

Beginnings and endings

By Bob Young

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We naturally talk about beginnings and endings. Time marches on, time is seen as forward motion. Life moves on. Our lives are marked by beginnings and endings. Human beings see time as a continuum, advancing little by little, each day pretty much like the one before it and much like the one after it, a continuous sequence that changes slowly, imperceptibly. One author compared time to water continuously flowing in a river. Even though time continues unchangeably from beginning to end, each moment is unique. Life is linear. History, even as it seems to repeat itself, moves toward an end.

God established divisions within time. These divisions make human beings aware of the passing of time – sun and moon, night and day, morning and evening. God numbered the days from one to seven to make a week. The moon orbits the earth and marks months, the earth's orbit around the sun marks years. Years may be divided into seasons: the rainy season—the dry season, fall-winter-spring-summer, seedtime—harvest, cycles with repeated beginnings and endings.

Solomon, in Ecclesiastes 1, declares that the endless cycles of life are vanity and meaningless. But in Chapter 3, God says that the markers and cycles of life point toward eternity. Marking time gives opportunity to reflect on what has been done, what has not been done and what is yet to be done.

The Easter season is upon us. Near the end of March, Passover will mark the beginning of the Jewish religious year. Another year, another marker, another beginning. Or is it? Christian faith sets forth an alternative. Jesus' resurrection reverses the order. The resurrection does not declare the repeated certainty of beginning and ending. The resurrection declares **the possibility of ending and beginning**. When we read Genesis 1 carefully, we see the same truth, "evening and morning."

The idea of ending in order to begin is not new to us -- birthdays, anniversaries, a new calendar year... and Resurrection Sunday, Easter. May your life be renewed and refreshed in this season of ending and beginning. Stopping in order to start. Casting off the past to enter the future. Death that brings life. Beginning, life, true life, abundant life, eternal life. A time of beginning—with renewed strength. Jesus' resurrection gives us a fresh beginning, pointing to the end and Jesus' return. As we anticipate that ending and Jesus' return, the same reality comes into view—an ending that makes possible a new beginning! Each time you hear the phrase, "beginning and ending," remember this! Jesus' resurrection and return declares ending and beginning!