

An 'Appointed Time': A word to the global church

by David Orton

<http://lifemessenger.org/appointed-time-word-global-church/>

*You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky,
but you cannot interpret the signs of the times (kairos).*

Matthew 16:3

*You will arise and have compassion on Zion, for it is time to show favour to her;
the appointed time has come.*

Psalm 102:13

Not all moments of history are equal. Some are hinges on which a quantum increase of the kingdom swings. We are currently in one of these.

If we fail to discern accurately what God is doing in this moment much will be lost to this generation. It is imperative for us to understand the times, like the sons of Issachar, so that we might know what to do (1 Chr 12:32).

The New Testament has two Greek words for 'time': *chronos* which refers to the general flow of time, from which we derive our English words *chronology* and *chronometer* (the instrument by which we measure time - i.e. a clock or wristwatch); and *kairos*, which on the other hand, refers to an 'appointed time' for a specific purpose. As a momentary window it demands an accurate and forceful response for its purpose to be achieved. For example, it was the word used in the weaving process for the momentary opening of the fabric through which the shuttle travels. It was also used in archery for the narrow aperture in space and time through which an arrow shoots to hit its target.

A *kairos*, therefore, in God, is an opening in time through which God comes to achieve a particular purpose, demanding an immediate and forceful response. Jesus describes this when he explained that the kingdom of God must be taken forcefully (Mt 11:12). Responding to a *kairos* requires spiritual violence. First, it must be recognised; and secondly, it can only be entered through radical obedience.

The wisdom writer aptly declares that, "*Without a vision (or 'prophetic revelation') the people live carelessly*", or as Eugene Peterson puts it:

If people can't see what God is doing,

they stumble all over themselves;

But when they attend to what he reveals,

they are most blessed.

Proverbs 29:18 THE MESSAGE

We have been stumbling "all over ourselves" for the next best thing in church growth and community impact; and, particularly in the prophetic and larger Charismatic streams, for increased spiritual phenomena, because we have not discerned accurately what God is doing.

With the knowledge that God does nothing except he reveals his counsel to his prophets first (Amos 3:7), I submit the

following word for discernment.

"October 8"

In November 2009 I awoke one morning with the voice of God ringing loud in my spirit with the words, "October 8".

There was nothing more; and so, for the next eleven months – well into 2010 – I pondered its meaning, sensing that it was something significant.

And then, as the date approached, I received a phone call from a particular leadership team inviting me to meet with them on "October 8". I had no other appointments for that date, and so, I knew this meeting was noteworthy. After a five-year journey they were at an impasse, meeting to consider the future of the group.

A season of maturity and harvest

To back up a bit, for several months leading up to this I had seen a phenomenon across the larger body of Christ: that we are in a season of full maturity and harvest. Seeds of character and destiny planted over years, and especially in the last season, are coming to full maturity. Decisions by decision, seemingly insignificant at the time, choices have been made, imperceptibly forming characters and destinies. What was not visible in the seed is now made visible in the mature fruit. It is only at harvest that wheat and tares can be distinguished. This explains why, on the extreme end of the scale, there has been a sudden outbreak of high profile ministers being brought to the light for gross departures from the faith, ranging from false teaching to lifestyles of adultery or homosexuality.

A harvest of two seeds

We are entering a harvest season—but a harvest of what? It is the harvest of two seeds: of wheat and tares—of the flesh and of the Spirit. Our response to the kingdom of God determines whether we sow to the Spirit or to the flesh. It is important to understand that the "flesh" is not referring to our physical bodies, which are the temple of the Holy Spirit, but in the Pauline sense, to our fallen human nature that is predisposed to self-effort and self-will, particularly in our attempts to serve God. These two seeds are within all of us. When yielded to, two kinds of Christian results: they are illustrated in Ishmael and Isaac. While both were of the same father – Abraham – Ishmael was conceived through the flesh. With the delayed promise of a son Abraham impatiently resorted to human plans and power to bring it to pass, yielding to Sarah's suggestion to have the child through her handmaid, Hagar. Isaac, on the other hand, as the son of promise, was born through Abraham's faith and patience at the 'appointed time', twenty-five years after the promise. 'Ishmaels' and 'tares', therefore, are attempts at achieving the divine purpose prematurely through our own efforts.

We must remember that the parable of the wheat and tares is a kingdom parable addressed to the generation from whom the kingdom was about to be taken. The parable, therefore, as with all the kingdom parables, is not about heaven and hell, but about yielding to the character of the king and his kingdom. Therefore, being a 'tare' is not so much about losing personal salvation, or living in gross sin, but rather about missing the fullness of the kingdom through the dominance of *self*. Sons will always remain sons; however, the question is whether they will become mature sons. Those who refuse kingdom maturity will be disinherited, losing the kingdom, while those who submit to the maturing process of God's disciplines will inherit Father's business—kingdom authority and power.

A sifting & sorting

The last season has been a *sifting* and the next will be a *sorting*. In the sifting we have made decisions, seemingly inconsequential at the time, but with spiritual consequences as they determine whether we are in reality ruled by the kingdom of God. We may think we are "serving" God, while unwittingly our service begins and ends in self-determinism; that is, we decide when, where, and how we "serve". The call of the kingdom is never convenient. We are being sifted every time there is a clash of loyalty between God and our money, God and our career, or God and our family. This is not to say these things are not legitimate. Nevertheless, it is to say that decisions for the kingdom of God will play out in small real-life decisions, moment by moment, as to whether we will put Father's will first—first in our affections, first in our relationships, first in our schedules, and first in our finances. The high call of God in Christ Jesus does not brook with competing loyalties. For the person who is seeking the kingdom these competing demands will be regularly denied in obedience to God's voice. Others may, but you may not. The way into the kingdom is exceedingly narrow, and few are they who find it (see Mtt 7:14).

In the sorting there will be much movement as God's people are realigned. The decisions made in the sifting will determine alignment in the body. Previous loyalties and relationships in the body will come under much tension and even break as Christ marshals the troops in military order for war. Those who have refused to yield to God's authority in the body or in the competing demands of life will be taken out of the frontline. The Lord of the harvest will re-assign labourers according to their obedience in the sifting.

As the Lord said to Jeremiah:

If you have run with footmen and they have tired you out,

Then how can you compete with horses?

If you fall down in a land of peace,

How will you do in the thicket of the Jordan?

Jeremiah 12:5 NASB

In other words, if we can't make kingdom responses in a time of relative ease, how will we do it when the heat is really on?

"October 8" – the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) 2011

Returning to "October 8". On checking the Jewish calendar for 2011 I was amazed to discover that it was the date for the *Day of Atonement* (Yom Kippur).

This has great prophetic significance for the body of Christ from 2011 onwards for the next ten to fifteen years; in fact, it signals an 'appointed time'.

By way of background, the corporate life of the old covenant church, Israel, revolved around the three annual feasts: *Passover*, *Pentecost*, and *Tabernacles*.

They provide a powerful type and shadow of spiritual truths and 'appointed times' in God's calendar for the universal body of Christ.

The typical and prophetic significance of the first two feasts has already been fulfilled: *Passover*, fulfilled by Christ, our "Passover lamb", in his substitutionary death; and *Pentecost*, in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the upper room. However, the typical and prophetic significance of *Tabernacles* remains to be fulfilled.

Unfortunately, with the decline of the church from the second century onwards, the spiritual truths of *Passover* and *Pentecost* were gradually lost to her experience, needing to be restored. God intervened and through the Reformation (1500s), the Evangelical Revival through Wesley, Whitfield, and Edwards (1700s), and the Pentecostal Revival (1900s) the truths of *Passover* (justification by faith & holiness) and *Pentecost* (baptism of the Holy Spirit) have been restored. Each feast restored has been a major *kairos* or 'appointed time' for the global church.

Nevertheless, this still leaves, *Tabernacles*, the last great feast to be fulfilled.

The feast of *Tabernacles* consists of three parts: in order, they are the feast of *Trumpets*, leading up to the *Day of Atonement*, followed by the feast of *Ingathering*.

Mid-twentieth century saw an 'appointed time'—a new *kairos* for the body of Christ. There was an opening in the spirit and the feast of *Trumpets* began. This was a shift in revelation and emphasis from the feast of *Pentecost* (Pentecostal Revival of the early 1900s) to the feast of *Tabernacles* (present and future moves of God). The feast of *Trumpets* in the Old Testament was a

ten-day period marked by the blowing of trumpets, fasting, and humbling before the Lord, all in preparation for the *Day of Atonement* (see Leviticus 16, 23; Num 10).

The blowing of trumpets, signifying the prophetic ministry (Isa 58:1), announced the feast. Mid-twentieth century saw a new awareness of the prophetic, particularly through the 'Latter Rain Revival' (various ministries and churches in North America & beyond). The 'Healing Revival' (William Branham, Oral Roberts et al) and the 'Evangelical Revival' (Billy Graham, Bill Bright et al) also occurred at this time. All of these were sparked in 1948, or thereabouts, coinciding with the restoration of the state of Israel. The 'Charismatic Renewal' (1960s) and 'Jesus Movement' (1960s) followed rapidly on the heels of the Latter Rain and Healing revivals as a flow-on effect, taking the move of God to all nations and denominations. Many of its most influential teachers spoke out of the truths of the Latter Rain and Healing revivals. Subsequent outpourings of the Spirit, the 'Third Wave' (Vineyard, 1980s), and especially the 'Toronto Renewal' (1990s), have flowed on from the Charismatic Renewal, seeded by the Latter Rain. Through these moves of the Spirit 'spiritual' worship (singing in the Spirit, prophetic song of the Lord, scripture in song, contemporary psalmody etc), body ministry, ministry of apostles and prophets, prophecy and the laying on of hands, dreams and visions, unity of the body of Christ, maturity, restoration, healing and deliverance, signs and wonders, and intercession all became more common currency in the larger church.

And so, for the last sixty years, in this feast of *Trumpets*, the call has gone out for the bride of Christ to prepare herself for the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. There has been a strong Elijah anointing on various prophetic voices preparing the way of the Lord. The call to bridal intimacy, to unity and maturity, to repentance and humility have all been preparatory for a new *kairos*—the *Day of Atonement*, culminating in the feast of *Ingathering*.

2011-2025 – a new *kairos* for the global body of Christ

October 2011 to approximately 2025 will be an 'appointed time' for the global body of Christ.

All that the feast of *Trumpets* signifies will accelerate and be completely fulfilled. There will be a shift into another dimension of the Spirit and of God's purpose for the true *ecclesia*. The *Day Atonement* and the feast of *Ingathering* will begin to be fulfilled.

Passover and *Pentecost* were preparatory for *Tabernacles*, the last great feast and climax of the Jewish year. The *Day of Atonement* was the centre point of this feast.

So, what does the *Day of Atonement* signify for the church?

As *Passover* speaks of salvation from sin and death the *Day of Atonement* must speak of something more. The *Day of Atonement* speaks of a mature church entering the fullness of all that Christ, as our *Passover Lamb*, has purchased—entry into the inner sanctuary, that previously inaccessible realm where God manifestly dwells, the Holy of Holies. As the culmination of Israel's year it speaks of the church ultimately attaining to corporate mature manhood, to the fullness of the stature of Christ (Eph 4:13). And as the one day of the year when the "Apostle and High Priest of our faith" – Jesus – as our forerunner, went through the veil into the presence without perishing, it speaks of the church fully abiding in Christ – the Apostle and High Priest – and thus entering into a fuller experience of the powers of the age to come—into resurrection life itself (see Heb 3:1; 2:17; 4:14f; 5:5, 10; 6:5, 20; 7:26, 28; 8:1, 3; 9:11; 10:21; Jn 11:25). Inscribed by the finger of God on the tables of stone, the Ten Commandments contained in the Ark of the Covenant, declare God's holy judgements against humankind—the penalty of death. And yet, the blood of the sacrifice, now sprinkled on the Mercy Seat, allows the Apostle and High Priest, on behalf of the whole nation, to appear in the presence of God's eternal judgements and yet live. The *Day of Atonement*, is therefore, the fullness of the first-principles of Christ, particularly the final two—eternal judgement and resurrection life:

1 Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection [maturity]; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, 2 Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. 3 And this will we do, if God permit.

Hebrews 6:1–3 KJV

The first principles of the doctrine of Christ must be progressively restored to the church – “line upon line, precept upon precept” – and only then will God “permit” her to go on to maturity (see Isa 28:10-13). Each of these first principles corresponds to a feast of the Lord as they have been restored or fulfilled in the church:

1. **Passover** – *Repentance from dead works & faith towards God*, restored through Martin Luther and the Reformation—justification by faith (1500s). Ascension Gift Ministry restored: *pastor & teacher*.
2. **Unleavened Bread** (within Passover) – *doctrine of baptisms*, restored through the Anabaptists—baptism in water (1500s); holiness, restored through John Wesley—sanctification (1700s). Emphasis: “dead to sin” – baptised into death (Rom 6:3-11).
3. **Firstfruits** (within Passover) – *doctrine of baptisms*, restored through the Anabaptists—baptism in water (1500s); holiness, restored through John Wesley—sanctification (1700s). Emphasis: “alive unto God” – raised in newness of life (Rom 6:3-11). Ascension Gift Ministry restored: *evangelist*.
4. **Pentecost** – *baptism of the Holy Spirit*, restored through the Pentecostal Revival (early 1900s).
5. **Trumpets** (within Tabernacles) – *laying on of hands*, fulfilled through Latter Rain Revival, Healing Revival, & Charismatic Renewal (mid 1900s). Ascension Gift Ministry restored: fuller restoration of *teacher & evangelist*; partial restoration of *apostle*; restoration of *prophet*.
6. **Day of Atonement** (within Tabernacles) – *eternal judgement & resurrection* life, yet to be fulfilled—the next move of God (2011-25?). Ascension Gift Ministry: complete restoration of apostle; apostolic alignment of Christ's global body.
7. **Ingathering** (within Tabernacles) – *maturity* – one body of Christ and the harvest of the nations (Eph 4:1-16; Rom 11), fulfilled in the coming move of God (mid 2000s?).

Sifting – brokenness before the Lord

As the feast of *Trumpets* approaches completion in the next season will see an acceleration of the sifting. The call to bow to the government of God, to humility and brokenness before the Lord, will intensify. Additionally, the difference between wheat and tares – between flesh and spirit – will become more visible. There will be a dividing between the holy and the profane.

Sorting – apostolic alignment

This will lead to a sorting of God's people. There will be a major apostolic alignment across the larger body of Christ. True apostles who have been internally processed and aligned with Christ as the chief-cornerstone will become the foundation of the dwelling that God is building by his Spirit (Eph 2:19-22). They will emerge from the willing embrace of obscurity through the fires of suffering and persecution. They will come into a new level of authentic spiritual authority, functioning as true fathers and mothers of the faith. Eschewing titles and positions they will serve through relational and organic networks in humility of spirit, but with great authority. Individuals and groups will be faced with the decision to either accept or reject this new breed of apostolic leader. Those who have balked at the government of God through the heart sifting of the last season will recoil and refuse this new alignment. They will reject Christ's authority in his body, choosing to isolate and rebelliously dwell in a dry land. Nevertheless, Christ's authority will return to his church and the fear of the Lord will be restored. A new breed of Christian, with a teachable heart, will seek out spiritual fathers and mothers for the wisdom of God. They will lay down their lives for the sake of the body, investing themselves in the redeemed community. As the church comes into apostolic order there will be a quantum increase of the government of God. God's favour will increase, accompanied by miracles, signs and wonders. Even so, the miraculous will be with apostolic purpose; that is, for the harvest. This will be in stark contrast to those who are currently pursuing supernatural phenomena to engage a constituency and advance their ministries. The apostolic oneness of Christ's body will be restored, with the increase of new citywide organic wineskins. These will be apostolically related and organisationally decentralised, bypassing the institutional system of church. Through these new organic apostolic networks the body of Christ will be prepared and equipped in the supernatural for the harvest of the nations.

How to respond to an 'appointed time'

When the kingdom comes to each of us it comes in a way that is imperceptible to the natural man. Our senses and cognitive

capacities are inadequate for the knowledge of God. The natural man cannot receive the things of the Spirit. As helpful as book-learning may be it is not adequate, apart from the Holy Spirit, to reveal God. Therefore, we must recognise that without humility of heart and reliance on God, we do not have the equipment or the ability to understand the Christian life, let alone live it.

The *kairos*, while in space and time, is not of this world and must be spiritually discerned:

But, as it is written, “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him”—these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.

1 Corinthians 2:9–10 ESV

Jesus, in response to the Pharisees' demand for a sign, pointed to the contradiction of them interpreting signs of the weather, but not discerning the signs of the '*times*' (*kairos*): “... *You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times [kairos]*” (Matt 16:3 ESV). Confusingly, various end-time scenarios have used this text to give weight to what they see as the signs of the second coming, usually apocalyptic disasters and negative social trends. However, Jesus was not referring to the supposed signs of his second coming, but of the actual sign of his first coming!

In fact, he said that the only sign of the *kairos* would be the sign of the "*Son of Man*" (see Lk 11:29-30). God becoming man – the incarnation – is the sign of an 'appointed time'—of when heaven comes to earth. I will return to the full significance of this in a moment.

Thus, the first coming of Christ sets the pattern for every future *kairos*. He does not come from Jerusalem as a positioned leader of a religious institution with man's credentials and endorsement. In fact, he comes with heaven's imprimatur from outside officialdom as an 'illegitimate' carpenter's son from an insignificant town called Nazareth. And so, like the Jews of Jesus' day, we are expecting him to turn up in a particular way. And therefore like that generation we stumble over the visitation of God because it doesn't fit our criteria. Like the Pharisees we develop our watertight theologies to protect the enscripturated truth, but crucify the personification of truth when he stands among us. Or like the crowds we want the miracles — the *acts of God*, but short-track the *ways of God*. Or like that generation, we may feel the sting of injustice, expecting him to come as the liberator, but refuse him as the slave-master.

Here is the rub. Christ comes to us *incarnationally*—that is, in his body. This offends us. We want to relate to him direct, with whom we do as our High Priest; nevertheless Christ – the Apostle – comes through his body—through those whom he sends as apostles (see Mtt 23:34; Lk 11:49). We stumble at this and are offended at the earthen vessel – it is not the colour or the shape we expect – and therefore, we miss the treasure—Christ.

Do you want more of Christ in this next season?

Here is the condition—receiving those whom he sends:

For I say to you, from now on you shall not see Me [THE Apostle] until you say, ‘BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD [apostles]!’

Matthew 23:39 NASB (author's emphasis)

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