

Discerning The Times [Part Two]

“And he said also to the people, when ye see a cloud rise out of the west, straightway ye say, there cometh a shower; and so it is. And when ye see the south wind blow, ye say, there will be heat; and it cometh to pass. Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern the time?” (Luke 12: 54-56).

Jesus rebuked the people by calling them charlatans and hypocrites because they did not understand the importance of discerning the times. It was easy and convenient for the disciples to focus on the physical things all around them, they could look at the direction of the wind and determine what type of weather will follow. They are adept at reading the physical things they could see and feel all around them but they could not discern the time. In other words, they could not understand the mind of God. It is important to understand the timing of God and to walk according to the counsel of his will.



“And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it” (Luke 19:41). When Jesus came close to the city of Jerusalem he was moved with compassion and he wept for the city, he wept for the city “saying, if thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes” (v.42). Israel was carried away doing their own things, they were carried away by the physical things all around them so much so that their eyes were blinded and could not see the plan of God for their lives. They could not apprehend or discern the things that belonged to their peace. Israel did not know the time of their visitation, they glossed over and missed the time of God’s visitation because they could not discern the times (Luke 19:44). This is sad and painful.

This same position is reechoed in Micah 7:4 “The best of them is brier: the most upright is sharper than a thorn edge: the day of thy watchmen and thy visitation cometh; now shall be their perplexity”. The Lord is preparing to visit his people in a mighty outpouring of the spirit, but are we going to be ready to partake in this visitation or are we going to be perplexed and miss the day of his visitation? Herein is the challenge; the need to actively discern the times. God moves in times and in seasons. God speaks and moves in sundry times and divers manners in the times past (Hebrews 1:1). This same God is speaking to us in these last days by his son.

Paul reminded the Thessalonians in the book of **I Thessalonians 5:1** “But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write to you. For ye yourselves know that perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.... But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness” (**I Thessalonians 5:1-2,4-5**). What Paul was saying in essence to the Thessalonians is that they ought to know the times and seasons in God. He didn’t need to write to them about times and seasons they ought to know. They should be able to discern the times because they are children of the light, children of the day so that day, time or season, should not come upon us as a thief in the night. The onus is on God’s people to stir themselves up to discern the times. We are children of the light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore, let us not sleep, as others do; but let us watch and be sober (vs 5-7).

Present Truth Key to Discerning the Times

‘Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though you know them, **and be established in the present truth**” (2 Peter 1:12). There is a truth that is present truth. Truth is truth and it does not change but there is a truth that is present truth. “Long time ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets” (Hebrews 1:1, English Standard Version ESV). God moves in times and in seasons, he speaks at different times and in many ways. There is something that is in the mind of God for his people for the now. There is a current burden in the heart of God, and we as God’s people must be able to pick that burden from time to time. Just like the disciple whom Jesus loved, we need to learn to lean on the bosom of our Lord Jesus Christ, we need to lie on his breast, wait on him in prayers so that we can listen to his heart beat and pick what is in his heart and know what is in his mind (John 13:23-25).

It is important that God’s people listen carefully to the holy spirit and establish themselves in the present truth. ‘He that hath an ear, let him hear what the spirit says unto the churches...’ (Revelations 2:7). The spirit of the Lord is constantly speaking to the churches but it takes he that is available, it takes he that is attentive to hear what the spirit of the Lord is saying. Very often we miss what the Lord is saying to us because we are often distracted, we are not attentive. It is only he that has an attentive ear that will hear what the spirit of the Lord is saying to the churches. This is the reason why the Israel missed the time of their visitation. They were not listening. They had ears but they were listening to the wrong sounds, they were distracted and as a result they missed the visitation of the Lord.

Our Lord Jesus Christ took nothing for granted, he would do nothing except he hears from the father and knows the direction the father is going on a daily basis. He was current in the spirit. Early in the morning, a great while before dawn he was up and went out and departed into a solitary place, and there he prayed so that he can hear the voice of the father and get instructions and directions from the father as to how to approach the day (Mark 1:35). “Then answered Jesus and said unto them, verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things so ever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise” (John 5:19). “Then said Jesus unto them, when ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things” (John 8:28).

Paul the Apostle in I Corinthians 14:7-8 raised a very important point on the need to hear correctly. “And even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped? For if the trumpet gives an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself for the battle?” this means your ability to be ready and prepared for battle depends on the type of sound you are hearing. What are you hearing? Are you hearing the trumpet that is giving a certain sound or the one that is giving an uncertain sound? There are many sound out there, there are many voices out there but the question is what voice are you hearing. “There are, it may be, so many kind of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification” (I Corinthian 14:10).

We have to be able to discern that which is the right voice and that which is the wrong voice. “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (I Thessalonians 5:21). “Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ” (2 Timothy 1:13). What are you holding fast to? What have you heard or what are you hearing? Are you hearing sound words? It is very important what you are hearing. What we are hearing will determine how far we can go in our Christian lives. “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (I John 4:1).

Time Appointed Key to Discerning the Times

“Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; but he is under tutors and governors **until the time appointed by the Father**. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world: but when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law” (**Galatians 4:1-2**). There is a time appointed by the Father. The Father has appointed a time to reveal the Son. “Unto us a child is born, but unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulders, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace” (**Isaiah 9:6**). The child may be heir to the throne and all things belong to the child but the child cannot exercise that authority or rule until the time appointed by the father when the child would have grown up to become a son. Time is in the hands of God. There is a time that God has set to visit his people and we must be able to discern the time and season of his visitation.



The vision is always for an appointed time. “I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reprov'd, And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. **For the vision is yet for an appointed time**, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry” (**Habakkuk 2:1-3**). We all need to stand upon our watch and set ourselves upon the tower, and watch to see what time the Lord has appointed.

We need the ministry of the watchman to discern the times and to watch out for the time appointed by the father for the vision. We need to hear what the Lord is presently saying to his people. We need to prepare the table and be ready for the master, we need men to watch in the watch tower, we need to arise as the princes of God with our shield. For the Lord is saying to us set watchmen in the church that will continually stand upon the watch tower in the daytime and in the night time, and let them declare what they have seen (**Isaiah 21:5-6, 8**). We need to call out to the watchmen and constantly ask them how far has the night gone? How much longer before the day breaks? (**Isaiah 21:11-12**).

The Children of Issachar Key to Discerning the Times

“And of the children of Issachar, which were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do; the heads of them were two hundred, and all their brethren were at their commandment” (**I Chronicles 12:32**).

“Issachar is a strong ass couching down between two burdens: And he saw that rest was good, and the land that it was pleasant; and bowed his shoulder to bear, and became a servant to tribute” (**Genesis 49: 14-15**).

It is important to note that the children of Issachar were men who could discern the times, they had understanding of the times, they knew the mind of God. Because they understood the times they knew what Israel ought to do. They could give direction to Israel, they could instruct Israel on how to position herself, and what manner of men they ought to be. The whole of Israel listened to them, the whole of Israel was at their command.

Issachar was a strong leader who could see ahead and give instructions to the people. He could see into the mind of God ahead of the rest of the people. Because he could see ahead that rest was good, and that there remaineth therefore rest for the people of God, and that the land was pleasant and fruitful he was able to bear the burdens with his shoulders and he became a servant of tribute.

The church needs leaders who like the children of Issachar will have the understanding of the times, leaders who are capable of discerning the times, leaders who can see ahead of the rest of the people and warn them of any imminent attack. Leaders who will be able to carry the burdens of the people by interceding for them to avert evil and to establish them in the faith and lead the people into their rest.

Awake thou that sleepest Key to Discerning the Times

“Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise. Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise but understanding what the will of the Lord is” (**Ephesians 5:14**).

“Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city: for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean. Shake thyself from the dust: arise, and sit down, O Jerusalem: loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion” (**Isaiah 52: 1-2**).

It is time for us to awake from our sleep. The church like the ten virgins while tarrying have slumbered and fallen asleep. The church has lost its axe head; the cutting edge is no more. The cutting edge has become blunt and the church has gone to sleep “If the iron be blunt, and he do not whet the edge, then must he put to more strength: but wisdom is profitable to direct” (**Ecclesiastics 10:10**). This verse is simply telling us that it is very hard to cut with with a dull knife, but if you sharpen the knife, the job is easier. If an axe is blunt and the edge isn’t sharpened, then one has to use more strength. The church needs to awake from her slumber and sharpen the edge of the sword in order to be effective in the ministry and get the much desired results.

Just like the sons of the prophet cried unto the prophet that the axe head had fallen into the water, the church need to wake up and come to the consciousness of the fact that the axe head has fallen off, the cutting edge of the church is no more, it has fallen off into the water and we need to cry for help. We need to seek the face of God to bring back the lost axe head, we need to cry unto the Lord to bring back the lost glory back to the church (**2 Kings 6:1-7**). The church needs to wake up from sleep and arise from the dead so that Christ can give us light. We must seek to walk circumspectly not as fools but as wise men and women. We need to be deliberate in our walk with God. We need the wisdom of God in our daily lives. We need the wisdom that comes from above which is first of all pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy (**James 3:17**).

The church needs to redeem the time, making the best use of the time because the days are evil. We need to make good use of every opportunity that God gives to us to serve him and live for him. We all have to make the most of the time that God gives to us. This is not the time for vain pursuits and carnal living because the days we live in are wicked and evil days. “Knowing the time, that it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now, is our salvation nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly (circumspectly), as in the day; not in rioting and

drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof" (**Romans 13: 11-14**).

Walking in the Light key to Discerning the Times

The church needs to understand what the will of the Lord is. The church needs to walk in the light as he is in the light. "This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleaseth us from all sin". God is light and in him is no darkness at all. If we walk in darkness, then we are not in him. God does not want us to be confused and to walk in darkness. Confusion of faces does not belong to us. God wants us to walk in the light as he is in the light. If we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and we will not stumble.

"Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walks in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him (**John 11: 9-10**). Jesus gave an apt illustration here saying, if a man walks in the day he does not stumble because he has the light of the day time and there are 12 hours in the day, but if a man walks at night he is very likely to stumble because the light of the day is no more because it is dark. So we have a choice here to walk in the day or to walk in the night. The scriptures declare that we are children of the day not of the night. Walking in the dark is not our portion. "But ye brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all children of light, and children of the day: we are not of the night nor of darkness. Therefore, let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken at night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation (**I Thessalonians 5: 4-8**).

God's children should not be in the dark concerning what happens in their personal lives and all around them. God's children ought to be in a position to appropriately discern the times but the problem with us is that we are not sober, we are not walking in faith and in love as we ought. We are not putting on the breastplate of righteousness and we have gone to sleep as others do. Because of all of these we are not able to walk in the light as he is in the light. God's children are of the light and of the day. We should have insight, we should have light and we should not stumble because we are not of the night nor of darkness. It behooves us as God's children not to sleep as others do but we need to put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for an helmet, the hope of salvation (**I Thessalonians 5: 6-8**).

Walking in Love Key to Discerning the Times

Jesus taught his disciples in Mathew Chapter 6 verse 22 that the light of the body is the eye and he told his disciples that if the eye be single the whole body shall be full of light but if the eye be evil, the whole body shall be full of darkness. Jesus warned his disciples that if the light that in them becomes darkness because of their carelessness, how great that darkness will be. The question here is how can we keep our eyes single. The only way we can accurately discern the times and also walk in the light is for our eyes to be single. We must make Jesus our focus. Looking unto Jesus the author and the finisher of our faith. We must lay aside every weight, and sin that so easily beset us, every distraction, and sin which easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us. Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith (**Hebrews 12:1-2**).

Our light can become darkness if we do not walk in love. The reason why we grope in darkness, and we are unable to discern the times most of the times is because we are not walking in love as we should. If we walk in bitterness, envy, and strife there is no way we will be able to discern the

times and walk in the light as we should. For where there is envying and strife, there is confusion and every evil work (**James 3: 14,16**). James was asking the brethren, from whence come wars and fighting among you? And he answered with another question, come they not come from your lust that war within your members? He said further, you ask and receive not, because you ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lust (**James 4: 1,3**). Walking in the flesh and living a carnal life contributes to the darkness that we see all around, this is the reason why we ask and we don't receive.

He that claims that he is in the light but hates his brother is actually in darkness. But he that loves his brother abides in the light and there is no occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hates his brother is in darkness, and walks in darkness, and he does not know where he is going and cannot discern the times, because the darkness has blinded his eyes (**I John 2:9-11**). God has called us to walk in love. He has given us a new commandment because darkness is passing away, and the true light is beginning to shine (**I John 2:8**).

A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another, as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one to another (**John 13:34-35**). Herein is the key to walking in the light and discerning the times. Herein is the key to understanding the times and walking in the light. May the Lord heal our hearts and take away bitterness and strive from the body of Christ. The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient (**2 Timothy 2:24**). For where there is envying and strife, there is confusion and every evil work (**James 3:16**).

Source:

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July 2020 Newsletter Edition