

# Church of God, The Eternal

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Dear Brethren:

Warm greetings to you all—those who, in these critical times of the end, are walking not by sight, but by faith.

Today we do not live to the rhythm of bells which mark the pace of horses; we no longer hear the people singing songs to raise their moods as they work. These are lovely pictures of my childhood, of a time too soon gone, but never to be forgotten. Indeed, times change; but as many say to console themselves, we must adapt and live with the times. And as the Preacher said, "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven."

God is the Master of time, for He created the astral bodies on which time depends. In Genesis 1:14–19, God shows us that time is determined by the sun, the moon, and the stars. In Psalm 104:19, we read the following: "He appointed the moon for seasons: the sun knoweth his going down." So days make up weeks and months, months make up years and their seasons, and years make up generations. And in all this there is a season to every thing, and a time to every purpose under the heaven.

Time is an important aspect of the Bible. God created it in order to fulfill a purpose. We know that the week symbolizes the space of seven thousand years which God has allotted man for various activities. Six days are given to man to do his work, but the seventh day of the week is a time of rest, during which we concentrate our attention on spiritual things. It is a holy day, devoted to God. Likewise, the seventh millennium—that period represented by the seventh day of the week—is a time dedicated to the purpose of God, showing that time when God will intervene in the affairs of man and accomplish His awesome purpose, according to which all human beings of that era will have to learn to know God, to respect Him, and to honor Him.

God has appointed the times for certain things to come to pass. There are favorable times, and then there are times of distress. The prophet Habakkuk wrote a prophecy which "is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry" (Hab. 2:3). God predicted something which will be fulfilled at the time which He Himself has appointed.

There were times when some generations in ancient Israel lived in bondage; other generations enjoyed freedom and the great blessings of God; still others were deported and suffered painful consequences because they failed to apply to their lives the Way of life which God had given them. In fact, four thousand years of man's history were recorded in order to teach all those who have been called since the first coming of Jesus Christ. That is why we are able to refer to the time of Noah and see the attitude and behavior of that

society, and then compare it with the society of our time. If the picture is the same, then we understand the sort of times in which we are living. For Jesus Christ said, ". . . as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (Matt. 24:37).

The prophet Daniel wrote a prophecy which would be kept secret and sealed until the time of the end. God told His servant Daniel, ". . . thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased" (Dan. 12:4). So, then, we are not going to understand these things before God chooses to reveal them. And this era is called "the time of the end." In the first verse of the same chapter, we see that at the time of the end "there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time. . . ."

As for the prophet Hosea, he wrote to the people of God of our time, ". . . it is time to seek the Lord, till he come and rain righteousness upon you" (Hos. 10:12). In other words, it is time for us to live up to the Truth which was revealed to us, and to manifest the character of God in our lives, not the character of natural man. It is time, says the prophet. God has granted us time so that we can fulfill the purpose of our call; but let us not forget that there is, indeed, a time to every purpose under the heaven!

God has appointed a period which He calls "a time, and times, and half a time" (Dan. 12:7 and Rev. 12:14). It is a period in which some of God's people will have God's protection, while others will experience the most painful time of distress.

Also speaking of the people of God, the prophet Malachi tells us, "Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts. . ." (Mal. 3:7). So, in general, man's mentality has not improved with time. Let us not take these scriptures lightly or indifferently, for there is a time for everything. There is a time when one can laugh and scoff at everything, but the time will come when there will be tears and lamentations.

We have begun a new year. God requires us to repeat an act of obedience every year—to observe the holy days which He instituted in their appointed times or seasons. It is something which we rehearse year after year so as to come to respect and fear God more, to understand His plan and purpose better, and to become more aware of the times in which we live. But what kind of resolve did we have as we began the year? Are we determined to get rid of sin? Or, thinking that we have plenty of time, are we going to continue to nonchalantly live in a spiritual structure doomed to crumble rapidly? God has fixed a time when all that is not built on a sure and unchangeable foundation will come crashing down. As the prophet Ezekiel tells us, "And thou, profane [ungodly] wicked prince of Israel, whose day is come, when iniquity shall have an end" (Ezek. 21:25). If God called us to know and understand His Truth, then we know that His purpose is sure, we know that the ultimate objective is for the called to take the reins of power on this earth in the government of God. But for that responsibility we must manifest the character of God—that is, we must know what we are doing, where we are heading, and we must be determined. No longer do we need to say to ourselves, "I wonder, in my case, if it is God's will for me to obey all the truth revealed to me at this given time." If we started the year taking Passover worthily, sincerely repenting of our mistakes before God, if we eradicated the old leaven out of our lives and ate the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth, then it witnesses to the fact that we are fulfilling what God wants us to be—faithful and resolved people. All year long we will have the choice of manifesting either the character of God or the character of man. We must resolve in our hearts that we will not depart from God.

This is something each one of us must decide independently, and God grants each one of us the necessary time—which He Himself has determined—to be strengthened, to come to make all decisions in conformity with His will, and to leave it at that.

Thus, time is something which God created in our interest and in the interest of all humanity. But let us remember that "to every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven." The Apostle Paul says to us, "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Eph. 5:15–16). And Jude, servant of Jesus Christ, says "to those who are called, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ" (v. 1, RSV), "remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ predicted. They certainly told you that in the last times there would come scoffers who would ridicule the faith and live apart from God, following their ungodly passions and evil desires" (Jude 17–18, *La parole vivante*). These situations are inevitable among God's people, for they were predicted for our time. However, we need not all take part in such behavior, nor let these circumstances discourage us.

God has created a purpose in accordance with His will, and the events to which we are witnesses prove to us that His purpose is carried out. God tells us through His servant Isaiah, "Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure [‘I will accomplish all my purpose,’ RSV]" (Isa. 46:9–10). Thus, brethren, once God decides that the time has come for Him to accomplish something, He does not change His mind. What He foretold will be fulfilled. And if our will is in harmony with God's will, then we in turn can manifest a resolve like God's.

It is therefore essential, as this year begins, to find out where we really are in order to judiciously use the time which we have left and finish our race. God has promised the necessary power for us to be able to reach the goal, and He shows us how close the finish line is by what is happening and by those things which will come to pass at the time He has appointed. When we have crossed the finish line, we shall again find a time when songs of joy brighten up people's work. And the prophet Zechariah tells us that "in that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD" (Zech. 14:20).

Brethren, maintain your vision, your faith, and your confidence. Let us pray for one another, and let us meet at that finish line!

With affection and respect,



Jean Aviolat