

Better Way Apostolic Church- Bible Class

Subject: It's About Time: 2 Peter 3:8, 9

This very minute—do you know what time it is?

Charles Dowd, a schoolteacher from Connecticut, proposed the time zone plan currently in use in the United States. It was on this day in 1883 that it was first implemented.

If you were to give an answer to the opening question, your answer would be relative. What is 9 a.m. Saturday morning for one person, may be 8 a.m. Sunday morning for someone else on another continent. A half-a-century ago, Albert Einstein made us aware of the relativity of time. As we have gained more scientific knowledge, we have also learned that if one travels at the speed of light, time essentially stands still.

Time is a relative measurement that was created by God to assist the human race. However, he is timeless. That is why we have these inspired words: "With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day" (2 Peter 3:8 NIV). When your "time" on earth is over, unmeasured time will begin. You will either spend it with your Creator or with Satan. God wants you to know that "NOW" is the time to choose him. If you delay, your choices may be very limited.

Remember: How you spend your measured time determines where you'll spend your unmeasured time.

BELONGING to GOD

We belong to God as his children and friends. And as believers we belong to the church, both the local church body and worldwide community of believers. As members of an earthly family we belong to one another, husband-wife, parent-child, child-child. Belonging is essential for a sense of security.

WHAT BELONGS TO GOD?

Deuteronomy 10:14 . . . The highest heavens and the earth and everything in it all belong to the Lord your God.

Psalms 24:1 . . . The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it. The world and all its people belong to him.

Since God created everything that is good, it all belongs to him and we should be good stewards of the resources that he has entrusted in our care.

WE ALL NEED A SENSE OF BELONGING, FOR IN BELONGING IS SECURITY AND ACCEPTANCE.

Deuteronomy 33:27 . . . The eternal God is your refuge, and his everlasting arms are under you.

When we feel we belong, we feel secure and accepted. Feeling accepted gives us confidence to share our deepest feelings without worry of rejection.

IT IS AWESOME TO BELONG TO GOD.

Deuteronomy 28:10 . . . All the nations of the world will see that you are a people claimed by the Lord, and they will stand in awe

Anyone can belong to the world, for we are easily given to worldly things. But it is awesome to belong to the Lord God, Creator of the universe, because that means he accepts us.

Isaiah 26:19 . . . We have this assurance: Those who belong to God will live; their bodies will rise again! Those who sleep in the earth will rise up and sing for joy! Belonging to God is an eternal relationship, not merely for this world, but for the world to come. This permits us to live again after we die. The grave is not the last chapter, merely the transitional one.

WHEN I BELONG TO GOD, WHAT SHOULD I DO?

Psalm 34:9 . . . Let the Lord's people show him reverence, for those who honor him will have all they need.

BELONGING TO GOD MAY BRING SUFFERING AND PERSECUTION HERE ON EARTH.

John 15:19-21 . . . The world would love you if you belonged to it, but you don't. I chose you to come out of the world, and so it hates you . . . The people of the world will hate you because you belong to me, for they don't know God who sent me.

You cannot belong to both Christ and the world because their purposes are so different. When you belong to the world, you will pursue worldly pleasures, which are self-indulgent. When you belong to Christ, you will pursue godly acts that are in conflict with the world. There is no dual citizenship with the world and Christ.

WE WHO BELONG TO GOD ARE EXPECTED TO WORK TOGETHER IN HARMONY.

Romans 12:4-5 . . . Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function . . . And since we are all one body in Christ, we belong to each other, and each of us needs all the others.

Belonging to God makes us all part of Christ's body, the church. When bodily parts work against each other, the body fails to function. When they work together, the body functions as it should.

WHAT IS A SURE TEST TO KNOW IF WE BELONG TO GOD?

1 John 2:3-4 . . . How can we be sure that we belong to him? By obeying his commandments . . . those who obey God's word really do love him.

WHAT ARE THE PRIVILEGES OF BELONGING TO GOD?

Romans 8:1 . . . Now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus.

Galatians 4:7 . . . Now you are no longer a slave but God's own child. And since you are his child, everything he has belongs to you.

Galatians 3:29 . . . Now that you belong to Christ, you are the true children of Abraham. You are his heirs, and now all the promises God gave to him belong to you.

Ephesians 1:3 . . . How we praise God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we belong to Christ.

Belonging to God means you are no longer a slave to sin and therefore guilty before God. Now you can receive all the blessings he freely gives to his children. We inherit the family privileges of the Almighty.

HOW CAN I BE SURE I BELONG TO GOD?

1 John 2:3-5 . . . How can we be sure that we belong to him? By obeying his commandments. If someone says, "I belong to God," but doesn't obey God's commandments, that person is a liar and does not live in the truth. But those who obey God's word really do love him. That is the way to know whether or not we live in him.

1 John 3:10 . . . Now we can tell who are children of God and who are children of the Devil. Anyone who does not obey God's commands and does not love other Christians does not belong to God.

Obeying God is a reflection of our love for him and belief in him. Since we are human, we cannot obey God perfectly all of the time. What God wants is for us to desire to always please and obey him.

PROMISES FROM GOD:

Leviticus 26:12 . . . I will walk among you; I will be your God and you will be my people. God wants us to belong to him.

Romans 8:1 **BARRIERS**

HARMFUL BARRIERS

WHAT BARRIERS CAN KEEP US FROM GOD AND OTHERS?

KEY BIBLE VERSE: When Jesus heard this, he was amazed. Turning to the crowd, he said, "I tell you the truth, I haven't seen faith like this in all the land of Israel!" (Matthew 8:10)

LIFE IS FULL OF NATURAL AND ARTIFICIAL BARRIERS.

The centurion could have let many obstacles stand between him and Jesus—pride, doubt, money, language, distance, time, self-sufficiency, power, race. But he didn't. If he did not let these barriers block his approach to Jesus, we don't need to either. What keeps you from Christ?

KEY BIBLE VERSE: The woman was surprised, for Jews refuse to have anything to do with Samaritans. She said to Jesus, "You are a Jew, and I am a Samaritan woman. Why are you asking me for a drink?" (John 4:9)

SOCIAL AND SPIRITUAL BARRIERS ARE REAL.

This woman (1) was a Samaritan, a member of the hated mixed race, (2) was known to be living in sin, and (3) was in a public place. No respectable Jewish man would talk to a woman under such circumstances. But Jesus did. The gospel is for every person regardless of race, social position, or past sins. We must be prepared to share this gospel at any time and in any place. Jesus crossed all barriers to share the gospel, and we who follow him must do no less.

HELPFUL BARRIERS

HOW CAN BARRIERS HELP US GROW?

KEY BIBLE VERSE: These people were left to test the Israelites—to see whether they would obey the commands the LORD had given to their ancestors through Moses. (Judges 3:4)

BARRIERS CAN BE CHALLENGES TO OVERCOME.

We learn from an earlier chapter that these enemy nations were still in the land because the Israelites had failed to obey God and drive them out. Now God would allow the enemies to remain in order to “test” the Israelites; that is, to give them an opportunity to exercise faith and obedience. By now the younger generation that had not fought in the great battles of conquest was coming of age. It was their job to complete the conquest of the land. There were many obstacles yet to be overcome in their new homeland. How they would handle these obstacles would be a test of their faith.

BARRIERS ALSO REMIND US TO RELY ON GOD.

Perhaps God has left obstacles in your life-hostile people, difficult situations, baffling problems-to allow you to develop faith and obedience. They can be overcome with his help.

HANDLING BARRIERS

HOW CAN BARRIERS BE OVERCOME?

BIBLE READING: Deuteronomy 1:19-36

KEY BIBLE VERSE: Don't be afraid! The LORD your God is going before you. He will fight for you, just as you saw him do in Egypt. And you saw how the LORD your God cared for you again and again here in the wilderness, just as a father cares for his child. Now he has brought you to this place. (Deuteronomy 1:29-31)

GOD IS GREATER THAN ANY BARRIER.

The spies were not sent into the land to determine whether they should enter, but where they should enter. Upon returning, however, most of the spies concluded that the land was not worth the obstacles. God would give the Israelites the power to conquer the land, but they were afraid of the risk and decided not to enter. God gives us the power to overcome our obstacles, but like the Israelites who were filled with fear and skepticism, we often let difficulties control our life. Following God regardless of the difficulties is the way to have courageous, overcoming faith.

KEY BIBLE VERSE: At that moment the curtain in the Temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook, rocks split apart, and tombs opened. (Matthew 27:51)

GOD HAS ALREADY DESTROYED THE GREATEST BARRIER.

The temple had three main parts-the courts, the Holy Place (where only the priests could enter), and the Most Holy Place (where only the high priest could enter, and only once a year, to atone for the sins of the nation-Leviticus 16:1-35). The curtain separating the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place was torn in two at Christ's death, symbolizing that the barrier between God and humanity was removed. Now all people are free to approach God because of Christ's sacrifice for our sins (see Hebrews 9:1-14; 10:19-22). . . . Now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus.