

Knowing The Time In Which We Live: What Time Is It?

Romans 13:11

We read in I Chronicles 12:32, “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.”

The children of Issachar understood what was going on around them. They were able to relate current events to what God had spoken in His Word. They read the Bible and applied the Bible in their lives. They were hearer and doers of God’s Word. God’s Word is practical. It’s relevant to our times.

The children of Issachar took the word of God very seriously and studied it to know what God said concerning the times they were living in.

In addition to understanding what was going on, they had the unique ability to know what their people should do.

As a result of this God-given ability, the princes of Issachar were the ones who helped Deborah— a prophetess who was the judge of Israel at the time— and Barak, the military chief, with the best military strategy and assistance to defeat Sisera and Israel’s enemies (Judges 5:15).

Out of a total army of three hundred and thirty six thousand leaders that made up the military strength of David’s army, the children of Issachar contributed only 200 leaders.

However, few though they were, they were the ones who defined the vision, provided a strategic direction and developed a working plan of action which informed the rest of the children of Israel on what they should do.

As always, their practical strength rather than their numbers was what Israel required to achieve what was most important— knowing what to do at a critical time.

They had spiritual insight and walked in righteousness. No wonder Israel’s national leaders succeeded when they walked in the light of their counsel.

In Romans chapter 13, the Apostle Paul exhorts the church to be like the children of Issachar.

We read in verse 11, “And that, *knowing the time*, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.”

The Bible mentions the word “time” or “times” on over 700 different occasions.

The early church theologian Augustine observed, “What then is time? If no one asks me, I know what it is. If I wish to explain it to him who asks, I do not know.”

Here is the mystery of the use of “time” in the Bible; God does not dwell in the confines of time. God is timeless. Time is His invention. Past, present, and future time doesn’t rule God.

The scriptures teach that God lives in eternity.

We read in Isaiah 57:15, “For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.”

Therefore, God is not subject to time as we are. Time is not so much for God but for us. We have only a certain amount of time to live on the earth.

Psalms 90:10 says, “The days of our lives are seventy years and if by reason of strength they are eighty years, yet their boast is only labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away”.

Then in verse 12 of the same chapter it states, “Teach us, to number our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom”.

In other words, the average life span of the human race is between seventy and eighty years and if we live longer it will be met with pain and suffering. So we ought to count our days and use them to the best of our ability.

The Bible asks this question, “*For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away*” (James 4:14). Our lives pass by so quickly that in light of eternity it will seem like only a vapor of smoke that soon disappeared.

Before we know it another year will have come and gone, followed by that a decade and then another and another. We will be left wondering, “Where has all the time gone?”

The apostle Paul wrote in the book of Romans, “*knowing the time*”. He was not talking about the time of day, but knowing that our time on earth is short and therefore should be used for the One who created and redeemed us, Jesus Christ.

If you read on in Romans chapter thirteen, you will see that Paul emphasizes that now is not the time to be dozing (spiritually sleepy and unaware of what God is doing now) or using our time unwisely.

He goes on to say, “*that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. (Romans 13:11-12).*”

The title of my message is, **Knowing The Time In Which We Live: What Time Is It?** We must know the times. There are three things we observe from the text.

1. Now is the time for salvation.

As you read through out the book of Romans you will see that Paul has been stressing the need for one to pay attention to their own personal need for salvation. In the first few chapters the doctrine of the universality of sin is explained.

We read, that “*all have sinned and come short of the glory of God*” (Romans 3:23) and that there is no one righteous in them selves (Romans 3:10).

The way to obtain a right standing with God is not the ability to keep a set of rules or laws but through faith in Jesus Christ (Romans chapters 4 and 5).

The scripture boldly declares “*Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation*” (2 Corinthians 6:2).

Now is the time for conversion. Confess any known sin, repent and turn to God. Now is the time to accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior.

Tomorrow is not promised to any one of us. **TODAY IS THE DAY OF SALVATION!** We may not have next week or next year. Now is the time for salvation!

It is a grave mistake to suppose that you can safely put off for tomorrow trusting in Christ. Millions have done this to their eternal ruin.

The Scriptures make it abundantly clear that salvation will not be available forever.

Oh what a terrible cry is this when many realize that it is too late for them. There will then be no escape. Here is one forecast of their terrible cry.

We read in Jeremiah 8:20, “The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.”

The harvest is past.

The siege of Jerusalem lasted two years; for Nebuchadnezzar came against it in the ninth year of Zedekiah, and the city was taken in the eleventh.

This seems to have been a proverb: "We expected deliverance the first year-none came. We hoped for it the second year-we are disappointed; we are not saved-no deliverance is come."

A Bible commentator writes, "The words of the people lamenting that all their expectations of help and deliverance have passed away.

To those who fail of God's great salvation, it will be a most bitter reflection that they have wasted abundant opportunities which will never return."

If people need to be saved then doesn't suggest that we live in perilous times. Perilous times?

2 Timothy 3:1, "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come."

Perilous times shall come. Times of danger, of persecution, and of trial.

What time is it? Now is the time for salvation.

Are you saved? Is Jesus Christ your Savior? Has Jesus forgiven you of your sins?

2. Now is the time for watchfulness.

We read Romans 13:11, “And that, knowing the time, that *now it is high time to awake out of sleep*: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.”

Beware of spiritual sleepiness!

“Wake Up,” Paul says.

“Men, by nature, are active only in deeds of wickedness. In regard to Christ they are insensible, and the slumbers of night are on their eyelids. Sleep is "the kinsman of death," and it is the emblem of the insensibility and stupidity of sinners. The deeper the ignorance and sin, the greater is this insensibility to spiritual things: and to the duties which we owe to God and man.”

Paul was calling believers to renew their commitment to Christ. He uses the idea of sleep to show how they had drifted out of spiritual consciousness and was no longer aware of the dangers of being indifferent.

From the context it appears that some had become lax and was allowing the works of darkness to overcome them.

Just as in the natural realm we get sleepy, it is possible to become spiritually sleepy. Usually we become sleepy during one of four times.

1. We become sleepy when we are exhausted. The same is true of spiritual exhaustion. If one is actively doing the work of the Lord it is important that we take time to rest and renew ourselves spiritually.

2. We become sleepy right after we have enjoyed a good meal. Our metabolism slows down to digest the food and the rest of our body gets lazy and wants to sleep. The same can be true in the spiritual life as well. Perhaps things have been going well with you in your relationship with God and you are full of His blessings. **Beware!** This is a time one could become spiritually sleepy and slow down for God.

3. We get sleepy during time of inactivity. Our physical body naturally adjusts to the demands we place upon it. When we are not active and no demands are upon us physically, again our bodies slow down. The same is true in the spiritual realm. If we are not doing anything for God, we soon don't "feel" like doing anything.

4. We become sleepy when we get comfortable. Our physical bodies enjoy comfort. When we are at a place of comfort we often stop what we have been doing to enjoy it. This is also true in our spiritual life as well. Comfort very easily turns into sleepiness.

Paul exhorts believers in 1 Thessalonians 5:5-8, “Ye are all the children of light, and the 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 in the 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.”

What time is it? Now is the time for watchfulness.

Are you watching? Are you walking with Christ?

3. Now is the time for expectancy.

We must prepare for the second coming of Jesus Christ.

Read the text carefully and you will see that the Apostle Paul was referring to the time when Christ will return. The phrase “*the day is at hand*” (vs. 12) indicates that there was an expectancy of Christ’s return.

We read in Hebrews 10:25, “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.”

James adds in 5:8, “Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.”

The teaching of the second coming of Christ is mentioned over three hundred times in the New Testament alone! His coming will be at a time no one knows.

"No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father"
(Matthew 24:36).

Preparation for the second coming of Christ is to be aware of our time “*knowing the time*”, be spiritually alert, “*awake out of sleep*”, realize it is getting closer everyday, “*nearer then when we believed*”, do away with sin in our lives, “*let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. 13 Let us walk properly*” and we are to be fully clothed in the person of Jesus Christ (Romans 13:11-14).

Now is the time of expectancy.

In closing, the Apostle Paul exhorts God’s people in Romans 13:11 to know the time. Now is the time of salvation; now is the time of watchfulness; now is the time of expectancy. Each day we are given twenty four hours. Each week we are given 168 hours. If you live the average life span of 70 years, you will have lived 613,200 hours. When you stand before God, how will you give account for the time He has given you? Let us pray!