

## Set Times II

"Therefore consider carefully how you listen. Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has will be taken from him."<sup>1</sup>

How do we listen? What are the ways by which a person can listen? Attentively? Yes. With faith and a believing attitude? Yes. Diligently with full concentration? Yes. Like Mary Magdalene as she sat and listened to Jesus while Martha served? Yes. However, when you do listen to what Jesus has just told you and consider carefully how you listen, you find surprisingly that the one common ingredient behind how we all listen is **time**.

To listen attentively takes time. It means you have to wait until all that is to be spoken has been spoken. Concentration takes time... and to listen and believe takes time. It takes time for what has been said to percolate down into your heart from your mind. To retain what you hear requires time. So when Jesus said to us, "...consider carefully how you listen," the major consideration we must undertake is the time we spend listening. Do you have time to listen? How often do we interrupt what is being said so that we can 'cut to the chase' as it were? It is one thing to shorten a long-winded story by someone, but it is another to shorten what the Lord would have to say to you.

One of our greatest failings is that we do not take the time to listen to God. When our attitude to God responding to our prayers and requests is the same as someone ordering a hamburger in a drive through... then really we do not have much time for anything else either, for "...whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has will be taken from him." However, when we take the time to listen, then to those who have taken time to listen, more is given until they have more than enough, not just more content and information to listen, but more time to listen.

Consider Martha who was busy preparing the Lord's dinner... too busy to take the time to listen... so that we find Martha was the one who was not given more by the Lord. What we fail to understand and have left out of our consideration because of habit is the ability of miraculous power to shorten the time it takes to perform a task so that we can have more time to listen.

The command is, "Listen to Him!"<sup>2</sup> not, "Do whatever He says." Now this is the key to the availability of miraculous power to do what is needed to be done. One of the lessons Jesus tried to teach the twelve at the feeding of the 5,000 was the ability of those who have miraculous power to shorten the time it takes to perform a task. Phillip estimated it would take eight months wages to buy enough bread for each to have a bite...<sup>3</sup> eight months to get the money and then the time to go and buy the bread and bring it back. It was already late in the day... there was no time to go and buy the bread and then come back and feed them. Remember what triggered off the Lord asking them about feeding the people was that the disciples came to Him and said, "This is a remote place, and it's already getting late. Send the crowds away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food."<sup>4</sup> It was the impending shortage of time that triggered off their comment, "...it's already getting late."

Likewise with the feeding of the 4,000 later, again it was the lack of time that triggered off the need to multiply the food. This time it was Jesus who pointed out the situation, saying, "I have compassion for these people; they have already been with Me three days and have nothing to eat. I do not want to send them away hungry, or they may collapse on the way."<sup>5</sup> You see, the time it would have taken for them to get the food was too long before the time it would take for them to collapse on the way. In both cases it was a situation where time was running out for feeding the people. In both cases Jesus demonstrated the use of miraculous power to accomplish the task needed in the available time with enough to spare.

And just so that you do not miss the point, Jesus caused the boat to immediately reach the shore at Gennesaret as it is written: Then they were willing to take Him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the shore where they were heading.<sup>6</sup> Had they repented of the disobedience, that boat would have gone immediately to Bethsaida and not Gennesaret so that all the time they wasted rowing in the night would have been redeemed and they would have been in Bethsaida the next morning when the crowd would be hungry again.

<sup>1</sup> Luke 8.18

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 17.5; Mark 9.7; Luke 9.35

<sup>3</sup> John 6.7

<sup>4</sup> Matthew 14.15

<sup>5</sup> Matthew 15.32

<sup>6</sup> John 6.21

We know the crowd from the 5,000 went across to Capernaum to search for Him the next day. Now what would have happened if Jesus was in Bethsaida the next day instead of somewhere between Gennesaret and Capernaum? One thing is for sure, it would have been a larger crowd, just as hungry, for breakfast. Forgive the speculation, but since this never happened, it is permissible in this sense... we can redeem the time as it were and ask, "What if they did go to Bethsaida... what then?" One thing is certain from the subsequent behaviour of the crowd... they would have searched for Jesus and found Him in Bethsaida. Now we also know by Jesus' own words that one reason they searched Him out was not because of the miracle, but "...because you ate the loaves and had your fill."<sup>7</sup> So had they found Him on the other side of the lake at Bethsaida, they would have expected another feed. If that was the case, what might Jesus have used in Bethsaida to feed them? Fish again? They are in a village now, elect, and in every village you would expect sheep, even lambs. Consider this... imagine this... had Jesus been able to kill a lamb and place it on an altar, have it cooked (with fire from Heaven even) and then multiplied it... consider how much better the teaching of the eating of His flesh and blood would have gone down.

Why could not He have done this anyway when they found Him on the other side of the lake, I hear you ask? Elect, consider the time and the Scripture... for the preparation of a lamb for sacrifice is to be done at a specified time as it is written: "Prepare one lamb in the morning and the other at twilight..."<sup>8</sup> The set time for God the Lord to have food prepared for Him is morning and evening. "See that you present to Me at the appointed time the food for My offerings made by fire..."<sup>9</sup>

By the time the crowd found Him on the other side, the morning had passed. He did not... no, He could not give them food, for the time to prepare the food was morning and evening. The feeding of the 5,000 and 4,000 were both late in the day at the approach of evening, when the allowed time by God for the preparation of food to be offered to Him was permitted. And in keeping with His fulfilment of the law, Jesus could not and did not feed them the next day before He spoke to them about His flesh and blood.

However, had they been at Bethsaida, then it would have been the morning that they could have found Him, and it would have been permissible to prepare a lamb as well as the bread, and there would/could have been the multiplication of bread and lamb at Bethsaida with or without fire from Heaven to do the cooking... a pleasing aroma to the Father. Now consider how the Jews and disciples would have then taken the teaching of the eating of His flesh and blood after they have had a breakfast of fine bread and lamb cooked by fire from Heaven.

Had they listened and obeyed, how different the circumstances around the teachings of John 6 would have been... but they did not listen and worse still, they did not repent even though they showed their faith and worshipped. Boisterous demonstrations of faith like Peter calling out to the Lord, "Lord, if it's You, tell me to come to You on the water," and of worship like those who remained in the boat,<sup>10</sup> is no substitute for obedience and repentance. In order to obey, as I have always said, we must first listen... and since mistakes and sins still accompany us, repentance must be naturally continuous, as naturally as the blood flowing in our bodies that maintains our flesh with life.

Likewise, Martha was busy preparing and began to complain to the Lord of Mary's attentiveness to His words instead of helping her, probably because of the lack of time. There was probably more work to be done than could be done by one person in the time available for the dinner to be prepared. Time was running out and given their mortal capabilities, both Martha and the twelve had become anxious and voiced their concerns. Perfectly understandable behaviour for people who have no miraculous power.

However, the Kingdom of God is the kingdom of power and Jesus has said, "...you will receive power... and you will be My witnesses..."<sup>11</sup> So it is people, us, who are supposed to have power... the same power as Jesus and so likewise be able to do what is needed in less time than is available as Jesus did. But we do not... we lack power. Is it just the lack of faith? Lack of practice? Or is it something else?

Is it the availability of power that permits the shortening of the time that it takes to perform a task or is it the shortening of time that makes available the power to accomplish the task?

In the beginning the former was certainly the intention. The availability of power for the early church was designed specifically for them to shorten the time it would take for them to finish the assigned work, that is, to preach the Gospel to all nations, to set off the earthquakes and disasters, and have imitators, false christs, deceiving others as they had encountered in Bar-Jesus. Remember, elect, when Jesus first

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<sup>7</sup> John 6.26

<sup>8</sup> Numbers 28.4

<sup>9</sup> Numbers 28.2

<sup>10</sup> Matthew 14.28, 33

<sup>11</sup> Acts 1.8

warned the twelve of the conditions of the end times, there was no mention of the beast or the false prophet or the two witnesses of Revelation 11. It is as if some of the things we now face are to come because of what was not done rather than what was planned all along. Certainly, had the early church received the power in full by going to the Mount of Transfiguration on resurrection morning, Luke's record of the acts of the apostles would be nothing like what is written now. So yes, in the beginning the power was given to shorten the time for Jesus to return.

However, now that the reality of two millenniums of delay is staring at us in the face and the times set by God from the creation of this world is running short... **it will be the shortening of time that will make the power available.** What does this mean: "...the shortening of time that will make the power available"? Elect, nothing is as it seems... you should know by now. If a haphazard flippant reading of the gospels can allow the account of Matthew to deceive you into thinking that the twelve were sent to the middle of the lake by Jesus and that they actually went to the mount in Galilee as commanded, then anyone with a presumptive flippant attitude will never understand this statement. Indeed, though they see it written, they would not see what is written. For now not only will they hear and not understand, see and not perceive... in knowing they will not know **as well.**

The longer you spend listening to the instructions for a given task that must be done within a set time, the less time you have in doing the task... that is a truth. So then the shortening of time in this case occurs because you have spent the time listening and hence shortened the time available for the work. However, in using the time to listen, so by the Lord's promise you will be given more... more to listen and more time to finish the work. But in the context of set times, the truth is no more time can be given, for the times are set. That leaves only one possibility, that **the time to do the task is shortened so that it can still be done within the set times... and that is when the power to shorten the time it takes to reach our destination is made available.** Sounds complicated? Not really. Foolproof is what it really is... foolproof to keep out those the Lord Himself called, "fools," and not just fools, but "blind fools."<sup>12</sup> Men who are interested in only appearing to be listening to Jesus, but have no time to hear what He is saying... those who are filled with the yeast of the pharisees, sadducees and herodians. Hidden from those who say, "We listen to Jesus," but do not take the time to hear what He has said... for if you are looking to solve the problems of the day with your mind set on the way this world thinks, you will be like Philip... there is not enough money or time to feed them all.

If you are boisterous in shouting out what you believe and what you intend to do for God and are eager to worship God without having first done what you were commanded to do, and repented for you know you have barely done what you were told, then the storyline for you will always be from Gennesaret to Capernaum and John 6.66 as it is written is the fate that can await you.

But if you have taken the time to listen carefully, then with obedience and failing that, repentance, that which did not take place, that which God had in mind but did not happen, will be made known to you, and the journey from Bethsaida to Capernaum can resume just as one day you will participate in the resumption of the walk of man with God as if Adam ate first of all the other trees, including the Tree of Life, until God gave him the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and so man became just like God without dying.

Amen.

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<sup>12</sup> Matthew 23.17