



Lovely Lord of the Lord's Day

17. The Divine Timekeeper

The perfection and loving care of our Lord is demonstrated in His beautiful timing.

A bashful little girl stood before the drugstore counter almost un noticed. After waiting on the other customers the druggist asked in a crisp voice, "What do you want?"

The little girl replied, "Please sir, my mother is sick. Will you give her some medicine?" With that she placed a slip of paper on the counter. The druggist quickly filled the prescription, poured it in a bottle, handed it to the little girl—and she was gone.

A moment later the druggist stopped his work abruptly and stood staring into space. "Did I—?"

The cold perspiration seemed to pour from every pore in his body. Then he was sure; in his haste to fill the prescription he had included an element in the preparation that made the mixture a poison. If the mother took a dose, it would kill her. He would be a murderer. Quickly he found the slip of paper and looked for an address. There was none. He didn't know who the girl was or how to find her.

He did the only thing he knew left to do, he prayed. "Oh, God, please don't let the mother take the medicine. Keep it from her—please!" He sat down and held his head in his hands. "O God," he repeated again and again. "I've not served You as I should have, but if You prevent this mother from taking this medicine, I'll serve you the rest of my life."

Just then the door opened again, and there stood the little girl, frustration written all over her face.

"Please sir, I was running home and I tripped and fell and broke the bottle of medicine. Would you please give me another bottle? I'll be more careful next time."

Even while the druggist was pleading with God, whom he had neglected, God had come to his rescue. God's timing—love's timing—is perfect.

One day long ago, Jesus directed one of His disciples to go to the sea and cast in a hook. The first fish that he would catch would have a piece of money in its mouth. With this money he was directed to pay the temple tax.

Peter did as he was told, and lo and behold there in the fish's mouth he found the money just as he was told he would. It took divine timing for the hook and the fish to meet. It took the power that controls nature. He who orders the fish of the sea, directed one specific fish to meet the hook at a specific time in order to fulfill the need of the specific moment. Surely there were many hungry fish in that body of water. But just one fish was directed to bite the hook and be pulled to shore. This illustrates again the mighty power the Creator of the universe has. He can direct the fish of the sea and the heart of a man.

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The same all-wise ruler of nature had arranged more than thirty years before for a group of Eastern Magi, wise men, to come on a long journey, to start at the right time, to travel at the right speed, and to arrive on the right day to make connection with the family who were soon to leave for another land. This family did not have means for the trip, except as these others should arrive at just the appropriate time to supply that need.

Divine wisdom timed the movements of all concerned so that his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, would receive gifts from these wealthy men—gifts sufficient to defray the expenses of the journey Jesus and His parents were to take in order to fulfil a prophecy of the old Testament Scriptures. Surely this is the One of whom godly men have written by divine inspiration, who is “upholding all things by the word of his power,” and who also made the worlds.

This word of power was so great that, when at Creation's dawn it echoed, “Let there be,” the record says, “There was”. This was the Word which the psalmist referred to when he said, “By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.” Psalm 33:6. “For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast.” Psalm 33:9.

It was He who made the world and rested on the seventh day of Creation—set it aside for man by hallowing and sanctifying it—who, because His timing is perfect, causes miracle after miracle of nature to take place before our very eyes until we take these heavenly timings for granted.

Someone has said that if we could plant nuts and bolts in the ground and grow perfect cars, we would soon cease to wonder at or appreciate the greatness and intricacy of cars.

All nature is full of the wisdom of our Creator. His perfect timing is seen in the growing of flowers, of corn, of wheat, and of every shrub and tree. "To every thing there is a season." the wise man said, "and a time to every purpose under the heaven. " Ecclesiastes 3:1.

The Capistrano swallows return on time at their appointed season. The fish spawn on time, the flower is pollinated on time, and the trillions of galaxies move in the great heavenly sea with perfect precision because of Him whose timing is perfect.

I stood in the hall of science at one world's fair and looked with wonder at the achievements of man. I was impressed with this statement: "The measure of a scientist is his ability to reach out beyond himself." How exceedingly far man has been able to reach out! God would have mankind reach out even farther—all the way to his Maker.

Sacred Scripture begins with the words. "In the beginning God." It continues by such commands as, "Remember now thy Creator." It insists that Christ, your and my Redeemer and Lord, is that Creator.

I'm happy that He remembers us precisely on time too, aren't you? How many instances we have of our Lord's wonderful timing in our lives! Have you ever wondered what would happen if the light rays reaching the retina of the eye had different speeds? Suppose some slowed down by a fraction of a second. What confusion it would bring to the eye!

Then think of the wave lengths that activate the ear drum. Think of the confusion of sound we would hear if the pattern or the speed were changed. Oh, I'm grateful for the intricate timing God has devised so that everything fits perfectly.

I remember an experience we had more than thirty years ago while on our way to church one Sabbath morning. We were driving a Whippet car along a rugged serpentine mountainous road on the Island of Grenada, British West Indies. We were hurrying along with just enough time to get to the church if we maintained our speed. Everything was going well, when suddenly, for no apparent reason, the motor stopped. It had never done this before, and I wondered what the trouble could be.

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I jumped out of the car, raised the hood, and peered at the motor to see if I could see anything that might have come loose. As I was examining the engine, I looked up just in time to see a mammoth rock come rolling down the hill and across the road a hundred feet ahead. Had we continued our journey, we surely would have met with disaster. When I stepped back in the car, I pushed the starter and the motor started immediately.

We had no doubt in our minds that the angel of the Lord was there to protect us from danger. The timing was perfect. We paused and thanked our Lord for His protection.

This same God protected Daniel in the lions' den. Had the angel arrived just a moment too late, Daniel would have landed in the lions' stomachs.

Daniel, chapter three, tells of the three Hebrew worthies who, unwilling to bow in worship to anyone but their Maker, were thrown into the fiery furnace. Had the One "like the Son of God" come to their rescue one split second too late, these men would have burned to a crisp.

I am so glad that our Maker is our friend and that He, who timed the first great week of Creation, times and orders the lives of all who serve Him today.

Another thrilling story of deliverance because of the perfect timing of our God of love is the story of Esther. Mordecai was willing to risk his life, and the life of Esther, the queen, in the face of wicked Haman and his evil devices. You will remember that Haman wanted Mordecai to bow down to him, but Mordecai would bow only to the God of heaven. Because Mordecai was true to his Maker, Haman planned to execute Mordecai on a gallows he had erected.

Once again God's timing was perfect. Read the story of Esther again and notice how our God worked in behalf of Mordecai and Esther. God disturbed the sleep of Ahasuerus, the king, the very night before Mordecai was to die. Haman stood in the courtyard waiting to see the king for permission to hang Mordecai. But God's perfect timing reversed Mordecai's hanging, and instead Haman was strung up on his own gallows!

This brings to mind the story of Mr. John Hamston, a Sunday School teacher in the large Baptist church in a certain Eastern town. He heard of a group of people who observe Saturday for their rest and worship day. He felt they were misguided and was determined to straighten them out. So in a rather matter-of-fact way he opened his Bible and decided he would find an abundance of texts of Scripture which, he was sure, indicate the necessity of Sunday worship. He would then present these texts to the misinformed Sabbath keepers. Instead he had a little trouble finding the texts.

"Let's see," he said to himself, "where is the one that says we should honor the first day because of the resurrection of Jesus?" He looked and looked, but couldn't find it.

A little frustrated, but undaunted, he closed his Bible and decided to go over to his pastor's home and have him help to find it. Surely the pastor would know exactly where to locate it. When Mr. Hamston told his pastor of his mission, the pastor said; "I'm sorry, sir, But there is no such text."

Now he was confused and a little shaken. Hadn't he been keeping the first day in honor of the resurrection because the Bible commands it? Now he began a serious search for what the Bible really teaches about the Lord's day.

He read in Revelation 1:10 that the Lord does have a day; but the text does not say which day the Lord's day is—the first, second, third day, or which. Then he turned to Mark 2:28 and found that the Lord's day is the Sabbath day. But now he had to find out which day the Sabbath day is. The text didn't designate the specific day of the week.

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Sabbath means "rest". So the Lord's day is the rest day. Mr. Hamston found another New Testament text of scripture where the seventh day is declared to be God's rest day. "For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works." Hebrews 4:4. When he put Isaiah 58:13 and Exodus 20:8-11 together, he had a clear picture of what the Bible teaches with regard to the Sabbath, called the Lord's day.

Mr. Hamston was about to find out that seventh-day observers honor Christ's glorious resurrection, but they honor that tremendous event in the way appointed by Scripture. In Romans 6:1-6, and 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 he found that baptism, symbol of the new life, and the Lord's supper, are Heaven's appointed memorials of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. So while we are commanded to keep the seventh day of the week as the rest day, we are to celebrate His resurrection by baptism and by living the new life—the resurrected life—in Christ Jesus.

"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." Romans 6:1-6.

"For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come." 1 Corinthians 11:23-26.

Mr. Hamston was amazed, and yet finally delighted. He had at last found the truth. Now Mr. Hamston was about to run headlong into a problem. He was a railroad engineer. He had learned from his study of the Word of God of the sacredness of the seventh day. Being an honest man, Mr. Hamston decided he would no longer run his train on the Sabbath. He determined to give that holy day to the Lord for sacred worship.

Week after week Mr. Hamston declined to finish the run which would go into the Sabbath hours. Finally, one day, Mr. Hamston received an ultimatum. It came from a Mr. Severs, an official high in the ranks of the railroad. There was very little kindness or understanding conveyed in the note. In effect it revealed that Mr. Severs regarded Mr. Hamston's convictions as sheer nonsense and that if he was not at work the following Saturday, there would be no job to come to on Sunday.

Mrs. Hamston encouraged her husband to stand firm in his obedience to the Lord of the Lord's day. Surely a God who could create this world could and would provide for His faithful, obedient children, They read words from the lips of Jesus, our Lord, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things, [the temporal necessities of life referred to in Matthew 8:25-33] shall be added unto you."

Both engaged in earnest prayer. Both believed God would do what He had promised. Both determined with Job, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." Job 13:15.

The next Sabbath day came, and they observed it in harmony with God's Word. On Sunday morning Mr. Hamston wondered what to do. He had been clearly notified not to report for work again if he failed to finish his run on Saturday.

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After some thought Mr. Hamston decided to return to work, or at least report in for work at the office. He had just entered the office and closed the door when one of his friends walked up and asked, "Have you heard what happened last night?"

"No, I guess I haven't," Mr. Hamston replied, "tell me about it."

His friend went on to tell him in detail what had happened. The official who had threatened Mr. Hamston, had been replaced by a new man who kindly allowed Mr. Hamston to have his Sabbath time off.

God's timing is perfect.

Dear Lord, Thou hast declared, "There is a time for every purpose and for every work." I know that "my times are in thy hand," and I ask that Thou wilt give me the power to believe that Thou wilt work out Thy purposes in my life. I do believe, and I return thanks that Thou art giving me the power to fit into Thy perfect timing and that, as I seek first the kingdom of God, my temporal needs will be added, just as my Lord Jesus has promised; in Jesus' name, Amen.

Reflection: May our Lord Jesus through the Holy Spirit bless you in your prayerful meditation on the following scriptures.

Great Bible Facts of Timing:

1. Split-second timing caught the fish on Peter's hook. "Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee." Matthew 17:27.
2. God times the arrival of the wise men who supplied Jesus' parents with needed money for the sudden trip into Egypt. (Matthew 2:1-14)
3. "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven." Ecclesiastes 3:1.
4. Our Lord has given the timing of His holy worship day as the memorial of His great Creation. "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made." Genesis 2:1-3; (Exodus 20:8-11)