

The Right Time for a Visitation

Introduction: This is that time of the year that Christians call “Advent”. It is a time of preparation to celebrate the birth of Jesus. Just like John the Baptist was sent to prepare the way of the Lord, ahead of His arrival, we also take time to prepare our hearts to celebrate the visitation of Jesus: He came to us 2000 years ago, but He is still coming into people’s lives every day and one day, He will come again.

Opening Text: Galatians 4:4 (NIV) - *4 But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law*

400 years after Malachi, God spoke again. His Word took on flesh and dwelt among us. However, Jesus came at a time set by God – a specific time in His agenda, a time when specific conditions were in place – an “appointed time”. We find that expression (appointed time) 18 times in the bible because God has appointed time for things to happen.

God has times and seasons that He has set by His own power. He has His own timeline and calendar. The birth of Jesus was not a random event, disconnected from any specific purpose and timeline. Jesus came at the right time. He came at the appropriate time.

Romans 5:6b *“You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.”*

There was a right time, a set time, when God sent His Son to be born of a woman.

When the time set had fully come, God sent His Son

He came at a time in history with unique political, social, moral and religious conditions. These conditions came together, they converged, and God saw it fit to send His Son.

Shakespeare said, *“there is a tide in the affairs of men”*. We can say that when the tide was right in the affairs of men, Jesus came in.

1. **When Jesus came, the tide was right ‘politically’** – in a very unique way, unparalleled in history.
 - a) One of Caesar’s greatest achievements was the unification of the known world. There were no more closed frontiers. There were no more nations at war. It was called PAX ROMANA, or the Roman Peace.

From the Atlantic Ocean to the Caspian Sea, from Britain to the Nile, From Hadrian’s wall to the Euphrates River, it was all Rome – no more countries and borders that one had to negotiate.

If Jesus would have come a century earlier, the Gospel would have been blocked at every turn. There were barbarian tribes and kingdoms involved in constant wars.

- b) Also, when Jesus came, the known world was connected by more than 80 000km of paved roads. The Apostles would have never evangelised the world like they did if it wasn't for the engineering wonder that the Roman roads were.

The road system of the empire was a unique feat. Indeed all roads led to Rome, in those days.

The Appian Way was the first stretch to be built and the bible mentions it in Acts 28:13-15.

- c) Not only there the world was at peace, travelling was possible but there was a **common language** spoken from one end of the Empire to the other: Greek (later on, Latin). These were unique conditions and because of them, the spreading of the Gospel was made easy. Wherever the Apostles spoke about Jesus, they could do it in a language that was common. The Gospel became a message accessible to every nation and every people group.

Roman peace, Roman Roads and a common language made it an ideal time for God to send '*news of great joy, which shall be to all people*' (Luke 2:10).

Historically, these were unprecedented and unappalled conditions!

2. When Jesus came, the tide was right 'socially'.

Deep down beneath the shining culture of the roman world, there was also dissatisfaction and social unrest. Two out of 3 people walking the streets of Rome were slaves. There were at least 60 million slaves in the empire.

In Israel itself there was deep hatred against their occupiers and against the rulers set in charge. Herod the Great burdened people with taxes that were unbearable. There was repression, oppression and great resentment.

Also, the Jews had never abandoned the belief that their Messiah would come to deliver them – and He came, at the right time, to proclaim liberty to the captives!

As someone said, "***men's extremity is still God's opportunity***" – the breakdown of all human resources only prepared the world to listen to Christ.

Suddenly the message of the hope that Christ brought made all the sense in the world. People were ready for the message Jesus announced everywhere He went:

Luke 4:18-19 NKJV - "*The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; 9 To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.*"

3. The tide was right 'morally'

In the first chapter of Romans, Paul describes a world that was sunk in moral hopelessness.

- a) In the Roman world, much like today, every immoral extreme was allowed - only to lead to greater emptiness in the hearts of men.

Theodore Mommsem, the famous German Historian wrote about this period: *“The world was growing old and not even Caesar could make it young again”*

Stoic philosophers encouraged death as a guarantee of personal freedom, an escape from an unbearable reality that had nothing left to give.

Interestingly, the same moral hopelessness is also prevalent in our society today:

The latest Australian Bureau of Statistics data shows that around 8-9 lives are lost per day to suicide. Suicide is the leading cause of death among Australians aged 15–24

But Jesus came proclaiming life!

John 10:10 - *The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.*

The world Jesus came to was sick and morally bankrupt, but He came saying ,

Luke 5:31-32 - *Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.”*

And because of Jesus, where sin abounded, God’s grace abounded all the more (Rom.5:20)

- b) The Olympus was crowded with gods but they were all dead. Caesar tried to make himself god and find his place in the pantheon of gods but he was just as powerless.

What could the divinity of Caesar add to someone in need?

What could it do for a man with a broken heart?

What could it accomplish for a soul stabbed with the remorse of sin?

When everything had been done that could be done, the hungry hearts of men were still hungry.

- c) The moral tide was full. That is why John the Baptist came preaching repentance, in order to prepare the world for Jesus.

All that we see in the world today, only makes our message more relevant and the visitation of Jesus more eminent.

Conclusion

But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law

Jesus came at the right time. He entered the world during unique historical circumstances:

- a) The world was connected like never before (does that sound like today?)
 - b) The world had become small: no longer many countries but one. Our world has also become small – we often refer to it as a ‘global village’
 - c) The world spoke the same language – we are also living days of uniformity and conformity (culturally and morally).
 - d) Despite the external successes of Rome, the world was hopeless, restless, depressed and oppressed. Does that describe a lot of people you know?
- Could it be that the once again the *word’s extremity is still God’s opportunity*?
 - Could it be that once again the tide is high for a revival of souls like never before?
 - Could it be that the fulness of time is also upon us, in this time.

when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman.

Do we know what time it is?

Romans 13:11-14 NKJV - *And do this, **knowing the time**, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. ¹² The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. ¹³ Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. ¹⁴ But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.*

The word “time’ used here in the Greek language is Kairos.

Kairos means, “*a season, an opportune time. It is not a mere succession of moments, which is Kronos, but a period of opportunity. It is a critical and decisive point in time: a moment of great importance or significance; a point when something is ready or favourable. A period marked by distinct conditions. An appointed time. Prophetically, periods in which prophecy is fulfilled and critical and decisive moments transpire in redemptive history*”

(Lexical Aids to the NT by Spiros Zodhiastes)