



## A Vast Illusion: Time According to 'A Course in Miracles'

By Kenneth Wapnick

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This study weaves various passages from 'A Course in Miracles' into a comprehensive theory of time. In three parts, the book first explains the holographic though illusory nature of time. It next discusses the plan of the Atonement, the role of the miracle and forgiveness, and the time collapse they foster. The third part discusses the end of time, and includes the Course's concepts of the real world, the Second Coming, the Last Judgment, and finally God's last step.

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## **A Vast Illusion: Time According to 'A Course in Miracles' By Kenneth Wapnick Bibliography**

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### **Editorial Review**

#### About the Author

Kenneth Wapnick, Ph.D. is a clinical psychologist and one of the foremost teachers of A Course in Miracles, which he has been working with since 1973, when he joined Dr. Helen Schucman, scribe of the Course, and Dr. William Thetford at the Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center in New York. He has written more than 25 books on the Course, including *Love Does Not Condemn*, *Absence from Felicity: The Story of Helen Schucman and Her Scribing of 'A Course in Miracles,'* *The Message of 'A Course in Miracles,'* and many others. He has also produced over 150 audio and video titles discussing the principles of the Course. He is President and co-founder, with his wife Gloria, of the Foundation for A Course in Miracles in Temecula, California.

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From pages 57-59:

In the first part of the book, which deals with the origin and nature of time, we are concerned mostly with passages which present A Course in Miracles' basic metaphysics of time. The two sections we are about to study do that as well, but they also serve as a bridge into Part II, which will deal more with the Course's view of time in relation to the plan of the Atonement, and its direct relevance to the central teaching on the miracle's collapse of time through forgiveness.

...it is important to keep in mind our previous statement that A Course in Miracles is written on two different levels....The Level One treatment of time incorporates the idea that everything has already happened, having all occurred in a split second, and that we really are not experiencing anything for the first time. We are, in effect sitting in front of a TV screen, kaleidoscope, or a computer, and merely by choice "reviewing mentally what has gone by." This is intelligible only when time is regarded as non-linear, as the experience of past, present, future is merely part of the ego's trickery.

...A Course in Miracles frequently speaks about time as if it were linear....Thus, Jesus is saying that even though time is an illusion and there is no past, present, and future, he will talk about time as if it were linear, because that is what we believe....the major thrust of the Course is...to help us with the very practical problems we believe we have, all of which involve our experience of time's linearity. As A Course in Miracles says of itself:

This is not a course in philosophical speculation, nor is it concerned with precise terminology. It is concerned only with Atonement, or the correction of perception (C-in.1:1-2). From pages 204-205:

It is evident that the Holy Spirit's perception of time is the exact opposite of the ego's. The reason is equally clear, for they perceive the goal of time as diametrically opposed. The Holy Spirit interprets time's purpose as rendering the need for time unnecessary. He regards the function of time as temporary, serving only His teaching function, which is temporary by definition.

...The ego's purpose is to teach us that time is real, while the Holy Spirit's purpose is to teach exactly the opposite....The purpose of time, which is forgiveness, was given by the Holy Spirit in answer to the ego's purpose of time, which is guilt. His emphasis is therefore on the only aspect of time that can extend to the infinite, for now is the closest approximation of eternity that this world offers. It is in the reality of "now," without past or future, that the beginning of the appreciation of eternity lies. For only "now" is here, and only

"now" presents the opportunities for the holy encounters in which salvation can be found.

We are still operating within the second level, within the illusory nature of this world where time is seen as linear -- past, present, and future. But the Holy Spirit helps us use that linearity to forgive the past, let go of the fear of the future, and then to retain the present. Thus, we are clearly not talking about eternity, which is independent of time, but rather the steps within the dream that will lead us to Heaven....this should not be confused with the Gestalt emphasis on the present, the "here and now," because this is seen only within a linear, "this world" context. A Course in Miracles, on the other hand, speaks about using the "now" to lead us beyond time entirely. In addition, the purely psychological approach to valuing the present emphasizes our feelings in the present. The Course's understanding is that feelings are not the key factor, but rather are the effects of the thoughts that give rise to those feelings. From page 229:

Thus, the Holy Spirit operates within this temporal framework even though He knows that time and space are not real. However, He does not obliterate the belief in time and space, which would awaken us from the dream too rapidly, precipitating panic. Rather, the Holy Spirit changes our nightmare dreams to happy dreams. This results in the experience of remaining in the split mind, living within the world of time and space, but living only in the present, not the past or the future. What is thus undone is not the dream itself, but simply the part of the dream that holds our guilt and the belief that God will punish us. As the text says of the miracle: The miracle does not awaken you, but merely shows you who the dreamer is. It teaches you there is a choice of dreams while you are still asleep, depending on the purpose of your dreaming. Do you wish for dreams of healing, or for dreams of death? (T-28.II.4:2-4)

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