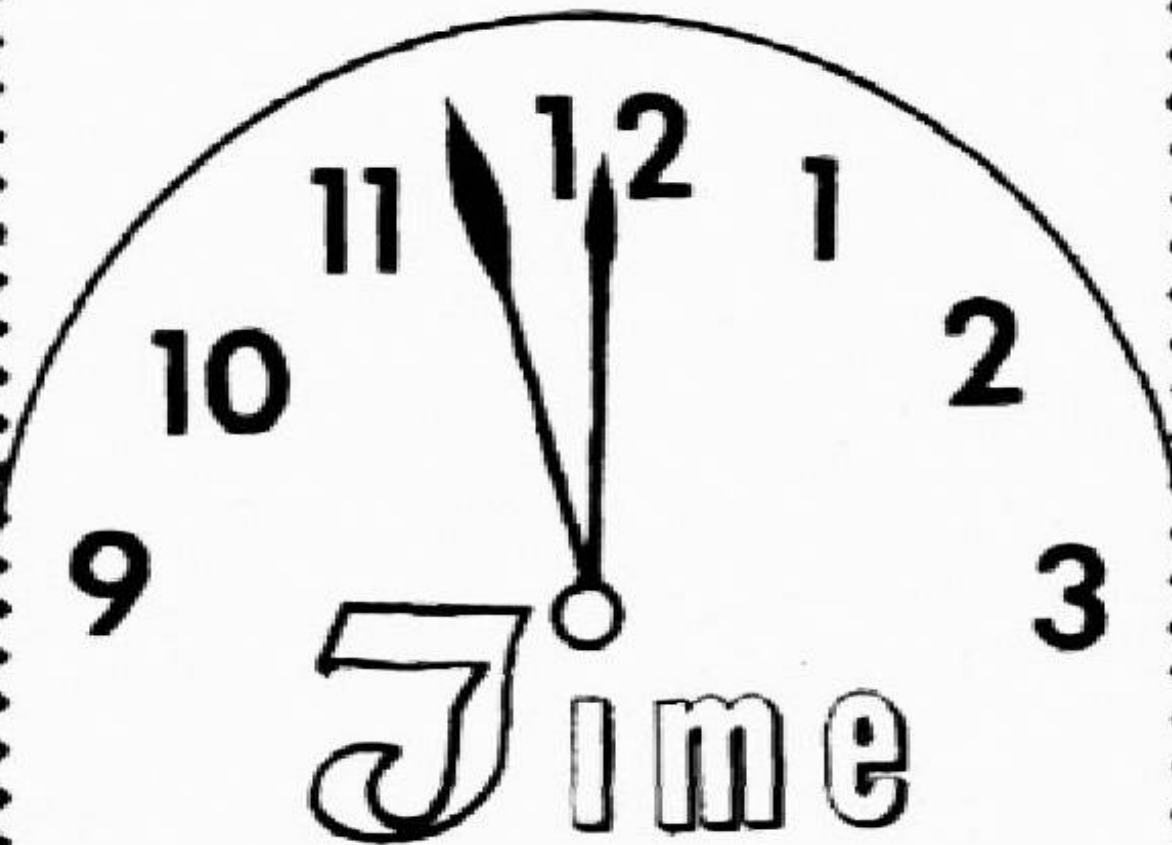


GOD'S



CLOCK

by

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Matthew 20:1 For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard.

2 And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard.

3 And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace,

4 And said unto them; Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way.

5 Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise.

6 And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle?

7 They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive.

8 So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first.

9 And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny.

10 But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny.

11 And when they had received it, they murmured against the goodman of the house,

12 Saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day.

13 But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny?

14 Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee.

15 Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?

16 So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.

Introduction

In the twentieth chapter of Matthew, where the Kingdom of Heaven is likened to a man who is a householder that went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard, we have a picture of God's time clock. As you know, we have clocks and watches for a purpose to know what time it is, how late it is in the day, how long before it is quitting time, and how much work there is to be done. Now, I do not believe in clock watching, but I believe we ought to realize something—time is slipping away and there is a big job to be done. God has a clock, and His alarm always goes off on time. He set it hundreds of years before and when the time was right, the alarm sounded.

We have illustrated the face of a clock—God's clock. This clock covers the Gospel day. Jesus said, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto . . ."; and the kingdom covers the Gospel day. He was not speaking, of a literal day of twenty-four hours, but the period of time covering the Gospel day. So, let us go around the clock and see exactly where we are today.

The First Call

Now we have to learn a few things in order to read the face of this clock. First of all, I believe you realize that in the Jews's day there were just twelve hours. In John 11:9, Jesus' own words were, "Are there not twelve hours in the day?" The Word of God teaches us that a Jew's day began at six o'clock in the morning and ended at six o'clock in the evening.

We read that a man (Christ) went out early in the morning to hire laborers in His vineyard. His vineyard is a place where His people bring forth the fruits of righteous and true holiness unto Him. Now, Malachi said that the Sun of righteousness would arise with healing in His wings. In the first call, Christ went out early in the morning with John the Baptist. This first call was to the Jews and the Jews alone.

The Word of God says that the law and the prophets were until John; since then, the Kingdom of God is preached and every man presseth into it (Luke 16:16). In the first call, when He went out early in the morning, He agreed with them for a penny. This is the only call where He covenanted with anyone. All the rest of the time, He said, "I will pay you what is right. I will deal with you in grace." In the first call only, He covenanted, or agreed, with them. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not" (John 1:11).

The Third-Hour Call

He went out the third hour. We know that He went out first at six o'clock; therefore, the third hour would be three hours later, or nine o'clock when He made the second call, which was on the day of Pentecost. That is where the Gentiles came in. He did not covenant with, these people. He said to these people when He went out into the marketplace, "Go work in my vineyard, and whatever is right, I'll pay." He dealt with them in grace.

What Christ gives us is just and right, because He knows just what we need. He does not give you what you earn, but whatever is right.

Like the man that went to work for somebody one time and the employer said, "Yes, I have plenty of work. I'll be glad to have you work." The man started to go to work, turned around, came back, and said, "Wait a minute, now, what do you pay?" The employer said, "I'll give you whatever you are worth." "Yes, but I cannot live on that," he said.

Well, I declare unto you, if we got just what we are worth, we could not live on it today. We are living by the grace of God. He is overpaying every one of you, whether you want to believe it or not. If you work for Him day and night, you are still overpaid. You are not getting what you are worth—you are getting what is right. He deals with us in grace. Thank God!

Acts 2:15 tells us that when the glory of God struck their souls and made them jump and pray and shout, people said they were drunk; but Peter said, "These are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day." Oh, but I can give you Scripture to prove that the original glory that the church had on Pentecost was short-lived. In A.D. 52, twenty-one years after Pentecost, Paul said that the mystery of iniquity was already working (2 Thessalonians 2:7). In A.D. 66, thirty-three years after Pentecost, certain men had crept in unawares (Jude 4). Someone had to let the standard down or they could not have gotten in. Men had crept in unawares right in the midst and were teaching things contrary to truth. They were dividing God's people and causing confusion. Paul warned that after his departure it would be worse and grievous wolves would enter in, not sparing the flock. Men of the church would arise and speak perverse things and lead disciples after themselves (Acts 20:29-30).

Why was there a need for a sixth hour call? Because a falling away had taken place. At the sixth hour, God called these people to come and stand for truth.

Now, three more hours from the third hour puts it right where the sun would go down at noon. Amos said the sun would go down at noon and there would be darkness in the clear day (Amos 8:9).

There are people who would like for you to feel that the church died here and that the Church of God began in 1880. No! God called a people clear through the Gospel day. That is one of the burdens of my message—to show you that the vineyard was working right around the clock. Glory be to God! The church was very much alive right in the noontime. God called a people right there in the darkness. The best workers God had were found there.

This darkness began around 270 A.D., and there were about a thousand years of darkness. History tells us that there were more souls saved and more who went home to glory during this call than in any other age. The Christians preached the Gospel and had something within them that convinced people so that they, too, were willing to be burned at the stake. (And we have a time getting something within a people that makes them willing for someone to speak evil of them.)

The church was very much alive. God called a people right in the darkness. Right in the midst, about A.D. 1170, Peter Waldo and others were men of God. That little group that had to hide in the caves and whatnot were so true to God that He used them in a magnificent way. We know that a reformation came

later, but I want you to see something—people stayed true and laid a foundation or it would never have been laid.

History teaches us that Rome burned Bibles and killed the saints. The Bibles that were left were translated into Latin where the Word would be hidden from the people. If God was ever to bring a reformation of light back unto mankind, the Bible was going to have to be translated into English, and God knew just how to do it.

Here were Peter Waldo and the people that history would have us feel were a poor class of people, deprived of everything, and unable to gather anything together of an intellectual nature; but through the Spirit of God they received a revelation of truth. God needed someone to translate the Word before the reformation could ever come. So, we read that some of these people got a job for Peter Waldo with John Wycliff, who was the head of the Oxford University, a wise, old boy who was capable of translating the Bible. The glory of God so shone through their lives that John Wycliff was convinced of truth and gave his heart to God and took that Latin Bible and translated it into English. I want to show you how they were working in the vineyard that day.

Over in Bohemia was John Huss. God was stirring his soul to prepare for the next move. The Bible was back in English now, and it needed to be proclaimed. Around A.D. 1410, God saw fit that an army officer of England took Wycliff's translation of the Word to the University of Prague where John Huss was the elector. John Huss got hold of the Word and began to proclaim it. He was put in jail. Many men and brethren came to him and said, "Let us fight your defense. We can give you the best defense there is and get you out of here." But he refused to talk to them on those grounds. He said, "I only want the glory and the Cross of Christ."

One night when he was depressed, he painted a picture of Christ on the cell wall. When he went to sleep that night, he dreamed that the pope and the bishop came and took paint brushes and defaced the face of Christ until it was pitiful. The next morning he woke up with that dream on his mind. He fell on his knees before God and said, "My God, will the face of Christ be defaced until men can never recognize it again?" That night God gave him another vision. Many painters came and touched up that picture and brought it out so gloriously that all of the defects were removed; and after the painters were through, a great multitude came and sang praises unto God.

He repeated his vision the next day to a man who visited him and said, "Brother, here is the answer to it. Rome has defaced the face of Christ until men cannot see Him. After my departure, God is going to send preachers who will paint such a picture of Him as they preach the Gospel that man will never be able to hide Him again from the hearts of men."

When they burned John Huss at the stake, he said, "You are about to roast a goose, but God is going to raise up a swan within the next hundred years that you cannot fry or cook." Thus, he spoke of Martin Luther. God had people working in His vineyard!

The Ninth-Hour Call

God showed Martin Luther the truth that the just shall live by faith. However, his followers built an organization around that one truth.

As time went on, God revealed additional truth to other men, but their followers would build an organization around the light they had and refuse to follow the leadings of the Holy Spirit as He led the Christians from the darkness of the Dark Ages into the present evening light.

To the sixth hour, we add three more hours, which puts us up to the ninth hour when God made another call. In 1880, God opened up the sixth seal and gave the ministry a call to call people to come and work in His vineyard. God showed D.S. Warner (and others) light on the unity of God's people. They began to sound out the message, putting judgment on Babylon (religious systems of the earth that use their own disciplines, catechisms, and creeds as the basis of Christian fellowship instead of the Bible) and calling God's people to "come out of her" (Revelation 18:4) and come back to Zion, to the unity that the church had in the morning time.

The Eleventh-Hour Call

Some people say there is no later call than that 1880 call. If that is so, then where is the eleventh-hour call going to come in? We have to own the fact that many Scriptures were hidden from us, and there is truth in God's eternal Word that has been stored up. Since some of the Word of God was written for people in this day and age, we do desire to know that which God wishes revealed. We are thankful for the truth of the past. Surely, it has been declared in a faithful way, and we thank God for it.

In the fifth chapter of Revelation, we find that John caught a vision of God's throne and a book sealed with seven seals. Now, we realize that the seven seals found in Revelation cover seven periods of time through the Gospel day, from a short time before the day of Pentecost clear through to the end of time. The book could not be opened until all the seals were opened. Can you see that? If the book is bound with seven seals, how can you say that the book is completely open when one seal has never been broken? We are not deducting the greatness from the sixth seal light one bit, but we are rejoicing in it. Their light was complete. Every bit of light they had was light, and there was no darkness in it. It was pure and it was clear; but, just as sure as we are here, there was another seal yet to be opened. In the eleventh chapter of the Revelation, the seventh angel sounded, the temple was opened, and the ark of the covenant could be seen. When the seventh angel sounded, the mystery of God should be finished, as He had declared to His servants the prophets (Revelation 10:7).

Why was it necessary for an eleventh-hour call? We find in God's eternal Word that something happened to the morning church. What happened then is the same reason for the necessity of the eleventh-hour call. Something happened in the morning church that God called a falling away. The original, perfect glory that the morning church had was short-lived. If we could just get this fact across to the people, it would cause them to quit trying to hold on to something that there is no glory in.

I have a book of camp meeting sermons (circa 1913) in which H. M. Riggle (and others) said that grievous wolves had already entered in among us. He said, "If we are not careful, within five years you will not be able to tell the church from Babylon. Cookstoves will be in the basement and people will be dressing like they dress down in Babylon."

Nothing that the devil can come up with of an outward source—the dragon, the beast, the false prophet, the eighth beast—can prevail against the church; but men can get in the middle of it and tear it asunder. How did the morning church lose her glory? She whipped the dragon and cast him out; but men getting in on the inside put her in such a shape that God was ashamed of her and hid her away in the wilderness. (He will hide us away in the wilderness if we fail to be an example of what the Church of God must be.)

There is a need for an eleventh-hour call. God's people have been led astray. Read the eleventh-hour call again. It is the only one in all the calls like it. When He went out the eleventh hour and found them standing idle in the marketplace, He said, "Well, how come you are standing idle?" The answer was, "No man hath hired us." They were man bound. People who cannot make a move unless man hires them. You know what Jesus said to them? "Go on out to work in the vineyard." They were the only group in the bunch who said they could not work for God because men would not turn them loose.

He went out the eleventh hour. The ninth hour plus two more hours puts it down to five o'clock on the Jews's clock, which is actually eleven o'clock on ours. Why was there a need for the eleventh-hour call? In the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew, Jesus said that at the time of His second coming, the kingdom would be like ten virgins: five wise and five foolish. There is the Laodicean age. These is the lukewarmness. Now, if the foolish wait until the midnight cry, they will never get a chance to get any oil, because when the midnight cry goes out, the oil shop will be closed. But He is making an eleventh-hour call to wake them up so they can get oil.

Jesus is going to come any time. It is clear past 11:30, maybe up to 11:55, in our time.

They were good people, those virgins, even though they were asleep. They were all virgins—they were all men and women who had an experience of salvation. How do I know? First of all, He said the kingdom would be likened unto ten virgins carrying lamps. No one is a part of the kingdom until he has been truly born again.

What is a lamp? Salvation! Isaiah 62:1 answers that symbol: "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation hereof as a lamp that burneth." When you are born again you get a measure of the Spirit, but if you ever keep that lamp going, you must get your vessel filled with the Holy Spirit.

I am sorry to say that even the wise virgins slept a little. But thank God, the Spirit of God within them kept them. When the eleventh-hour ministry went out, they woke up. (These are the people who are accepting the seventh seal light.)

Others let their lamps go out. The best thing we can do is try to get them saved. However, there is a people, even through this lukewarm and sleepy age, who have enough of the Spirit of God in their lives that even though their lamps are low, when the seventh-seal light comes, they just turn them up and measure to it.

Trimming your lamp means trimming it to the light of the age. You are going to have to come on, sixth sealers, and trim your lamps on up another step further and get up and get going for God. Those whose lamps went out tried to trim them, but you cannot trim a dead lamp. You know that, all you people who ever burned coal oil lamps. You have to keep it lit when you trim the wick. If the wick is burning uneven, there will be a shot of flame here and a low place and another shot, and it smokes instead of making light. It just makes a mess. So, you light it up and take the scissors and trim it.

You know what the wick is—that is the flesh, too much wick. When there is too much wick, there is not much light. A lot of people are running around sticking out a lot of wicks, thinking they have a lot of light. However, the wick is just what holds the light. It is the oil that produces the light.

God Deals in Grace

The parable of the clock would teach that God's rewards are of grace. Grace is shown forth. The man who only worked for an hour got the same pay as the man who worked all day. So, you see again, you do not get what you are worth, and you do not get what you earn. God deals in grace with you. Peter had to learn that, because he thought that Jews were worthy of salvation and Gentiles, never (Acts 10:9-15, 34-35, 45).

The rewards of Heaven are not calculated by the methods of this earth. The Word of God teaches that when Christ paid off at the close of the day, He said to the Jews, "Did not I agree with you for a penny? I covenanted with you and you are getting your penny. What have you to kick about?" You know what they kicked about? They were not complaining because they were not getting enough, but they were complaining because they thought the other fellow was getting too much.

That spirit is still alive. God blesses people, but they resent others getting too much. Some young fellow gets saved, and because he really opens up his heart to God and keeps his nose in the Book, God blesses him and he gets to coming out with good truth that stirs souls. Some old fellow who has been around for awhile will say, "Ah, he had better slow down. Wait till he has been on the road like I have been for 30 years before he talks like that."

Work is not always measured by the time spent working in God's vineyard. Short lives sometimes have far more real Christian living in them—stop and think about that a little bit. The man who only worked an hour got the same pay as the man who had been there all day. Jesus said that whatever is right, He will give. And He taught that whatever is right for the Jews is right for the Gentiles—it is right for every one of us.

The children of God, then, are humble and thankful, not jealous of others. God teaches His children to prefer the other (Romans 12:10, for instance). All He is teaching us in the lesson is that the last will come first and God's people will like it that way.

Jesus told the Jews that the publican and the harlot will enter into the Kingdom of God before them. Well, that was not because He was holding the Jews back and letting the others in first, but it was because of the Jews's unbelief. A false profession today will hinder you. Men and women will come in out of the world and find salvation and go into the kingdom and go to work while you are still pondering whether or not you want to do God's will.

We must obey the calling of God. These calls were for men to come to work in His vineyard. We are working in the eleventh-hour ministry, calling people to come and work in Christ's vineyard. The souls of men stand ready to be hired in one service or another. The marketplace is a place where the souls of men are going to be hired for one place or another. You will either yield yourself for service to Christ or to the devil (Romans 6:16).

The eleventh-hour call found them still standing idle, still unemployed in the Master's work: first, the work of getting their own souls saved, and then the work of getting other souls saved.

Friends, today too many of those who call themselves God's people are standing idle. Do you know how they were halted? The devil threw in another opinion, and he got them halted. When you are halted between two opinions, you are not doing a thing for God. You are wrestling that thing, and the devil has you stopped. We cannot afford to let two opinions get into our minds about spiritual things. If we let an opinion other than God's get in, it will stop us. Many have died spiritually halting between two opinions.

Proverbs 1:20-21 says that wisdom is crying out in the streets and in the place of concourse (marketplace). You can tell who are being wise—men and women who are laying aside petty things, getting on fire for God, and going out to win a world for Christ.

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