

# The Appointed Time

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[ 0 : 00 ] And open your Bibles if you've brought them to Matthew 26. Matthew 26. There are certain things in life where timing is everything.

Knowing how long to leave a cake in the oven or a steak on the grill. Timing is everything. Being sure to shoot the winning basket one second before the buzzer rather than a second after the buzzer.

Or knowing when to tell your father that you wrecked his car. Timing is everything. And so as we come to read the Gospel accounts, you soon realize that this is also true of the death of our Lord Jesus.

That the very death of our Savior, the timing of his death. Is of great significance. As you read through, you see that Jesus barely begins his public ministry as we're seeing in Mark's Gospel. We're at chapter 3 and there's people already wanting him dead and plotting to kill him. John 5. The Jewish leaders were trying all the harder to kill him because he claimed that he was equal with God and was breaking the Sabbath according to their man-made rules.

[ 1 : 32 ] Luke 4. Jesus comes to his hometown in Nazareth and before he's done preaching his sermon, they're furious and they take him out to the brow of the hill and wanted to cast him down to his death.

But he walked right through the crowd and went on his way. You see, as hard as they tried, their attempts to kill him all failed because as Scripture tells us over and over, it was not yet his appointed time.

Not his time to die. John 7.30. At this, they tried to seize him, but no one laid a hand on him because his time had not yet come.

John 8.20. He spoke words while teaching in the temple area that angered the Jewish leaders. Yet no one seized him because his time had not yet come.

And the further we read, the further we're convinced that timing is everything here. Luke 9.51. As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem.

[ 2 : 40 ] He's got an appointment to keep there. And at least four times during that final week leading up to his crucifixion, Jesus says words like these.

The hour has come. John 12.23. My appointed time is at hand. Matthew 26.18.

John 13.1. In the upper room, Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world. And again in 17.1, as he prays to the Father, my time has come.

And these four texts show us at least two things. First, that Jesus is aware of the divine timetable for his death. And that the appointed time for him to die was Passover.

During Passover. Now, let's notice this in our text. In Matthew 26. Verses 1 and 2. When Jesus had finished saying all these things, he said to his disciples, As you know, the Passover is two days away.

[ 3 : 48 ] And the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified. You see, the time has finally come. Not just in the 33 years of our Savior's earthly life.

But the time has come since Genesis 3.15. That first promise of the seed of the woman that would come and crush the head of the serpent.

That time had finally come. When he would crush Satan's head at Calvary and have his own heel wounded. It's to be during the Passover.

So, there's more though. So, let's read on. Verses 3 to 5. That's what Jesus says. Then the chief priests and the elders of the people assembled in the palace of the high priest.

Whose name was Caiaphas. And they plotted to arrest Jesus in some sly way and kill him. But not during the feast, they said.

[ 4 : 51 ] Or there may be a riot among the people. Although they thirsted for Jesus' blood. They definitely did not want to kill him during the week-long Passover feast.

When Jerusalem would be teeming with pilgrims who had come from all over the world. We're told that the population swelled somewhere like ten times its normal size.

And many of these people would have been sympathetic with the miracle worker Jesus. And they did not want to cause a riot. There had been many revolts by the Jews against the Romans.

And the Jewish leaders didn't want any trouble that might give the occupying Roman army an excuse to crush them all. And so their famous last words in planning Jesus' death are these.

But not during the feast of Passover. Any time but Passover. Now as tragic as it is, we can't help but note the irony of it.

[ 5 : 56 ] That when these enemies of Jesus wanted to kill him and tried to kill him, they couldn't kill him. Because his time had not yet come.

And now when they wanted not to kill him on Passover, they would kill him because his time has come. And all of this shouts to us that as for the death of Jesus, timing is everything.

Or if that's overstating, at least timing is significant. To see the length to which God goes. To have it change from their schedule to his.

So let's draw a few lessons from the timing of Christ's death tonight. First of all, we learn that our God reigns. Our God reigns. He's sovereign over all events, including the timing of them.

Here we have this clear conflict between the timetable of God and the timetable of the Jews. So whose timetable determines history?

[ 6 : 59 ] God or man? Proverbs 16, 9. In his heart, a man plans his course. But the Lord determines his steps.

So the Jewish leaders plan for any time other than Passover. And the Lord sees to it that they crucify him precisely during Passover.

Our God reigns. The Lord foils the plans of the nations and thwarts the purposes of the people. But the plans of the Lord stand firm forever. The purposes of his heart through all generations.

Ephesians, Psalm 33, 10 and 11. He works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will. Ephesians 1, 11. And brothers and sisters, this is the God who reigns over every situation in your life, including the timing of those events.

And he reigns in perfect wisdom and power and love, working them all together for your good and for his glory as he fulfills his good purposes in them.

[ 8 : 12 ] Here is our peace. In a world of trouble, in a world of hatred, our God reigns and he reigns for us. Things happen only if and when he determines they will.

It's his plan, not man's, that will be accomplished. So that's the first lesson. The second lesson, Jesus' death at the appointed time of Passover demonstrates the voluntary nature of Jesus' death on the cross.

If you come to the cross as just a mere spectator and you judge things by what you see with your naked eye, you'll be mistaken because Jesus looks like a weak and helpless victim, unable to save himself from death, helplessly caught in the vortex of the hatred of the Jewish leaders and the spinelessness of Governor Pilate.

But you'd be wrong, wouldn't you? For Jesus came to heaven purposely to do the will of his Father in heaven, which is to suffer and die for his people. And Jesus had an appointment to keep and all of his life, he's moving willingly, wholeheartedly toward that death on the cross.

He said in John 10, I am the good shepherd. He doesn't say that they will force me to die. He says the good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep.

[ 9 : 42 ] No man takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. Yes, he would avoid the many attempts on his life, but only because it was not yet his appointed time.

But now as Passover draws near, it was his appointed time and he knows it. And so he's not avoiding Jerusalem anymore. He's moving deliberately to Jerusalem with his face set like flint, undeterred by any temptations to avoid the hellish death that's awaiting him there in Jerusalem.

After eating the Passover meal that night of his arrest in the upper room with his disciples, he tells Judas, what you're about to do, do quickly.

Do quickly. Jesus is in charge of the timing of his death. And Judas goes off to fetch the arresting mob and Jewish officials.

And Jesus, so far from avoiding arrest, goes to the very place where Judas knows they will be. I play hide and seek with my grandchildren and I've got a little boy that every time I count to ten and come looking, I find him in the very same place.

[11:13] He's curled up beside a chair with his hands over his head as if we don't see him. It's almost as if he wants to be found. And here's Jesus.

And on the night of his arrest, he tells Judas to do what he's doing quickly. And he's not avoiding the place of arrest. He's going there precisely, almost as if it was intentional.

No, it was intentional. No, as if. That was his appointment for which he came. And so he goes into the garden of Gethsemane, not to hide among the olive trees, but to pray for strength to do God's will.

And then he goes out to meet the arresting mob. How's that for hiding? He goes out to meet them and says, who is it you're looking for? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth, I am.

Ego Eimi. And immediately they're down on their faces to the ground. The sheer omnipotence of the great I am floors them. He's not resisting arrest.

[12:33] The one word from him could destroy them all. He says, do you not think I can call on my father and he will at once put at my disposal more than 12 legions of angels.

But then how would the scriptures be fulfilled that say that it must happen in this way? Over and over in the arrest and crucifixion account, God is wanting us to know that Jesus was no helpless victim as he comes to the cross.

He's not at the mercy of man's will and plan. This was Jesus' will and plan that he made with the father before the world was made. And that's the timetable that he moves by.

The timing of his death tells us he's on the cross because he chose to be. That's when they mocked him on the cross as if he was unable to save himself.

You saved others? Ha ha. You can't even save yourself. Well, that wasn't it at all, brothers and sisters. But rather that when the choice was to save himself for you, he chose you.

[13:49] He chose to save you. It was damnation. And he took it willingly for you, for love, for the joy of bringing you to glory.

Does that not make you love him for it? It was intentional. It was voluntary. It was willing. A willing death as we see Jesus doing the will of the father.

Now, the Jewish leaders eventually will actually pressure Pilate to kill him during Passover. Isn't that something? What happened? Why did they change their plan and not wait until Passover was over as they wanted?

Well, ultimately, it was because God reigns and his sovereign power changed their timetable. As the church prayed in Acts 4, 27 and 28, indeed, Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed.

They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen. They did what you had decided beforehand should happen.

[15:07] That's sovereignty of God. That's his decree. Forms history. And that included, that plan included the when of his death.

It was not left up to chance. Passover was the appointed time on the calendar of God's eternal decrees. And so he changed their plans to bring it into line with his.

So that's the bottom line. God reigns and reigns over the timing of his son's death. But that's not to say that there weren't human reasons why they changed their mind.

The means that God used to bring them over in line with his timetable. I believe the biggest reason was the defection and visit of one of Jesus' own disciples.

Matthew 26, 14 and 16 here in this passage. Then one of the 12, the one called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priest and asked, what are you willing to give me if I hand him over to you?

[16:15] The scriptures say they were delighted. They were giddy with joy. High fives all around. To have one of Jesus' own inner band of 12 apostles ready to turn him in.

You see, having this opportunity fall into their lap was too good to pass up. And so they counted out the 30 pieces of silver. And from then on, Luke 22, 5 says, Judas watched for an opportunity to hand him over when no crowd was present.

You see the concern. But now instead of saying, not during Passover, at least to hand him over when no crowd is present. That satisfied their fears of a potential riot.

So they're happy now to kill him during Passover. Too thirsty for his blood to wait any longer and to pass up this opportunity now that Judas has come.

So they're hurried to rest at night. The two kangaroo courts of the Jews in the wee hours of the morning trying to pull this thing off before the crowds woke up. Falsely accusing him, they found him guilty of blasphemy and worthy of death.

[ 17 : 34 ] So very in the morning, they haul him off to Pilate and put him through the trials there. It had to be early in the morning. And they're pressing him for immediate death.

Oh, I'll just whip him and then release him. No! Crucify him! Crucify him! And get it over with now! So that by nine o'clock in the morning, Jesus is hanging, nailed to the middle cross outside of Jerusalem.

All of that took place, you see, to avoid the crowd. But it was during Passover, the very time of God's appointment and the time that his enemies did not want to kill him on.

It's as if God has a point to make. It must happen at Passover. And so it does. But why? There's 52 weeks in the year. Why the one week of Passover?

Well, thirdly, I think this death is so important that it was not to go unnoticed. God wanted this to be a very public thing with many eyewitnesses.

[ 18 : 46 ] So it happened during one of the busiest weeks of the year in Jerusalem when the city would be crawling with these pilgrims coming from all over the world. You know, the sign on the cross was in three different languages.

Aramaic, Latin, and Greek to cover all the peoples coming from all the different places. This event is for all people to know about. This death must be known because all people need this Jesus, the only God-approved sacrifice for sinners.

Years later, the Apostle Paul will be giving his defense of the gospel of Christ, crucified and risen.

And he will appeal to King Agrippa being familiar with these things, saying, I'm convinced that none of this has escaped his notice because it was not done in a corner.

In some secret corner, out of the way corner of the world where no one hardly knew about it. No, it wasn't done in a corner, but in Jerusalem, the strategic crossroads between Africa to the south and Europe and Asia to the north, the land bridge where all traffic came through.

There, outside of Jerusalem, and there during Passover when the most people from all over the world would be there to see the crucifixion of Christ.

[ 20 : 23 ] So why did Jesus die during Passover? I believe the most important reason of all is that his death is explained by Passover. And that's the fourth and final thing we'll look at.

That the timing of Jesus' death points us to the meaning of his death. If you were there as a spectator, the naked eye saw three criminals dying for the wicked things that they had done against the Roman Empire.

And that's because, as Isaiah said, Jesus was numbered with the transgressors. He's just one of them. That's what you'd see. And so the original Passover event says no.

No, that's not what was happening there. And it sheds light on this death at Passover. Passover points to a redemption in the first place.

We're going to look at three points. Passover points to a redemption from spiritual bondage by Jesus' death. Genesis 15 tells us that the Israelites had been enslaved and mistreated for 400 years in Egypt, groaning in their bondage and in their slavery.

[ 21 : 38 ] God heard. God cared. God came to them, sent Moses and Aaron to lead them out of Egypt to redeem them from captivity.

As you remember, Pharaoh was not willing to let God's people go. He needed some persuading and so God sent 10 plagues of judgment to make Pharaoh willing.

And the Passover happened during the 10th and final plague by which the Lord powerfully set his people free from slavery in Egypt.

The 10th plague did the job. You remember, God killing the firstborn sons of the Egyptians brought Israel out with a mighty hand. And so every year, for hundreds of years, Passover was celebrated as a day of independence, like our Independence Day by the Jews because it pointed back to their redemption, their independence from slavery in Egypt.

Oh, but now a greater redemption is accomplished by the death of God's Son by which sinners are set free from everlasting bondage to our sins and to Satan who were no more willing than Pharaoh to let us go.

[ 23 : 02 ] But by Christ's death, God has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us over into the kingdom of the Son that He loves in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our sins.

Christ's death paid the ransom price, the redemption price that sets us free from sin and Satan. For if the Son shall set you free, you shall be free indeed. And so Passover points us to Christ's death as redemption from our worst enemies.

But secondly, Passover points to a substitutionary sacrifice that turns away God's wrath. A substitutionary sacrifice that turns away God's wrath.

The tenth plague was that at midnight God was going to pass through Egypt and strike dead every firstborn son in the land from the son of Pharaoh to the son of the slave girl and even the firstborn of the cattle.

And this would cause loud wailing in Egypt unmatched in their history. But among the Israelites in Egypt, there would be peace and quiet. Not one dead.

[ 24 : 14 ] Not even a dog barking. So God would make known that he made a distinction between Egypt and his people, Israel.

But it wasn't, the distinction was not made because the Israelites were better than the Egyptians. They weren't. They deserved God's judgment as well.

They too were sinners. They too had sinned against greater light and greater love shown to them by God. No, the only reason they were spared the death of the firstborn son was that a substitute was sacrificed in their place.

each Israelite family was to select a one-year-old male lamb without defect and slaughter it at twilight.

It was a bloody scene just like Calvary. And some of the blood was to be put in a basin and then with branches painted on the sides and top of the doors to their house.

[ 25 : 20 ] Striking feature. all the Israelite houses covered with blood around the doors. And then they were to go inside that door and no one was to come out until morning.

Why? Because at midnight I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn. The blood will be assigned for you on your houses and when I see the blood I will pass over you.

No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt. Who were spared that night? Those who had the blood of an innocent male sacrificial lamb killed in their place.

That's substitutionary curse bearing. That's one dying in the place and under the curse for another. On their behalf instead of them the innocent suffering that the guilty what the guilty deserves.

The wrath of God's justice. So the wages of sin is death. But it was death paid by another. Not the firstborn son.

[ 26 : 34 ] And so God says when I see the blood I will pass over you. God is so holy and just that sin someone must pay. someone must pay for their whole life and either the sinner in hell or his substitute on the cross.

That's the message of Passover. And the boy in the house under the blood when God's judgment fell at midnight was safe because the blood had already been shed there.

Judgment had already fallen. Wrath had already been poured out on the innocent land. So Passover sheds its light onto Calvary.

This death that takes place at Passover tells us of a substitutionary curse bearing. those two criminals there dying beside Jesus are indeed dying to pay for their crimes against the state. Dying to pay for their own sins. But that man there in the middle cross has no sins. He's dying to pay for other people's sins.

[ 27 : 45 ] The righteous for the unrighteous to bring us to God. Amen. He was wounded for our transgressions.

He was crushed for our iniquities and the punishment that brought us peace was on him and by his wounds we are healed. It pleased the Lord to crush him that we might go free.

And so the Messiah dies at Passover because he had an appointment to fulfill this Old Testament type. of the Passover lamb. So Paul can write to the church of God at Corinth 1 Corinthians 5-7 and say Christ our Passover lamb has been slain.

How fitting that he should die during Passover as the fulfillment of all those hundreds and thousands of Passover lambs that had been slain through the years.

They were just types and pictures of this lamb. They could never take away sin Hebrews 10 tells us but this is the lamb and this is the blood that actually atones for sin and washes whiter than snow. [ 29 : 00 ] Precious blood of Jesus that cleanses from every sin 1 John 1-7 and that blood of Jesus our substitute is also our propitiation.

Christ our Passover lamb has turned God's wrath away from us by having it fall full force upon himself.

And so he propitiates God's wrath he pacifies God's wrath that should have and would have fallen on us for all eternity. How? By letting it fall on him as he took our sins upon him and bore them to the cross and became sin for us God judged our sins and poured out upon him the concentration of his infinite wrath into those three hours of darkness on the cross.

And because he suffered it we do not. Because he was forsaken we will never be. Do you not love him because of that?

And then Jesus' death at Passover also points to the role of our faith in salvation. Faith is a receiving grace. Someone described it as the empty hands that receives Christ and all the blessings of salvation in him.

[ 30 : 27 ] Empty hands. You see faith merits nothing. Faith earns nothing. It's just the instrument that receives Christ who merits everything for us.

You see God didn't say when I see your faith I will pass over you. He said when I see the blood I will pass over you in my wrath. The merit is in the blood.

The merit is in Christ. But that blood had to be shed and applied to the doors. And that's the role of faith. These Israelites had to have faith in the Lord.

They had to believe that what he said would happen. And since it's going to happen we're putting blood of an innocent lamb around our door. That was faith.

Faith in that substitute dying on their behalf. So sinners are forgiven not for what God sees in them but because he sees the blood once shed for them.

[ 31 : 33 ] And that's where God looks. when I see the blood. And that's where we must look in faith tonight. To the Savior.

To Jesus in whom we have redemption through his blood. The forgiveness of sins. That leads us to the final point. Christ's death at Passover preaches redemption from bondage substitution.

Christ in our place and it preaches remembrance. Passover was such a significant event in their history as a people that the Jews had a lasting memorial meal that was set up to remember it.

Year by year it was to be commemorated by a Passover feast as a reminder. And when your children ask you Father, what does this ceremony mean?

Why do we do this? Tell them it is the Passover sacrifice to the Lord who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt and spared our homes when he struck down the Egyptians.

[ 32 : 38 ] And so here we are 2,000 years ago on that night in the upper room. Jesus is eating the last Passover supper with his disciples.

And then he instituted a new memorial meal for his church to commemorate until he returns in glory. The Passover meal was tied to the old covenant that looked back to that night in Egypt when the nation was set free.

That's part of the old wineskins, that Passover meal. But now with the new wine of Jesus' blood that forgives our sins and establishes a new covenant, God's people need new wineskins, a new memorial meal to remember, a new point of reference for our faith and assurance, not looking back to the many lambs that were slain in Egypt and their blood applied to doors, but now looking to the very body and blood of Christ that turned God's wrath away and secured our everlasting salvation. And so our Lord says to us tonight, do this in remembrance of me. Do you see how the reference point has shifted from those lambs to the lamb?

In remembrance of me, that I am the true Passover lamb whose blood has caused God's wrath to pass over you forever. It fell on me that it might not fall on you.

[ 34 : 11 ] And whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim my death until I come. That's the explanation of this meal.

that we eat together tonight. It was first instituted at the last Passover supper by our Lord on the eve of his crucifixion. Let's remember him. His body given, his blood shed to save us from the coming wrath.

And so the timing of Jesus' death is significant. And it says to us, don't miss these Passover themes fulfilled in this Passover lamb. Let Passover pour its light upon Calvary, or perhaps more correctly, let Calvary pour its light upon what was symbolized in the Passover.

Where we see what it was pointing to all along was that coming Passover lamb, Christ, who has now been slain for us.

And so these elements of the bread and the cup point our faith to Christ's blood and body. and though our faith may be weak tonight, we can lay hold of Christ tonight.

[ 35 : 25 ] Let's remember that it's not the strength of our faith that saves us, but the object of our faith that saves us. We're looking to Christ. Again, it wasn't when I see the strength of your faith, I'll pass over you.

When I see the object of your faith, the blood of the innocent substitute, I will pass over. So let's be encouraged by that. We are to examine ourselves as we come to the Lord's table.

We are to confess any known sin. We are to make things right with brethren that we have offenses with. But let's not go to the point where we forget that what God is looking at tonight is not our faith and the strength of our Christian life.

He's looking to the blood and to the body that secured our salvation. So let's look where he's looking. That's what he's wanting us to do. Do this in remembrance of me.

And remember that we're not the only ones looking at Christ tonight. As we behold him by faith through the signs of the bread and cup, our heavenly father beholds Christ ever before him.

[ 36 : 45 ] Because when he had purged our stains, he took his seat above. There at the right hand of the majesty in heaven. And he's there tonight. And he's there on our behalf.

He's there as our mediator representing us. He's there as our substitute, as our propitiation, as our redeemer. And he's there in our flesh, a real man.

The God man. Our forerunner. And because he's there, will be there one day. And the father sees him there at his right hand. And he says tonight, child, when I see the blood, I will pass over you.

It's what he sees in him and not what he sees in you. He always sees his son. And his son is always making intercession for us. And therefore, he's able to save completely all that come unto God through him because he always makes intercession for us.

Five bleeding wounds he bears received on Calvary. They pour effectual prayers. They strongly plead for me. Forgive him. Oh, forgive, they cry.

[ 37 : 55 ] Nor let that ransom sinner die. His very presence there as our substitute appearing on our behalf means that the father ever looks on him and pardons us.

So here's our food. Here's our food for faith and assurance tonight. Let's look to Christ, feed on him, taste and see afresh how good he is.

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