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TIME AS GOD SEES IT

"To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck what is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; a time to gain, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to throw away; a time to tear, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; a time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace" (Ecclesiastes 3:1–8).

"He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also He has put eternity in their hearts, except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end" (Ecclesiastes 3:11).

"And He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings; He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding" (Daniel 2:21).

"What time is it?" is an oft-repeated question that we are all familiar with. In today's fast-paced world, people seem to run like clockwork. In fact, most of us are keen to order our lives around the clock. The clock—time—seems to have a strong hold over our lives. Doing the right thing at the right time, being at the right place at the right time, saying the right thing at the right time—all these mean so much to us. Simultaneously, much effort is being spent in finding ways and means to 'save' time.

Have you ever stopped to consider the fact that God has a clock that has been ticking away since the foundation of the world

or perhaps from eternity past—from time unknown to the present? Do you know that God has a clock for each of our lives? Have you ever attempted, or even desired, to order your life not just according to the watch on your wrist or the clock on the wall, but according to God's clock? How important is it to you that you do things according to God's time and that you are doing what He wants you to be doing at any point of time in your life? And, how important is it to you that you become what He wants you to be, at the time appointed for your life?

These are challenging questions and it is indeed important that we learn to know and order our life by God's clock. This book will help to discern and understand God's time for us as individuals.

God's Clock

"Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times (Gr.Chronos) or seasons (Gr.Kairos) which the Father has put in His own authority" (Acts 1:6,7).

God has a timetable, a specific order and time, in which He unfolds the events that He has planned. He works according to His time. He speaks and then fulfills His Word in its time. The Words that God speaks "will be fulfilled in their own time" (Luke 1:20). There are things that God has spoken which are "sealed till the time of the end" (Daniel 12:9). In God's 'clock' there is what is called "fullness of the times" or "due time." This refers to the most appropriate, fitting and opportune time—time when it is ripe—the right time. For instance, although the Edenic Covenant, promising the coming of the Redeemer was made in the third chapter of Genesis, it was not until thousands of years later that Jesus stepped

into history. Why was there such a long wait? The Bible explains, "When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son" (Galatians 4:4). At the 'kairos' moment—the most opportune time, the correct time in history—the Lord Jesus stepped into this world. God's eternal purpose too will be accomplished likewise. "Having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on Earth—in Him" (Ephesians 1:9,10). God has "appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness" (Acts 17:31).

So, we see that God has a time frame in which He intervenes in the course of events, to accomplish in His sovereignty that which He has predetermined. Just prior to His departure from the Earth (ascension), the disciples enquired of the Lord concerning the time in which Israel would be restored to power and set free from the dominating Roman Empire (Acts 1:6,7). The Lord's reply teaches us that the Father has times and seasons in His own authority. Jesus talked about the 'chronos' and the 'kairos.' These Greek words, 'chronos' refers to duration of time, an extent or quantity of time, while 'kairos' refers to the quality or the kind of time. 'Chronos' is used as a measure of time as in a period of time—a span or length of time. 'Kairos' is used with reference to special happenings, opportune moments, critical events and changes in time. It refers to the "fullness of time"—what event the present time is best suited for.

There are certain times and seasons which the Father has chosen to keep secret and "in His power." The Bible teaches us

that "the secret things belong to the LORD our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever" (Deuteronomy 29:29). Concerning the second coming and the end of the age, Jesus said, "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is" (Mark 13:32,33). However, this does not mean that we cannot know the 'chronos' and 'kairos,' which God desires to reveal. Throughout the Scripture, we can see that God expects His people to know the times and seasons in which they live, both as individuals and as a community. God expects His people to know what time it is, on His clock.

'Time' in the Bible

In his note on Biblical perspectives on time (Mercer Dictionary of the Bible, 1990), Simon J. Devries states, "What matters most about the Hebrew notion of time is that they expected each new day to be qualitatively different from all the other days, possibly producing a unique, unrepeatable event in which God might reveal the divine self in some special and decisive way. This is why the Bible developed a characteristic way of speaking of days in terms of their most noteworthy event." He continues to state that people of the Bible "believed that their God could meet them anywhere and at any time; all of space and all of history were God's domain. This is why the Bible has a sense of purpose and progression, a goal, a process, a destiny."

Time is an important element in the Bible where references are made to different kinds of time—different 'kairos' moments. The Psalms talk about a time when God may be found (Psalm

32:6), an evil time (Psalm 37:18,19), a time of trouble (Psalm 44:1) and the acceptable time (Psalm 69:13; 2 Corinthians 6:2). In the New Testament, one learns that God Himself appoints the time for the rise and fall of nations in addition to setting their boundaries (Acts 17:26,27). The period in which we live is referred to by terms such as the "latter times" (1 Timothy 4:1) and "the last days" (2 Timothy 3:1). Phrases such as "times and seasons" (1 Thessalonians 5:1), "these last times" (1 Peter 1:20), "various times," "time past" (Hebrews 1:1) and "a time of need" (Hebrews 4:16) are also found. Understanding the Biblical perspective on time is therefore an integral part of a successful Christian walk.

Understanding 'Kairos'

'Kairos' is simply the appointed time, the opportune time or the right time. Generally speaking, 'kairos' is not connected to the number of calendar years. If God has not specifically stated a particular duration of time, then the 'kairos' moment is dependent on the coming together of certain conditions—circumstances, situations, people, things and so on—which make it the right time for the fulfillment of what God has spoken.

For instance, the fulfillment of personal prophecy takes place at the 'kairos' moment. If a certain person has received a word of prophecy that he would be very successful in business, it does not mean that his success would come overnight. The fulfillment of this prophecy will take place when certain conditions that God is looking for, come together in this person's life. If the person who received the word of prophecy were a young man, then probably God would expect this person to go through some training and some years of working, before he is able to start his own business.

After the young man starts his business, it could still be several years before he gets a great idea that may eventually make him extremely successful. While the word of prophecy was true all along, it could only come to pass when all these conditions had taken place and the 'kairos' moment had come.

God expects His people to know the times and seasons in which they live, both as individuals and as a community. God expects His people to know what time it is, on His clock.

2

RECOGNIZING AND REDEEMING THE TIME

"See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is" (Ephesians 5:15–17).

"Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time" (Colossians 4:5).

The Scriptures admonish us to redeem the time (kairos). "Redeeming the time" refers to being able to recognize and seize the opportune moments of our life. From the context of the Scripture passage above, this is possible only if we are wise and walking circumspectly, with an understanding of the will of the Lord. In other words, our ability to seize the opportune moments of our life—to do the right thing at the right time—is dependent on our understanding of God's will for our individual lives. God appoints the 'chronos' and 'kairos' for our individual lives. Each of us has a 'chronos' or length of time to live. God promised His people, "I will fulfill the number of your days" (Exodus 23:26). The general will of God reveals that "the days of our lives are seventy years" and could extend to eighty (Psalm 90:10). God has promised to satisfy us "with a long life" (Psalm 91:16). In general, a child of God has the privilege of going "to the grave at a full age, as a sheaf of grain ripens in its season" (Job 5:26). More specifically, God has times and seasons for our individual lives. It is these specific times and seasons, the 'kairos' moments of our lives that we need to recognize and redeem. We need to seize the opportunity.

What is the 'kairos' in your life right now? What is the season of life that you are in? Is it a time for action or preparation? Is it a time to study or to teach? Is it a time for you to be learning about a particular aspect of Christian life? Is it a time for you to build a certain relationship? Is it a time for you to rest and plan for the days ahead? Is it a time for you to pause and consolidate the recent events of rapid spiritual growth? Is it a time for you to be researching and studying a specific subject? Is it a time for you to serve or to lead? When we are able to recognize the specific season of life we are in, then we will be able to redeem our time to fulfill this specific purpose.

When the Lord Jesus approached the city of Jerusalem on one occasion, He saw the city and wept over it. Pronouncing the forthcoming destruction of Jerusalem, He declared, "... because you did not know the time of your visitation" (Luke 19:41-44). God had an appointed "time of visitation" for Jerusalem but the people of the city were unaware of it. I believe that God has appointed times of special visitations for our individual lives. During these seasons of our life, God does a special work in our hearts, perhaps unveiling in detail the plans and purposes He has for our lives, or giving us specific direction, or imparting and releasing a specific gift in us. But, much of what results during this time of visitation depends largely on our response. If we are ignorant of the time of visitation, God will have to pass us by. Are you being attentive to God and sensitive to what He is unfolding in your life at present? How are you responding to what He is doing?

In Time and in Step

"...there is a time there for every purpose and for every work" (Ecclesiastes 3:17).

"...for every matter there is a time and judgment" (Ecclesiastes 8:6a).

We need to understand that there is a correct time for every purpose. It is important to know what God wants us to do concerning a situation, but equally important is carrying out the task at the right time. Very often, we receive an idea, plan, strategy or a vision from the Lord, and we want to see it fulfilled immediately or we want to go and do it right away. I have learnt, the hard way, that not only does God have a plan, but He also has a specific timing for the unfolding and fulfilling of that plan. It is our responsibility, to know not only His plans and purposes but also to understand His timing for their fulfillment. We need to walk in step and in time with God—neither ahead, nor behind.

Two events from the life of King David serve to illustrate what we are discussing here. God had destined David to be king over all of Israel. When David was still a young boy, he was anointed by Prophet Samuel—the anointing with oil representing the fact that God had chosen David to be the king. After David triumphed over Goliath and became a national hero, he had to run from King Saul to protect his life. David was hunted like a wild animal; he lived much like a vagabond making his dwelling in caves. Years had passed but David remained true to his God throughout this time. Eventually, King Saul was killed in a battle. When David heard of this, he was filled with remorse for Saul and his household. Following this, David inquired of the LORD saying, "Shall I go up to any cities of Judah?" And the LORD said to him, "Go up." David

said, "Where shall I go up?" And the LORD answered, "To Hebron." So David went up there. Then the men of Judah came and there they anointed David as king over the house of Judah" (2 Samuel 2:1-4).

Making the right move, at the right time, led David to being recognized as King of Judah. It was not long before that he was recognized as king over all of Israel. We see that David was a man who desired to walk in step and in time with God. Although he was destined for the throne, he was not hasty or rash in his attempts to get there. He allowed God to unfold His plans in His time. Also, David learnt the importance of taking one step at a time with God. Notice how careful he was to make the move to Hebron. But when he had made the right move at the right time, things began to happen in his favor. Making the right moves at the right time will position you to see the fulfillment of God's plans and purposes for your life.

The second event in David's life is rather unfortunate, because it shows how David failed to walk in step and in time with God and the severe consequences of this lapse in timing.

"It happened in the spring of the year, at the time when kings go out to battle, that David sent Joab and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the people of Ammon and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem. Then it happened one evening that David arose from his bed and walked on the roof of the king's house. And from the roof he saw a woman bathing, and the woman was very beautiful to behold" (2 Samuel 11:1,2).

It was that time of the year when kings went to battle with their men. However, David decided to send his men to war while he stayed in his palace. He was at the wrong place at the wrong time.

He saw the beautiful Bathsheba and ended up committing adultery with her. This act caused him much anguish and sorrow. The reason for this failure can be traced back to the simple fact that David chose not to go to war with his men when he should have. He made a decision that put him in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Looking at the way our Lord Jesus ordered His life, as recorded in the four Gospels, we see that He was sensitive and fully aware of the Father's timing for His life. The primary reason why Jesus waited for 30 years to begin His ministry was because He knew that His hour had not come yet—the hour for Him to step into the ministry that the Father had ordained for Him (John 2:4). Jesus commenced His ministry with the reading of those powerful Words from Isaiah 61. Having read that prophetic passage, Jesus announced to His audience, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:21). Jesus was aware of God's timing for the launching of His ministry. His message was also a timely one—a Word in season. He came preaching repentance saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of heaven is at hand. Repent and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:15). He was announcing the beginning of a new era and His message drew people's attention to what God was doing on the Earth at that time. He was preaching and proclaiming something that was relevant for those times. He was fully conscious of the things that the Father was doing and was about to do—of the current and forthcoming moves of God on the Earth. He used the phrase, "The hour is coming" to refer to the beginning of a time when people would worship in spirit and truth (John 4:21,23), and also with reference to His forthcoming resurrection from the dead (John 5:25). In another place, He spoke of a coming time when He would no longer speak to His disciples in a figurative language but speak plainly about the Father (John 12:31).

We learn from this that there is a specific timing for the specific moves or works or dispensations of God to be released on the Earth. Jesus was also aware of the time for His crucifixion—it did not take Him by surprise. He knew that the time had come when His disciples would be scattered and desert Him (John 16:32) and He would be crucified (John 13:1; 17:1). In fact, He even ordered His life in view of the fact that the time of His crucifixion was yet to come (John 16:32). The Bible also says, "... no one laid a hand on Him, because His hour had not yet come" (John 7:30; 8:20). From this rather quick overview of our Master's life, we see that He lived His life on the Earth being conscious of the Father's plans and timing. It is a challenge for us to emulate Him.

How are we ordering our lives? Are we seeking to move in step and in time with our Father and the plans He has for us? Some of us are prone to run ahead of God. We need to develop the virtue of not only waiting upon the Lord but also waiting for the Lord. The Bible teaches that God "acts for the one who waits for Him" (Isaiah 64:4). In my early teens, when the Lord first began to work through my life, on a number of occasions, I forced my way into areas and avenues of ministry. Of course God was merciful, as He knew that I was ignorant of the things that are being presented in this book, and He helped me to learn through it. But even during those days, I had the joy of seeing God supernaturally bless the holy boldness and initiative that was demonstrated. Lasting fruit has resulted from those early days. Having come to understand the truths that we have been discussing, it now becomes a responsibility to learn the timing of God. In the things that God is leading us to do, whether it is in our personal lives, ministry or our professions, we must make an effort to know both His plan and timing. We need

to be aware that God has a time for training and preparation. God provides 'in-service' training for His 'people of war.' Sometimes we seek to avoid certain events, places or experiences because of fear. We either fear how we would respond or simply fear the unknown. But sometimes, God would desire for us to move into those very situations, to conquer, learn and be trained in the process. These situations in life may appear to be detours or unnecessary delays. But God turns these around for our benefit.

Many surprises await those who are "like the mule." These are people who are hesitant, unwilling to let go of the past—the known and the familiar—and step into the fresh moves of God. The fresh moves of God are new and unfamiliar and it requires faith and courage on our part to step into what God is doing now.

We need to be aware of what God is doing on the Earth today. Those of us in leadership have the responsibility of leading those entrusted to us, according to God's timing, into those areas and avenues that are prepared for us.

Very often, we receive an idea, plan, strategy or a vision from the Lord, and want to see it fulfilled immediately. God not only has a plan, but also has a time for the unfolding and fulfilling of that plan. It is our responsibility, to know not only His plans and purposes but also to understand His timing for their fulfillment. We need to walk in step and in time with God—neither ahead, nor behind.

3

UNDERSTANDING TIMES AND SEASONS

"The sons of Issachar who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do" (1 Chronicles 12:32a).

The above verse refers to a particular people "who had understanding of the times." They knew the 'kairos' moments. They knew what action was best suited for their time. Understanding times and seasons will enable us to know what to do. There are different events, in our individual lives, for which we would have to seek God's timing—for instance, the launching of a ministry, marriage, making a change in vocation, relocating strategically for the Gospel's sake or entering into a new business. We will consider a few 'seasons' that are specifically identified in Scripture.

A Time for the Fresh Moves of God

We stated earlier that there is a specific time for the works, moves and dispensations of God, to be released on the Earth. God does not work in a disorderly way. Rather, He has a pre-appointed time in which He initiates and releases a new work that He wants accomplished on the Earth. On numerous occasions, Jesus alluded to this fact when He used the phrase "the hour is coming." According to Jesus, a time was coming when people would worship God in spirit and truth (John 4:21,23). We are living in such an hour. Further, Satan's crushing defeat through the incarnate Son of God had a specific time appointed in history. When Jesus knew that this pre-appointed time had arrived, He declared, "Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out" (John 12:31).

We are presently living in the time of the great outpouring of God's Spirit, spoken of both in Joel 2:28 and Acts 2:17, "And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh." This outpouring of God's Spirit on all flesh has been reserved for and characterizes God's working for the period of time in God's calendar called the "last days"—the days in which we are living.

There are a number of things we must understand regarding the moves or works of God on the Earth.

There can be more than one 'move' of the Spirit released on the Earth at any given period

The time in which we are living, for instance, is not only a time to worship God in spirit and truth but also a time to receive the outpouring of the Spirit. It is essential that we know this. Many people being ignorant of this truth have limited themselves—thereby the work of God in their lives—to just one of the many and varied things that God is doing on the Earth. They then propound their limited understanding and perspective as if it were the only thing that God is doing and this is obviously an unhealthy stance. As Christians, we need to be informed and open to all that God is doing. We should adjust and be accommodative to all that God desires to accomplish through our lives. To mention a few of the various facets of what God is doing—we have seen 'The Word Movement' where there was a great emphasis on teaching the Word of God with much exposition on topics such as faith, divine healing, redemption, prosperity and so on. Then there are the relatively fresh moves with emphasis on world missions, church growth, praise and worship, family, social/political action, spiritual warfare, the

prophetic and the apostolic. Open up, stretch beyond the known, and reach out for the different things that God is doing. Don't limit yourself or the work of God in your life. And, be tolerant towards another who speaks a different 'language' because of being involved in a different work that God is doing.

Every move of God fulfills a specific purpose

The purposes of the present day outpouring of the Spirit were clearly stated by Jesus, "You shall be witnesses to Me ... to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). We need to examine and come to an understanding of why God is doing what He is doing. Otherwise there is the possibility of being involved in the 'form' while missing the 'purpose.' This will also help us in evaluating our efforts in fulfilling God's intended purposes.

Every move of God complements every other move of God

The different moves of God do not contradict each other but rather add to every other thing that God is doing. For instance, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit not only enables us to be witnesses but also enables us to worship God in spirit and truth. Worshipping God in the spirit not only pleases the Father, but is also a weapon against the enemy and helps in furtherance of the Gospel into regions beyond. So associate and learn from those involved in a different work, so that your life may be enriched.

Possible for people to err when continuing in a past work of God

While it is important to know the previous moves of God, we cannot allow ourselves to live in the past. Consider the example of the Israelites who journeyed to the Promised Land. On many occasions

they were discouraged. They murmured and complained against God and Moses. On one such occasion, the Lord allowed fiery serpents to enter the camps killing many of the people. When the people repented, God instructed Moses to make a bronze serpent and set it on a pole so that "everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live" (Numbers 21:1–9). And so it was. Moving along a few hundred years in history, we see that the people of Israel burned incense to the bronze serpent that Moses had made, using it as an object of worship (2 Kings 18:4). God raised up King Hezekiah to destroy this deadly evil that was among God's people. There are many today who are holding tightly, in an idolatrous way, to the relics of a past move of God. This leads to error and deception that is displeasing to God.

Being unwilling to step into the new thing that God is doing can be costly

Many times, because we are so used to a certain 'way' in which we have seen God work and demonstrate His presence, we begin to hold on to that particular way in which God works. We then fail to be open to the new way in which God desires to operate in the present. Consider the great Old Testament leader, Moses. There was a time when God instructed him to strike a rock, which he did, and water flowed out to quench the thirsty Israelites (Exodus 17:1–7). Then a few years later, Moses faced a similar situation when the people needed water. However, this time God instructed him to speak to the rock instead of striking it with his rod. Moses being very aggravated with the complaining Israelites went and struck the rod instead of speaking to it. He went on to strike it twice (Numbers 20:1–13). Of course water flowed out, but God had to hold Moses accountable for unbelief and disobedience.

It appears that in that moment of time, Moses felt more comfortable in doing what he had done previously and knew would work. He was not comfortable speaking to the rock. Perhaps, he forgot that it was God and not his rod that was the reason behind the miracles. Moses had to face severe consequences for his unbelief. Are we being open to the new ways in which God wants to work, even if the end result may be the same?

A Time for the Fulfillment of a Vision

"Then the LORD answered me and said: "Write the vision and make it plain on tablets, that he may run who reads it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time; but at the end it will speak, and it will not lie. Though it tarries, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry'" (Habakkuk 2:2,3).

Every Word that God speaks into your heart and life has an appointed time for its fruition. The process is similar to that of a woman giving birth to a child. There is the instance of conception—God places His dream, His idea, His strategy, and His plan into your heart. Then follows the time of development where you, as an individual, and the other necessary events are aligned to fit the plan. Finally comes the time of birth—the vision becomes a reality. But what we need to know is that there is a time of waiting—a passage of time—from the time the vision is given to the time it becomes a reality. It is during this period of time that God enables us to lay the groundwork for the vision to be fulfilled. We need to be diligent about our immediate work, being confident that the vision will come to pass. During this waiting period, God is assembling together everything that is needed—people, places, things—that will enable us to fulfill the vision. Once we have been prepared and things have been aligned, then comes the 'kairos' moment—the time for the fulfilling of the vision.

A Time for Enjoying the Fruit

"He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season" (Psalm 1:3a).

Fruit is borne in its season. This implies that there is a time in which we can see and enjoy the fruit of our labor. Some of us may be laboring diligently in a specific area to which the Lord has called us. Very often, we get discouraged if we do not see fruit immediately, or for that matter, when we don't see fruit at the expected time. Looking for fruit when it is not the season can be discouraging. We need to understand that fruit is borne in its season. There is a time appointed for the result of our labor to spring up, blossom and bear fruit. As we labor, we can look to the Lord of the Harvest for it is He who gives the increase in His time.

A Time of Testing and Temptation

"Now when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time" (Luke 4:13).

"Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand" (Ephesians 6:13).

There are times and seasons which the devil sees as "opportune times" to unleash his onslaught against a believer. The devil plans his attack at opportune moments. Such times are also referred to as "the evil day" in Ephesians. These are times when we may, for some reason, be most vulnerable or may have left an open door for the enemy. Jesus referred to it as a "time of temptation" (Luke 8:13). Therefore, we are cautioned to "be sober, be vigilant" (1 Peter 5:8). It is important for us to understand that there are specific times and seasons for the onslaught of evil against us.

There will be times when the battle is more tough and strenuous than other occasions. However, we know that we can stand our ground and foil every work of the enemy. Usually, such times of intense satanic onslaught are indicative that we are on the brink of a major victory and breakthrough in our lives. Also, being sensitive to the season that other believers are going through will enable us to stand with them and be of support to them during such a time. God has promised His help "in time of trouble" (Psalm 41:1) and "in the evil time" (Psalm 37:18,19).

A Time for the Harvest

"Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia. After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them" (Acts 16:6,7).

Our God is the Lord of the Harvest. The nations are His harvest fields. He knows when each of His harvest fields is ripe, for not all of them ripen simultaneously. We know the experiences of Paul and his coworkers who attempted to enter certain regions for the purpose of proclaiming the Gospel, but the Holy Spirit did not permit them. There could be a number of reasons why a certain region is not ready for the Gospel. Perhaps, the people are not ready to receive the Word and so work has to be done through prayer and intercession. Perhaps, the laborers are not equipped to meet the challenges of the task in that region or perhaps, stepping in at a later time would simply bring in a greater harvest. Whatever be the case, we need to be sensitive as we step out into the harvest fields of God, following the leading of the Holy Spirit, walking in step and in time with Him.

A Time to Build God's House

"... the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet. Thus speaks the LORD of hosts, saying: "This people says, "The time has not come, the time that the LORD's house should be built." The word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet, saying, "Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, and this temple to lie in ruins?" (Haggai 1:1-4).

"Go up to the mountains and bring wood and build the temple, that I may take pleasure in it and be glorified," says the LORD" (Haggai 1:8).

The people of God in the Old Testament missed God's timing and were guilty of doing things that were inappropriate. They neglected the rebuilding of the temple and busied themselves in building their own homes. Drawing a parallel, we know that in our day God is building the temple, not made with "brick and mortar" but with "living stones." This is the Church, Jesus said He would build and for which He appointed gift-ministries and called the saints (Ephesians 4:7-11). We are in a time when more and more people will begin to sense the need to build the House of the Lord, and not so much their own temporal houses. A time is coming when God will call His people, as in the days of old, to stop building their own houses (their own personal luxuries or private Christian enterprises) and invest in building the Church. This means that we must be willing to adapt to new lifestyles of living sacrificially, giving liberally and going fearlessly.

The Silent Years

"But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I

went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and remained with him fifteen days. Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and also took Titus with me" (Galatians 1:15–18; 2:1).

We observe throughout the Scriptures that many of God's men—the leaders whom God raised—spent many 'silent' years in preparation. We refer to those years as 'silent' because not much is said about what they did during that period. They were being trained and prepared for what God had called them. And then at the end of the silent years, God launched them into a prominent ministry. We see this explicitly in the life of Paul. He was saved and called to be an apostle. But, it was not until many years later that he entered into the fullness of the anointing of an apostle. Following his conversion, he spent many silent years in Arabia. Perhaps 10 years later, he began his public ministry as a teacher at the church at Antioch. About three years later, he was called by the Holy Spirit to begin his apostolic work (Acts 13:1–3). We see this in the life of our Lord Jesus who spent 30 silent years before launching His public ministry. Joseph waited for about 13 years, Moses waited 40 years, and the list goes on. It is important to realize that the silent years are not times of inactivity. Rather, it is a time of preparation where one learns important aspects of what God has called them to do. The preparation that God takes one person through may be very different from the preparation that another person is taken through. God's School of Training is tailor-made for each individual. Many of us are in our training periods. What we do now is foundational to all that lies ahead. So be faithful to work, and most of all, to learn, train and prepare.

4

ORDERING OUR LIVES WITH DISCRETION

"A wise man's heart discerns both time and judgment. Because for every matter there is time and judgment" (Ecclesiastes 8:5b,6a).

Then He also said to the multitudes, "Whenever you see a cloud rising out of the west, immediately you say, 'A shower is coming'; and so it is. And when you see the south wind blow, you say, 'There will be hot weather'; and so it is. Hypocrites! You can discern the face of the sky and of the earth, but how is it you do not discern this time?" (Luke 12:54–56).

A wise man will be able to recognize both the right time and the right course of action for any task. For every matter and task—the launching of ministry, marriage, making a change in vocation, relocating strategically for the Gospel's sake or entering into a new business—there is a right time and also the right course of action to take (the right thing to do). God has called us to be people of wisdom—people who will be able to discern both time and judgment.

Recognizing the time and season of our life (as individuals or corporately) brings with it the responsibility to take appropriate action. Paul wrote, "Knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep ... the night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly, as in the day ..." (Romans 13:11–13). Since we know what time it is, we are admonished to live correspondingly. People of discretion are people who order their lives with a clear understanding of the times. These are people

who know how to "speak a word in season" (Proverbs 15:23) because they have disciplined themselves to hear the voice of God (Isaiah 50:4,5). They are always ready when it comes to serving God. They are "ready in season and out of season" (2 Timothy 4:2). God can call on them at any time because they are aware of the urgency of the hour in which they live. Therefore, they live disciplined lives in constant readiness. These are people who do not lose heart and are never weary of doing good for they know that in "due season" they will reap the rewards (Galatians 6:9). They are people who live and walk in humility, neither seeking fame nor abusing their authority. They do not seek the praise of man for they know that God will exalt them "in due time" (1 Peter 5:5,6). How are we ordering our lives? Are we making efforts to live by God's clock, to walk in time and in step with Him? Or are we just living in a random way, doing things because we see others doing it. Let us order our lives with discretion—reordering our priorities, changing our schedules, altering our lives according to the time and season that God is taking us through.

Being able to discern the time is so much like being able to tell the weather by observing the prevailing conditions. Jesus used this comparison in His strong rebuke to the multitudes that followed Him. The people saw the cloud conditions and the wind direction and were thus able to predict the weather. However, they were unable to "discern the time." From this useful analogy, we can make some remarks that will help us discern and respond properly to the times and seasons that God is leading us through. Being observant is the key to discerning times and seasons.

Observe the Leading of God's Spirit Within You

In the process of working in you, God unveils His plans and purposes to you. There are strong desires, dreams and hopes that He will birth in you, through His Spirit and His Word. You will find a burning passion—to reach the lost, teach His Word, be a businessman and so on—being ignited in the inner man. This is God communicating to you. Be observant to such works of God.

Observe the Situations and Events of Your Life

Your times, the events of your life, are in God's hands (Psalm 31:15). Things don't just happen. Realize that, many times, God is orchestrating specific events and situations for you. There is something that He is conveying to you through these things that come your way. Perhaps it is a divine appointment with a man of God or with the president of a large corporation. It could also be an opportunity to be involved in a particular work, listen to a particular message being preached, or listening to a remark that a friend may make and so on. God can be speaking to you through the ordinary events of life. Be sensitive to know when He is speaking (and when He is not!) and observe what He is saying.

Take Action by Relating the Moving of God's Spirit in You with Immediate Events

If you are out on the street and you see dark clouds gathering in the sky and you begin to smell the rain or even feel the first drops falling, you normally will not stand unprotected and get wet. You would pull out your umbrella or get under a shelter. Similarly, as you are sensitive to the leading of the Spirit and to the situations in your life, you need to continuously relate the two and then take appropriate action.

Be Sensitive to the Seasons of Life

Those who have lived in parts of the world where there are extremes of temperature, know the importance of wearing clothing suitable for the season. During winter, they pull out their thick warm clothing and during summer they wear lighter clothes. In other words, we adapt our dressing patterns to the prevailing weather conditions. In a similar sense, as believers, we should order our lives and conduct ourselves in accordance to the season of life God is taking us through.

God Will Take You Through Seasons of Preparation

All of us understand that God prepares us for the work that He has called us to do. What we might fail to realize is that usually there are several seasons of preparation. For instance, you may go through one season of preparation where you learn and develop new skills and abilities. You may assume that once this is over, God will release you to carry out the dream and plan you have in your heart. It might come as a surprise that when this season is over, instead of being launched to fulfill the dream in your heart, you step right into another season of preparation where God deals with some other aspect of your life. Perhaps in this season, He begins to deal with issues of your heart—developing and strengthening character and discipline.

Each Season Prepares You for the Next

The different seasons that God takes you through, are not isolated periods of life that you walk through and forget. Rather, each season is built on the previous season of life. The things you learn in this season of life will prepare you for the challenges that lie ahead in the next or future seasons of life. So, every season of life is important.

Be Willing to Change When Seasons Change

When seasons change and life goes through transitions, change will become necessary. For instance, in the present season of life you may be living in a certain place, having certain friends and being involved in certain activities. When God changes the season of life you are in, God may also require that you move to a new place, make new friends and be involved in a totally new kind of activity. However, some of you may find this difficult to do, because you are comfortable with the familiar and may be afraid of the unknown. You must be willing to move from your present into the future that God has for you.

Have Foresight and Prepare for the Next Season

Sometimes, you are aware that your life's season will change at a certain time. For instance, you could be moving from being a single person to becoming a married person, a couple of months from now. Since you know that this transition is coming in the not-too-distant future, plan and prepare for it as much as you can. Don't be caught unawares when the time for transition comes. Think through on all the issues that affect this transition and prepare well.

Enjoy the Season You Are in

You must learn to enjoy each season of life. Some seasons of life are not as pleasant as the others. Nevertheless, you must learn to enjoy the journey because each season has a value.

When Does 'Kairos' Happen?

As mentioned earlier, 'kairos' is the coming together of certain events in our lives that make it the opportune time. In personal

matters, 'kairos' is more dependent on us than on God. For example, you could be waiting for the 'kairos' moment to launch your business or your ministry. For a person waiting to launch his ministry, the 'kairos' moment will come when God sees that this person has been prepared. This preparation is dependent on how he responds to God's dealings in his life. God will wait until the desired character, purity of motive, right attitudes and a servant-heart are developed in him. Once God sees these mature in him, then the 'kairos' moment for the launching of his ministry comes. Until then, God will wait as long as necessary. God is never in a hurry.

Ordering Your Life

Observe the leading of God's Spirit within you.

Observe the situations and events of your life.

Take action, by relating the moving of God's Spirit in you with immediate events.

Be sensitive to the seasons of life.

God will take you through seasons of preparation.

Each season prepares you for the next.

Be willing to change when seasons change.

Have foresight and prepare for the next season.

Enjoy the season you are in.

5

RESTORATION OF TIME

"So I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten"
(Joel 2:25).

"Who satisfies your mouth with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagles" (Psalm 103:5).

"But, beloved do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (2 Peter 3:8).

In closing, we will make a few statements about restoration of time. We are living in a time which most Bible scholars believe is the time of restoration, spoken of in Acts 3:19–21. This is being fulfilled in the Church as it is being restored to great power and glory. However, as we see in Scripture, whenever God restores, He also increases (Job 42:10). What God restores becomes much greater and better than the original. This is also true in terms of time. Time does not control God but God controls time. In God's clock, time runs differently from what we are accustomed to. For some of us, locusts may have plagued our lives. In this context, locusts are symbolic of waste, destruction and fruitlessness. God is able to restore the years (time) that have been wasted (whatever be the reason). He can enable us to accomplish by His Spirit, in a year, what we would never be able to accomplish in a millennium by our own efforts. We can look to God to restore the time that has been wasted in our lives.

God is able to restore.
Whenever God restores, He also increases.
Time does not control God but God controls time.

Do You Know the GOD Who Loves You?

About 2000 years ago, God came into this world as a man. His name is Jesus. He lived a perfectly sinless life. Since Jesus was God in flesh, everything He said and did revealed God to us. The Words He spoke were the very Words of God. The things He did were the actions of God. Jesus performed many miracles on the Earth. He healed the sick and suffering. He opened blind eyes, unstopped deaf ears, made the lame walk and healed every kind of sickness and disease. He fed the hungry by miraculously multiplying a few loaves of bread, calmed the storm and did many other wonderful things.

All of these actions reveal to us that God is a good God who wants people to be well, whole, healthy and happy. God wants to meet the needs of people.

So, why would God decide to become a man and step into our world? Why did Jesus come?

All of us have sinned and done things that are unacceptable before the God who created us. Sin has its consequences. Sin is like a great unsurpassable wall between God and us. Sin separates us from God. It prevents us from knowing and having a meaningful relationship with the One who created us. Therefore, many of us try to fill this void with other things.

Another consequence of our sins is eternal separation from God. In God's court, the penalty for sin is death. Death is eternal separation from God in hell.

But, the good news is that we can be free from sin and be restored to God. The Bible says, "For the wages [payment] of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23). Jesus paid for the sins of the whole world, when He died on the cross. Then three days later He rose again, showed Himself alive to many and then went back into heaven.

God is a God of love and mercy. He does not wish that any person be lost in hell. And so He came, to provide a way for the entire human race to be free from sin and its lasting consequences. He came to save sinners—to rescue people like you and me from sin and eternal death.

To receive this free forgiveness of sins, the Bible tells us that we have to do just one thing—accept what the Lord Jesus Christ did on the cross and to believe in Him whole-heartedly.

"Through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive forgiveness of sins" (Acts 10:43).

"That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9).

You too can receive forgiveness and cleansing for your sins if you will believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The following is a simple prayer to help you make a decision to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and what He has done for you on the cross. This prayer will help you express your acceptance of what Jesus has done for you and receive forgiveness and cleansing for your sins. This prayer is only a guideline. You can also pray in your own words.

Dear Lord Jesus, today, I have understood what You did for me on the cross. You died for me: You shed Your precious blood and paid the penalty for my sins, so that I could be forgiven. The Bible tells me that whoever believes in You will receive forgiveness for their sins.

Today, I make a decision to believe in You and to accept what You did for me, by dying for me on the cross and rising again from the dead. I know I cannot save myself by my own good works, neither can any other human save me.

I cannot earn forgiveness for my sins.

Today, I believe in my heart and say with my mouth that You died for me, You paid the penalty for my sins, You rose again from the dead, and by faith in You, I receive forgiveness and cleansing for my sins.

Thank You Jesus. Help me to love You, to know You more and to be faithful to You. Amen.

NOTES

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All Peoples Church & World Outreach, Bangalore, India, has extended its ministry by launching its Bible College & Ministry Training Center (APC-BC&MTC) in August 2005. APC-BC&MTC equips, trains and releases faithful men and women to impact villages, towns and cities in India and other nations, for Jesus Christ.

APC-BC&MTC is a member institution of the Apostolic Council for Educational Accountability, Colorado Springs, USA, (www.acea-schools.org).

APC-BC&MTC offers 3 programs:

- The two-year **Bible College** program is for full-time students and provides spiritual and practical ministry training along with academic excellence. The program is designed to equip and empower students to successfully fulfill the call of God upon their lives. Students receive a **Diploma in Theology & Christian Ministry** upon successful completion.
- The two-year **School of Ministry** program is for working professionals. Students receive a **Diploma in Christian Ministry** upon successful completion.
- The **Practical Ministry Training** is for graduates from the Bible College who desire to undergo this training. Those completing one or more years receive a **Certificate in Practical Ministry** indicating the duration of involvement.

Classes are conducted in English. The faculty comprises of both trained and anointed teachers of the Word. All faculty and students have access to APC's Study Centre and Library (SC&L). The SC&L contains books, teaching tapes, videos, VCD's/DVD's and music CD's.

About All Peoples Church

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All Peoples Church
370, 11th Cross, 2nd Block
R.T. Nagar, Bangalore - 560 032
Karnataka, INDIA

Phone: +91-80-2354 4328

Email: contact@apcwo.org

Website: www.apcwo.org

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Have you ever stopped to consider the fact that God has a clock that has been ticking away since the foundation of the world, or perhaps from eternity past—from time unknown to the present? Do you know that God has a clock for your individual life? Have you ever made the effort or even desired to order your life not just according to the watch on your wrist or the clock on the wall, but according to God's clock? How important is it to you that you do things according to God's time—that you are doing what He wants you to be doing at any point of time in your life, and that you become what He would have you be, at the time appointed for your life?

These are challenging questions and it is important that we learn to know and order our life by God's clock. This book will help us in learning to discern and understand God's time for us as individuals.

Ashish Raichur

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Managing Editor/Head of Publications: Valentina Hubert
Assistant Editor: Arthi Rachel Isaiah
Cover and Graphics Design: Karuna Jerome, byFaith Designz

Contact Information:

All Peoples Church
370, 11th Cross, 2nd Block
R.T. Nagar, Bangalore 560 032
Karnataka, INDIA

Phone: +91-80-2354 4328
Email: contact@apcwo.org
Website: www.apcwo.org

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