhere. This truth is taught throughout the Bible as the phrase “I am with you always” is repeated 22 times in both the Old and New Testaments. These were even Jesus’ words of assurance just after giving the challenge to His disciples to take His message to the entire world. (1 Kings 8:27; Jer 23:23-24; Ps 139:7-10)
- **So, what DOES He see when He looks at “The Big Picture?”**
  - He sees His **creation**.
    - Five times in the book of Genesis God stands back and takes stock of his creation. Each time the text says, **"And God saw that it was good"** (vv. 4, 12, 18, 21, 25). And when all was finished and man and woman were created in his own image, it says, **"And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good."**
    - **Why does God take pleasure in His creation?** One of the most profound reasons is because the works of His creation “point us beyond ourselves to God Himself.” John Piper
  - He sees His **people**.
    - You can see God refer to His **“church”** in both the Old Testament and New Testaments.
      - On that same day, as the Book of Moses was being read to the people, the passage was found that said no Ammonite or Moabite should ever be permitted to enter **the assembly of God** [*Qeahal- Elohim*]. (Neh 13:1 NLT-SE)

- In time, **the Hebrew Scriptures were translated into Greek**. In the Septuagint version, *qahal* is generally translated to the Greek word *ekklesia*.
  - Now I say to you that you are Peter (which means ‘rock’), and upon this rock I will build my church [*ekklesia*], and all the powers of hell will not conquer it. (Matt 16:18 NLT-SE)
    - The NT word “church” is found 144 times in the NT, always translated in greek Greek, ***ekklesia***.
- There is even a reference to the Old Testament “church” (assembly of God’s people) in the NT.
  - Moses was with our ancestors, **the assembly of God’s people** in the wilderness, when the angel spoke to him at Mount Sinai. And there Moses received life-giving words to pass on to us. (Acts 7:38 NLT-SE)
  - After the Babylonian Exile, even in the Scriptures themselves, *Yhwh* was used less and less and *Elohim* more and more. In effect, whether intentionally or not, the Jews put less and less emphasis on the **personal relationship between God** and Israel and more and more on His universal relationship with all mankind. This laid the foundation for the preaching of the Gospel by the “New Testament Church of God”, which would reflect **the family name of the Deity**. ~ John Wheeler
- **Bottom line**: When God looks a “**His people**” on the earth, in both the OT and NT He finds their origin in and connects their future to His Name (*Qahal Yhwh* and *ekklesia Theou*).
  - Instead of underlining His personal relationship with Israel, He was underlining His potential family relationship with all humanity. Thus, instead of being called (in modern English terms) “the Church of the LORD (the Eternal, *Yhwh*)”, God’s religious assembly is called “the Church of God (*Elohim*, *Theos*)”. ~ John Wheeler
- He sees **the end from the beginning**.
  - I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose,’ (Is 46:9–10 ESV)
  - The LORD foils the plans of the nations; he thwarts the purposes of the peoples. But the plans of the LORD stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations. (Psa 33:10–11 NIV)
- **Take a couple steps back...what do YOU see?**
  - **It will depend on your FAITH in God**...Do we believe He is who the Bible says He is?
  - **It will depend on what you BATTLE**...Our struggles with fear, doubt, bitterness, insecurity, pride, etc.
  - **It will depend on where your HOPE lies**...Does our hope lie in our circumstances changing or are we truly depending on God to see us through, no matter what the circumstances?