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LET GOD RESET YOUR LIFE CLOCK

Today's Text: Joshua 10: 1-43; Isaiah 38: 1-20

Extracts:

1. “Then spake Joshua to the Lord... and he said in the sight of Israel, **Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon. And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies. ... So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day**” [Josh. 10: 12-13]
2. “Then came the word of the Lord to Isaiah, saying, go and say to Hezekiah, **Thus saith the Lord, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years. ...And this shall be a sign unto thee from the Lord, that the Lord will do this thing that He hath spoken; behold, I will bring again the shadow of the degrees which is gone down in the sun dial of Ahaz, ten degrees**” [Is. 38: 4-5, 7-8]

The clock has become an integral part of our lives. Whether it is the wristwatch or grandpa's wall clock, the alarm clock or even the most famous of all, the Big Ben of London, we can hardly do without it. It regulates when we wake and when we sleep, when we eat and when we should not. It dictates when we go to work and when we close. But why should this man-made object be controlling us so much?

*The clock is a measure of time, which is invisible. It takes a day of 24 hours for the earth to **rotate** (turn itself) round the sun. What the clock does is to try to keep pace with that movement by showing as precisely as possible, in hours, minutes and seconds, where we are in relation to that activity. Thus, when the clock reads, “6.00 a.m.,” we accept that our side of the earth has just begun to face the sun for a new day. Days add up to weeks, weeks to months and months to a year, the time it takes the earth to **revolve** (move itself) round the sun. Thus, our ages, achievements, etc., are all related to time and its measurement, the clock.*

While time is timeless, the clock is not. The clock can stop working or be late or fast while time is always accurate. That is why we buy new batteries and keep resetting our clocks. In Europe and America, they move their clocks one hour forward in the Spring (from March or so) when the days begin to get longer than the nights, and one hour back in the Autumn (Fall) (from September or so) when the nights begin to get longer than the days. But, have we ever seen the need to reset the clock of our lives? Are we living according to God's timing for our lives? That is the subject of today's lesson.

1. Background

The 5 Amorite kings [of Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish and Eglon] had heard of Joshua's spectacular victories over Jericho and Ai and how the Gibeonites had "sold out" by signing a league with the Israelites. Since Gibeon was a great city and, in fact, one of the royal cities, the 5 kings rallied together to teach the Gibeonites a lesson [**Josh. 10: 1-5**]. The Gibeonites cried to Joshua for help. The Lord assured Joshua, "Fear them not: for I have delivered them into thine hand; there shall not a man of them stand before thee" [**vv. 6, 8**]. Armed with that assurance, Joshua and all his "mighty men of valour" went to Gibeon [**v. 7**].

By the time that Joshua and his men had moved from their camp in Gilgal to Gibeon, it was already approaching night time. Without the luxury of electric power-generated streetlights, there was no way that the army of Israel would be able to finish the battle before dark. Yes, the Lord did help them against the enemies for "the Lord cast down great stones from heaven upon them unto Azekah, and they died; they were more which died with hailstones than they whom the children of Israel slew with the sword" [**vv. 9-11**]. Nevertheless, the key enemies, the 5 Amorite kings had not been captured or killed, but time was running out! So, Joshua prayed to the Lord and by His authority, he commanded as follows: "Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon." What happened? "The sun stood still and the moon stayed until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies." This unusual event lasted almost a whole day [**vv. 12-13**], which NASA experts have since established to be 23 hours 20 minutes! [see Vol. 2, No. 8: 18 March 2001, "If you think Faith is so hard, try Expertise!"].

Let us understand what happened here. Joshua prayed by human understanding when he asked the sun and the moon to stand still. We know that the sun does not move but the earth moves around the sun. Each day, it takes the earth 24 hours to spin around the sun. This action is referred to as "rotation." As the earth is rotating, it is at the same time moving and it takes one year or about 365 days to move once around the sun. This second movement is called "revolution." Therefore, when God answered Joshua's prayer, it was not the sun that stood still. Rather, it was the earth that stopped rotating and revolving for almost 24 hours! For humans, however, the effect was seen in the sky as the sun not going down. That gave Joshua and his troops the daylight they needed to win total victory. Joshua charged his troops, "stay ye not, but pursue after your enemies, and smite the hindmost of them; suffer them not to enter into their cities; *for the Lord your God hath delivered them into your hand*" [**v. 19**]. Joshua won total victory, "utterly destroyed all that breathed" and took their territories [**vv. 40-43**].

Hezekiah

To complete the background story, let us turn to the book of Isaiah Chapter 38 on the sickness of King Hezekiah. The story can also be found in Second Kings Chapter 20. The king was sick and God sent the prophet Isaiah to tell him that his time was up to die. The king turned around on his bed and prayed hard to the Lord saying, “Remember now, O Lord, I beseech Thee, how I have walked before Thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in Thy sight.... The grave cannot praise Thee, death cannot celebrate Thee; they that go down into the pit cannot hope for Thy truth. The living, the living, he shall praise Thee, as I do this day” [Is. 38: 1-3, 18-19].

God heard his prayer and immediately sent Isaiah back to tell the king that God “will add unto thy days fifteen years” [v. 5]. As a sign that God would in deed do what He had promised, the king was given a sign, “Behold, I will bring again the shadow of the degrees, which is gone down in the sun dial of Ahaz, ten degrees backward. So, the sun returned ten degrees, by which degrees it was gone down” [vv. 7-8]. Again, let us understand what happened here. The “sun dial of Ahaz” is a measure of a circle, which is well known to have 360 degrees. The earth is a circle, being spherical [Is. 40:22]. So, when God “returned the sun ten degrees,” it means that the earth’s rotation was moved back by ten degrees, the equivalent of 40 minutes! The earth rotates round the sun every 24 hours. That is, 360 degrees in 24 hours or 15 degrees per hour. Therefore, it covers 10 degrees in 40 minutes [10/15 multiplied by 60 minutes in one hour].

2. Lessons

What are the implications of the above stories for our daily living? We should note the following:

a) *Humans can only control the clock but not time!*

A commonly used expression is “what time is it?” when we actually want to know what the clock (or watch) is reading. That is why we can warn people to “stop wasting time!” or counsel, “a stitch in time saves nine!” This has given humans the impression that they can control time.

What does that do to us? We have set for ourselves milestones and time deadlines, which if not met can make us believe that we are failures, a major source of stress. A young person who has not completed a college degree programme by the age of 25 is already feeling left behind. A young woman who is not married at 30 is already thinking she is getting late. A young professional who is still living in a rented home at age 40 is feeling very uncomfortable. A woman who is approaching her menopause (40-50 years of age) is near panic, especially if she badly needs a child.

Look at even our daily routines. A person who is still on the bed at 8.00 a.m. on a working or school day will not be commended by his/her parents. By 12 noon on a workday, the tummy is already “grumbling” for lunch! On Sunday, a long sermon makes those who want to leave early uncomfortable and they may start looking at their watches. A new business without customers as yet is already complaining if it was the right decision to even start one.

In spite of our anxieties over time, we cannot control it because we do not even understand what it means from God’s perspective for “one day is with the Lord as one thousand years and a thousand years as one day” [2 **Pet. 3:8**; **Ps. 90:4**].

b) *When God resets the clock He also resets the time!*

When the Americans and Europeans apply the Daylight Saving Time, they can only shift their clocks but not time over which they have no control. That is why, for example, the sun can still be in the sky into 11.00 p.m. during certain times of the year and sets as early as 4.00 p.m. at other times in those areas. However, when God turned back the “sun dial of Ahaz” by ten degrees, He also moved time back by 40 minutes. When the sun stood still for almost a whole day for Joshua, God stopped time by 23 hours and 20 minutes. NASA scientists have proved that the day that is missing in history can be traced to these two events! This is confirmed in the Bible where it says, “And there was no day like that before it or after it, that the Lord hearkened unto the voice of a man” [**Josh. 10: 14**].

c) *Eternity is timeless!*

In the eyes of the clock, time has a beginning and an end. “To everything, there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven. A time to be born and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted” [**Ecc. 3: 1-2**]. But “whatsoever God doeth, *it shall be for ever*” [**v. 14**]. Since humans are both flesh and spirit, it follows that only God knows the clock of our lives. Therefore, that clock must measure eternity, not seasons! If eternity is timeless, then only God can regulate the clock of our lives to ensure that our lives agree with His timing! So, if there is something wrong with that clock, only God can reset it.

3. How God resets our life clock

God’s thoughts and ways are different from ours “for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts” [**Is. 55: 8-9**]. Let us take a simple example. We count our days as “morning and evening” but God counts “evening and morning” [**Gen. 1: 5**]. God created light on the first day but the sun on the 4th day. Therefore, it is not the sun

that gives light to the day; otherwise the first four days would have been dark! That is why the Psalmist wrote, “With Thee is the fountain of life; in Thy light shall we see light” [Ps. 36:9].

Let us, therefore, forget where we are right now. You may be regretting the state of your life right now. You may feel that you have under-achieved, that you have wasted numerous opportunities which may never come back. Behind you are broken promises and unfulfilled dreams. Ahead of you may be fears and uncertainties. The truth is that your life clock needs to be reset and only God can do it. Here is the process:

a) *Be reborn*

The starting point is to return to the “womb” and start afresh! Perhaps, we “lost” it early in our lives when we placed more emphasis on the non-essential aspects of life. Jesus has given us the formula, “seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” [Matt. 6:33]. He reiterated it to Nicodemus when He said, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” and “except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” [Jn 3: 3, 5].

There are many who claim to be born again but their fruits show otherwise whereas, “if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new” [2 Cor. 5: 17]. It is not enough to renovate the old house, your unregenerate self. Instead, the old house has to be pulled down and rebuilt before it can become the temple of the living God [1 Cor. 6: 19; 2 Cor.6: 16-18]. Therefore, repent for those past decisions you have taken which were based on disobedience and presumption. Ask the Lord to take centre stage in your life instead of being a mere appendage that you call upon each time you are in trouble.

b) *Wake up to His morning!*

Now that you are controlled by God’s timing rather than by the human clock, then let Him give you your priorities and milestones. That is what is called “walking by faith, not by sight” [2 Cor. 5: 7]. Under this dispensation, your morning is no longer “6.00 a.m.” but when you woke up to the reality of God in your life. Your morning is today, this moment! You may have gone to bed last night weeping “but joy cometh in the morning” [Ps. 30: 5]. God’s compassions are “new every morning” and great is His faithfulness [Lam. 3:22-23]! So, stop looking at the worldly achievements of your peers and follow God’s plan for your life. Sarah had her son, Isaac at the age of 90 [Gen. 17:17]! Hezekiah lived longer by 15 years [Is. 38: 5]. No human being can do that for you!

c) *Dwell in His presence for the rest of your life!*

David said, “one thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord *all the days of my life*, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in His temple” [Ps. 27: 4]. He went on to list the benefits of such an orientation, namely, protection, promotion and mercy [vv. 5-7]. Are these not what we are looking for in our earthly pursuits? Are these not the “these things” that Jesus said would be added if we put God first?

4. Conclusion

Steven Spielberg is an icon in the movie industry.¹ He was the director and/or producer of such monumental movies as “*Saving Private Ryan*,” *Schindler’s List*,” the “*Jurassic Park*,” among so many others. He has won a bunch of Oscars, Emmys and Golden Globes. He has been knighted by Queen Elizabeth of Great Britain and awarded honorary doctorate degrees by several top universities. He has been voted the most successful filmmaker of the 20th Century. In the 1960s, when he applied to the University of Southern California (USC) and other prestigious schools to study film art, he was rejected. In 1965, he enrolled at California State University, Long Beach but dropped out in 1969 without earning a degree. However, at the age of 55, he returned to his old school and completed the bachelor’s degree programme in film and electronic arts in May 2002! In his commencement [graduation] address, he said, “I wanted to accomplish this for many years as a ‘thank you’ to my parents for giving me the opportunity for an education and a career, and as a personal note to my family ... and *young people everywhere ... about the importance of achieving their college education goals.*”

The lesson of Spielberg’s story is that there is no fixed timetable or milestones for achieving one’s goals in life. It is even more so when God is the one guiding the timing of the activities of your life. Therefore, rather than look at others, look at God through His Son, Jesus, who is the author and finisher of your faith. You will get there but it may not turn out the way you want it or that it is supposed to be. It will in fact be better because God is the Perfect Programmer! Let Him reset your life clock so that you can follow His timing.

¹ Based on Joal Ryan, “Mr. Spielberg Goes Back to College,” <http://cache-origin-west.eonline.com/News/Items/Pf/o,1527,9953,00.html> [May 14, 2002]