

My Last Article and the Bible

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Well, ... I hope it isn't this one. But, you never know. It is certain, however, there will be a last one. You are approaching your "*last article*" too - whatever that "*article*" might be. Maybe it is the last Bible study you lead, the last gospel presentation you make, the last meal you deliver to a shut-in, the last song you sing in church, or the last Monday you report for duty at your job (your ministry). You are heading toward your last prayer on behalf of someone you long to see get right with God. Between now and then ... how are we to view the time we have? And how are we to know what "*articles*" we should be writing?

The Time We Have

James is not the greatest encourager when he says, "*You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away*" (Ja 4:14). Peter then piles on by quoting Isaiah. "*All flesh is like grass, and all its glory like the flower of the grass. The grass withers and the flower falls off*" (1Pet 1:24). And Solomon said, "*childhood and the prime of life are fleeting*" (Eccl 11:10). When I look at photos of myself just fifteen years ago - it is ridiculous. But Jesus out does them all by saying, "*which of you, by being anxious, can add a single cubit to his life's span?*" A cubit is about 18 inches - the length of a shall step. "*If then you cannot do even a very little thing, why are you anxious about other matters?*" (Lk 12:25,26). He calls the taking of one small step past our deathbed - "*a little thing.*" But, that one small step will be **impossible** to muster. Whoops, I stand corrected. He calls this, "*a very little thing.*" In this, He really does ... step on our ego. Of course, there is no point at getting upset with James, or Peter, or Solomon - or even Luke for recording Jesus' remarks - because we all know that it is God Himself behind these humiliating statements. But, He just wants to expose us to reality. So, how should one approach the time we have? After all ... we are here.

In one of the oldest Psalms, Moses pretty much sums it up. "*Teach us to number our days, so that we may present to Thee a heart of wisdom*" (Ps 90:12). The other choice ... is to remain the fool. As far as **how much** time we actually do have, David informs us, "*in Thy book they were all written, the days that were ordained for me when there was not yet one of them*" (Ps 139:16). "*It is I who put to death and give life*" (Deut32:39). On several occasions, Jesus' enemies tried to kill Him, but were unable, because "*His hour had not yet come*" (Jn 7:30, 8:20 and Lk 22:53). Satan could not strike Job's possessions, family or personal body without express permission from God - much less take his life (Job 1 and 2). Based upon this information, some believe we are indestructible - even now - until God determines the protective hedges are to be dropped. And we don't want to stay around past those determinations anyway. To approach one's time in this life with such a conviction, changes everything. Gone is the fear of man. Gone is the fear to live. And gone is the fear of death. And to purpose to seek righteousness at the same time? We would find ourselves living ... like Jesus did when in this age. Oh, to just imitate Him.

"Making the most of your time ...

... *for the days are evil*" (Eph 5:16). I approach my life in chapters. For example, each time I get sick, I use that as the end of a chapter, and when He reinstates me to health - that begins the next one. And if He is trying to get something through to me, I ask Him not to restore me until I learn whatever it is He wants me to learn. I do not want any repetitions of negative events for the same lesson. So, while ill (or some other negative event), I take that time to reevaluate, and come out with

renewed goals. Many times, I find I let go of frivolous activities, or what I then view as diversionary activities - which may have even been "*good things*" earlier. However, I still want to enjoy life - and even some of its diversions (I like Major League Baseball - minus steroids), but only to the degree it gives me a break, so I can reenter the fields God has appointed me (as best as I can discern) with renewed vigor and freshness. I want to make the most of my time. And time really does move at an alarming rate.

The "Articles" We Should Be Writing

Everyone is busy writing "*articles*." God places each of them under one of two bold headings - "*In Christ*" and "*Outside of Christ*." Those in the first column are headed for commendation and eternal reward, and those in the other column are headed for disaster.

"In Christ"

The Christian has an opportunity. "*Articles*" can be written that will be placed by God in this column. "*We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them*" (Eph 2:10) ... **should** ... walk in them. To assist the saint so that sanity prevails, He works in the Christian so as to both "*will and to work for His good pleasure*" (Phil 2:13). So, absent sin, the very things the saint wants to do - are the very things God wants the saint to do. And then ... He rewards the saint for doing those things. He is quite intent on showering His own from His eternal treasury. "*He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him **freely give us all things?***" (Ro 8:32).

"Outside of Christ"

Of course, the Christian can choose to traffic in garbage. Unfortunately, there is far too much of that. Such "*articles*" will be ferreted out and "*will be burned up, (and) he (she) will suffer loss*" (1Cor 3:15). All products of the flesh will be placed in this "*Outside of Christ*" column.

For the non-Christian the picture is bleak indeed. Jesus put it this way. "*He who is not with Me is against Me. And He who does not gather with Me scatters*" (Lk 11:23). You can probably figure out which column all non-Christian "*articles*" populate. So, the real question is ... "*If He can not impose His will - **who cares what He thinks?***" It is upon such a hope of impotence that everyone outside of Jesus Christ places his/her hope. I am of the conviction this is a losing wager. Actually, it is already a lost wager. "*(T)he one not believing has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the uniquely begotten Son of God*" (Jn 3:18). The verb, "*has been judged*" is in the perfect tense in Koine Greek. This tells us an action has been completed in the past with results up to the present. So, when unbelief in Christ is chosen, condemnation is the sentence levied. That state continues up to ... and into ... any present moment of that unbeliever's life. The only thing that can reverse this dire state is a reversal on that previously made determination of unbelief. That is one reason I write my articles. I hope to have whatever audience I reach ... reconsider. Not for my sake, but for their own sake.

I was one in my early years ... an unbeliever that is. I was active, but in the final analysis, it was "*a futile way of life inherited from (my) forefathers*" (1Pet 1:18). Jesus once told His adversaries, "*that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God*" (Lk 16:15). All campaigns, endeavors and passions outside of Christ are ... "*an uproar for nothing*" (Ps 39:6). Nothing? Yes, nothing. Solomon explored many facets of human activity, and then authored an extremely sober assessment of the varied evils and vanities "*under the sun*" (Eccl 4:7 - but read the whole book). One reason Jesus came, was to "*deliver us out of this present evil age*" (Gal 1:4). The non-Christian lives for, and writes "*articles*" destined for the bottom of the bird cage.

Death

“Lord, make me to know my end, and what is the extent of my days. Let me know how transient I am. Behold, Thou hast made my days as handbreadths and my lifetime as nothing in Thy sight. Surely every man, at his best, is a mere breath ... surely every man is a mere breath” (Ps 39:4,5,11).

The real problem with death, and how we relate to it, is that we do not understand it. We aren't meant to. *“He has set eternity”* in our hearts (Eccl 3:11). It is not reasonable to expect that a heart with eternity **set in it** can at the same time understand a heart that is **to die**. These are cross purposes - mutually exclusive - polar opposites - and are contrary understandings incapable of residing in the same heart. In this case, death is the outsider ... imposed upon an eternal heart - and therefore, *“does not compute.”*

There are some things an individual may not understand - and the consequences are not that substantial. For example, there are many things about internet promotion, and the various search engine algorithms involved, I will never understand. So, I have determined to write materials that hopefully have worthwhile content, and trust that these formulas will honor my labors ... or later catch up to my work. I believe this will happen because I do know that search engines want to provide valuable content to their searching public ... so, they will figure things out. That belief has allowed me to walk around information on bounce back rates, keyword saturation, and social media endeavors that I just really don't *“get.”* Maybe this is a misguided belief, but because my life is not hanging in the balance, error in this matter will not prove lethal. But to look at death, not understand it, and attempt to walk around it ... will not end well. In that matter, my life **is** hanging in the balance. There is proof that the entire human race doesn't understand death. The proof is the resurrection account of Jesus Christ.

Proof

“Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and I am the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades” (Rev 1:17,18). Each person, if thinking sanely, would thoroughly investigate these claims with the greatest of care and fervor. Have you? Any shred of confirmatory evidence would be front page news - shouted from the rooftops, and kept in front of the public eye at every turn. And those who are convinced that Jesus did rise from the dead - would speak of this to every mortal encountered. I don't do that ... as I still do not understand mortality - not really - and how we are all hanging by a thread. When the rich man in Hades begged Abraham to send Lazarus back from the dead to warn his five brothers of that *“place of torment,”* he said, *“If someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!”* But Abraham concluded the truth of the matter. *“If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone rises from the dead”* (Lk 16:30, 31). Jesus did. But without the activity of the Holy Spirit, this event would have been buried long ago ... smothered under centuries of bottom of the birdcage *“articles.”* What a mess we are in. So blind, so dull, so unable to accurately assess the emergency in which we find ourselves.

So, What About My Last Article?

Well, if death remained at bay, I am confident there never would be one. I have dozens of articles in the works and it is a common occurrence that as I am writing one ... it spins into a couple more before I finish the primary one. God's information from the Bible, and its applications to the matters of this age, is inexhaustible. So, the only reason I will ever have a last article will be because God has determined my time in this age is complete. The same is true concerning the *“articles”* you are choosing to write. I hope that makes you happy. It does me.

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