

"Sir, we wish to see Jesus" — John 12:21

His Hour

In his God-given wisdom and by the direction of the Holy Spirit, Solomon wrote a wonderful and poetic discourse on God's use of time. He begins, "To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven..." Then, after listing several "times," the Preacher extols God's use of time, saying, "He has made everything beautiful in its time" (Ecclesiastes 3:1, 11).

As we consider the gospel of John, it is interesting to note the multiple references to a particular "hour" in Jesus' life. In all but one case, the hour under consideration would seem to be the hour of His death. He knew that this hour would come; He came into the world for this hour. Let's notice the texts.

At the wedding feast in Cana of Galilee, the supply of wine ran out. Mary mentioned the lack of wine to Jesus, who responded, "Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come" (John 2:4). By the end of the account, the guests were drinking the best wine ever to be poured. This is the one occasion when the hour mentioned is not associated with His death. It may be His manifestation to the public by miracles that He spoke of. Or, even more precisely, He may have been waiting for it to be known that the wine had failed so that without doubt, this miracle "manifested His glory" (John 2:11).

In the beginning of John 7, we are told Jesus spent His time in Galilee, for the Jews in Judea sought to kill Him. With that setting, the instruction of Jesus' brothers, "...Depart from here and go into Judea..." is entirely cruel. John explains to us, "For even His brothers did not believe in Him" (John 7:5).

Jesus' response was prompt, "My time has not yet come..." (John 7:6). It was not time for Him to die yet. He did go to the feast, but not in such a way as to give the Jewish leaders an opportunity against Him (John 7:10). It is not that Jesus feared the scribes and Pharisees or that He didn't trust the Lord's care - He refused to yield to a temptation of the devil (John 7:3-4; Matthew 4:5-7).

After arriving in Judea, Jesus spoke with the leaders before the people. He defended His teaching (John 7:16-18) and inquired about their intent to kill Him (John 7:19-20, 25-26). Though "they sought to take Him ... no one laid a hand on Him, because His hour had not yet come" (John 7:30). It was not yet time for Him to die.

At the same feast, the Jews brought a woman who had been

caught in adultery to Him, "...testing Him, that they might have something of which to accuse Him" (John 8:6). He passed their tests and defended Himself against their accusations "...and no one laid hands on Him, for His hour had not yet come" (John 8:20). It was yet time for Him to die.

In the final year of Jesus' ministry, after He had raised Lazarus from the dead, the council on Jerusalem gathered to discuss what they should do about Him. Caiaphas urged that they should put Him to death (John 11:47-50) "Now this he did not say on his own authority; but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die..." (11:51). His time was fast approaching.

Jesus knew from the beginning of His ministry that He was to die for the people. Now as the time approached, He acknowledged that it was soon time for Him to be crucified. When Mary anointed His feet with costly oil, and His disciples balked at the waste, He defended her, "...she has kept this for the day of My burial. For the poor you have with you always, but Me you do not have always" (John 12:7-8). He knew that the time was at hand.

On the next day, Jesus was received by the crowd in Jerusalem as "...the King of Israel!" (John 12:13) Jesus knew, "...the Hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified" (John 12:23). That He is speaking about His death is evident, for He would shortly thereafter say, "Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour. Father, glorify Your name" (John 12:27-28). His speech in the context clearly shows that He knew the time was at hand - His hour had come.

Again, John acknowledges this important hour as Jesus and His disciples gathered "...before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father..." (John 13:1). Later that night, Jesus would be arrested, and the next morning, He would be crucified.

Having left the upper room in which the feast was shared, Jesus went out to the garden to pray. More of Jesus' prayer is given in John's account than any other gospel. In John 17:1, Jesus began, "Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son may glorify You..." He was ready to go to the cross, that God would be glorified, and mankind might be sanctified and justified in Him.

Why is all this important? What benefit is there in this for us? As Solomon said, "He made everything beautiful in its time" (Ecclesiastes 3:11). Through this appointed hour - the hour of Jesus' death and the subsequent resurrection three days later - God has provided the means whereby all individuals, though stained by sin, might be made pure and holy, and have the hope of heaven. What a wonderful hour!

William J. Stewart | Odessa, Ontario, Canada

Walking - The Need To Persevere

Over the last several years I have been walking on a fairly regular basis. I started several years ago just to get in a little better physical condition when traveling overseas in evangelistic efforts. About nine years ago, a visit to my doctor, revealed I needed to increase my efforts to walk for health reasons. I usually try to walk five days a week. My problem is being persistent. It is so easy to skip a day, a week or even to stop altogether. There are several obstacles to overcome, for me at least, which I face, either real or perceived. It is a lot easier to not walk, yet I really need the exercise.

The Bible describes the Christian's life as a walk. Seven times, in Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus, he instructs them both from a positive and negative standpoint about their walk. The Greek word used in these verses is "peripateō" and is defined as "Hebraistically, to live; i.e. to regulate one's life, to conduct oneself" (Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament. 504). This word is found 96 times in the New Testament. Vine, in his word study, gives this definition: "is used (a) physically; (b) figuratively, signifying the whole round of the activities of the individual life, whether of the unregenerate, or of the believer" (1217-1218).

Notice what Paul says to the church at Ephesus when he speaks of their walk in those seven verses. They are told to walk in good works (2:10); to walk worthy of their calling (4:1); to walk in love (5:2); to walk as children of light (5:8); and to walk circumspectly - which would be carefully, exactly, accurately, and diligently (5:15). Yet there were steps they were to avoid as well. They were not to walk in the lust of their flesh fulfilling its desires, etc. (2:1-3); neither were they to walk as the rest of Gentiles in lewdness, etc. (4:17-19); and not as fools, making sure they redeemed the time (5:15-16).

Walking with the Lord is somewhat like walking physically. I must persevere. There are obstacles to overcome, some real and some perceived. It is easier to stay home from church services on Sunday night or Wednesday night. If I miss one service, is it easy to miss another, then another, etc.? There are members of the Lord's church who are sick physically

and spiritually. They need encouragement and help. Are we willing to continually teach, encourage and care for those who have such needs? The world tries to influence our thinking, which will have its effect on the way we live. Are we going to resist the evil around us and stand for the ways of righteousness? It is easier to blend in with the world. The study of the word of God is vital for our spiritual life. It takes no effort to go days at a time, never open our Bibles, and spend countless hours watching TV, searching the web, or playing games on an iPhone. There are a great number of ways to illustrate this principle, but these will suffice. I must persevere!

Listen to the admonition given to the brethren at Corinth, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58). It is for sure they had been anything but steadfast when you read the previous chapters of all the problems that existed among them. Yet it seems to me the apostle was telling them to get back to serving God, stop all bickering among yourselves, follow the word which had been preached to you, and be steadfast in this effort. It was said of Enoch:

"After he begot Methuselah, Enoch walked with God three hundred years, and had sons and daughters. So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years.

And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him" (Genesis 5:22-24).

That is perseverance - three hundred years!

If I stop physically walking, my health may not be quite as good as it could be, yet the consequences will not be devastating. I may not live quite as long, the quality of my life may not be as good, yet such is not going to change my eternal existence. But if I do not persevere in my walk with God the end results will be catastrophic. It is he who endures to the end that will be saved (Matthew 10:22). The most valuable thing I have in my possession is my soul. I cannot afford to lose it. Remember also, the choice I make in whether to walk with Jehovah or not, may also have a destructive effect on those I love: a spouse, children, grandchildren, etc. Do not lose heart, continue steadfastly, and give yourself to prayer (Luke 18:1).

Jim Mickells | Lewisburg, Tennessee



Read your Bible daily