

**PENTECOST:
A TIME TO EXPERIENCE GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT ALIVE AND ACTIVE**

Twenty-fourth Sunday after Pentecost

Proper 28

November 15, 2009

Daniel 12:1-3

Psalm 16

Hebrews 10:11-14 [15-18] 19-25

Mark 13:1-8

The Last Tick of the Big Clock

The Big Clock

This Sunday the four Scripture passages hand us elements of a user's manual for God's Big Clock and what to do before its Last Tick. Scripture scholars call the Big Clock and its Last Tick the Bible's apocalyptic scenario for the end of time. But we prefer the Big Clock and its Last Tick. That's what happens when you babysit 3-year-old and 2-year-old grandchildren for any length of time.

Many of us are geared to the immediate needs of caring for children and parents, of planning business meetings, of organizing committee responsibilities, of looking for work, of staving off hunger, and of restoring relationships. Pondering the end of time can seem a bit daffy or just irresponsible. But thinking about clocks is easy. Clocks send us to meetings on time; thanks to clocks we pick up the children at school before the principal calls; a clock assures that we don't miss our train or flight. When we are unaware that our clock is running fast or slow or has even stopped ticking, there are consequences, some trivial and manageable, others serious and irreparable.

Daniel 12:1-3

Often it is in hard times that we hear the Big Clock tick and wonder about God's provisions for us. But Daniel assures us that not even hard times and not even the racing of the Big Clock toward the Final Tick can separate us from God. Our connection and protection in such times arrives in the form of God's heavenly messenger, a great angel named Michael. What's more, God is so watchful in these hard times that God jots down our deeds in another of his instruments, the Great Book.

Psalm 16

The writer of this Psalm rests assured in his personal relationship with God, and because of this he sets aside all fear. Sure the Big Clock ticks, but the psalmist confidently states, "I am so thankful and glad, and I feel completely secure, because you protect me from the power of death" (Psalm 16:9,10a, *GNT*). So, according to the writer, the Last Tick on the

Big Clock does not faze him because God's abiding presence surrounds him and nothing can shake his confidence in God (Psalm 16:8).

Hebrews 10:11-25

The Big Clock and its Last Tick—or, in the translation of our passage “The Day of the Lord (v. 25).”---count out the ages of sacrificial living. At one point in time, Jewish priests pleased God by offering animal sacrifices. At another point in time, Jesus' sacrificial death pleased God. And now, before the Final Tick, it is our turn to live sacrificially. “Let us be concerned for one another, to help one another to show love and to do good (v. 24, *GNT*).”

Mark 13:1-8

Jesus knew about the Big Clock and its Last Tick. But his followers were slow to catch on. One day, in Jerusalem, Jesus told his followers to look at the grandest and holiest structure in the city—the Temple. Surely, the Temple would rise gloriously from the Temple mount forever. But, in Jesus' words, “Not a single stone here will be left in its place; every one of them will be thrown down (v. 2, *GNT*).” Naturally, the followers wanted to know when this would happen. All Jesus could say was, “Watch out, and don't let anyone fool you” (v. 5, *GNT*).

The Final Tick and a Suggested Reading

The Big Clock does not tick forever. It gives us a measured amount of time. One day it will fall silent. But only God know when. And when it does, we can't rewind it; we can't install new batteries; and there is no turning the Clock back. Our passages are clear. Now is the time to live lovingly, watchfully, forgivingly, and prayerfully.

If you want to read more about angels such as the one mentioned in the passage from Daniel, check out the new Time Inc./ABS publication, *Angels and Miracles*, available at bookstores nationwide.

This week's Reflection was prepared by Robert Hodgson, Jr., Ph.D., Dean Emeritus of the Nida Institute for Biblical Scholarship at the American Bible Society.

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This week we remember to pray for the work of the Bible Societies in: Afghanistan – With thanks to God for the completion of the Dari Bible and with prayers that people will accept the Gospel and that God will change the lives of those who read it, and with continued prayers for the situation in the country and that people will be more open to hearing and receiving the Word of God; **Pakistan** – With thanks to God for the good progress on the Interconfessional Urdu Bible translation project and with prayers for the Protestant and Catholic translators working on this project, and with prayers that the fundraising target for 2010 will be met; **Iran** – With prayers for the development of Bible teaching programs in schools and that the Bible, in particular the new Persian translation, will be available to all who need it.

Activity Corner: “Beat the Clock”

Supplies needed: Bibles (one for each participant); Bible concordance; timer or stopwatch.

Using a Bible concordance keyed to the Bible translation being used, look up passages that include the word “time.” Some suggestions are:

Exodus 9:5	Matthew 2:7
Deuteronomy 6:20	Mark 1:15
1 Samuel 3:8	Mark 13:33
Esther 4:14	Luke 21:8
Job 39:2	John 7:6
Psalms 69:13	Acts 1:6
Ecclesiastes 3:1	Romans 13:11
Isaiah 9:7	2 Corinthians 6:2
Jeremiah 31:1	Galatians 4:4
Ezekiel 7:12	2 Thessalonians 2:6
Daniel 12:1	Titus 1:3
Micah 3:4	Hebrews 9:28
Habakkuk 2:3	1 Peter 5:6
Zephaniah 3:20	Revelation 22:10

Copy each citation on a small piece of paper; fold the papers and place them in a bowl or basket. From the folded sheets, randomly select a passage and announce it; set a time of one minute and challenge everyone to find the passage in their Bible. The one who finds it first reads it aloud and then selects the next passage to be looked up. Conclude by discussing the various verses in which “time” is mentioned and encourage a discussion about using time wisely in accordance with God’s will.