

Appointed for the Fire

Dr. John Carmichael

[Lev 23:1-4 NASB95] 1 The LORD spoke again to Moses, saying, 2 "Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, 'The LORD'S appointed times which you shall proclaim as holy convocations--My appointed times are these: 3 'For six days work may be done, but on the seventh day there is a sabbath of complete rest, a holy convocation. You shall not do any work; it is a sabbath to the LORD in all your dwellings. 4 'These are the appointed times of the LORD, holy convocations which you shall proclaim at the times appointed for them.

- Imagine opening your calendar and discovering that God Himself has already blocked out several days. Not your employer. Not your family. God.
- And beside those dates He has essentially written: "These days belong to Me."
- That is what happens in Leviticus 23.
- Israel already had a relationship with Yahweh. They already prayed. They already sacrificed. They already had priests. They already had the tabernacle. And every seventh day they had the Sabbath.
- Yet God said, in effect: "Your weekly rhythm is important—but I am also going to establish extraordinary seasons when you stop what you normally do and gather before Me."
- The Hebrew word translated "appointed times" is mo'ed. It carries the idea of an appointed time, appointed place, or designated meeting.
- These weren't dates Israel invented. God made the appointment. Passover interrupted their schedule. Pentecost interrupted their schedule. Trumpets interrupted their schedule. The Day of Atonement interrupted their schedule. Tabernacles interrupted their schedule.
- God actually built spiritual interruption into Israel's calendar.
- Why? Because God knows something about human beings: We can love God and still become distracted. We can believe and become busy. We can pray and gradually lose our hunger.
- We can attend church every week while slowly allowing the extraordinary things of God to become ordinary to us.
- So God gave His people two kinds of spiritual rhythms: REGULAR RHYTHMS and EXTRAORDINARY SEASONS.
- There are things God develops through CONSISTENCY. And there are things God does through CONCENTRATION.
- This week, we are deliberately stepping into a concentrated season. Sunday night through Wednesday night, we're saying: "God, You have our attention."

Why do God's people need extraordinary seasons of concentrated spiritual encounter when we already worship Him regularly?

The appointed seasons of Scripture reveal four reasons we periodically need to interrupt our normal rhythms and give God extraordinary attention.

I. WE NEED EXTRAORDINARY SEASONS BECAUSE ROUTINE CAN DIM OUR REMEMBRANCE

- a. Passover: Remember What God Has Done
- b. [Exo 12:14 NASB95] 14 'Now this day will be a memorial to you, and you shall celebrate it [as] a feast to the LORD; throughout your generations you are to celebrate it [as] a permanent ordinance.
- c. [Deu 16:1-3 NASB95] 1 "Observe the month of Abib and celebrate the Passover to the LORD your God, for in the month of Abib the LORD your God brought you out of Egypt by night. 2 "You shall sacrifice the Passover to the LORD your God from the flock and

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the herd, in the place where the LORD chooses to establish His name. 3 "You shall not eat leavened bread with it; seven days you shall eat with it unleavened bread, the bread of affliction (for you came out of the land of Egypt in haste), so that you may remember all the days of your life the day when you came out of the land of Egypt.

- d. [Lev 23:4-8 NASB95] 4 'These are the appointed times of the LORD, holy convocations which you shall proclaim at the times appointed for them. 5 'In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at twilight is the LORD'S Passover. 6 'Then on the fifteenth day of the same month there is the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the LORD; for seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. 7 'On the first day you shall have a holy convocation; you shall not do any laborious work. 8 'But for seven days you shall present an offering by fire to the LORD. On the seventh day is a holy convocation; you shall not do any laborious work.'"
- e. God commanded Israel to keep Passover year after year.
- f. Why? "Now this day will be a memorial to you..." Exodus 12:14
- g. God did not want a generation of Israelites who knew they were free but had forgotten Who freed them.
- h. Passover brought them back to the blood. Back to Egypt. Back to deliverance. Back to the night when Yahweh brought them out.
- i. The spiritual danger isn't always rebellion. Sometimes it is forgetfulness. We forget how lost we were. We forget the prayers God answered. We forget the doors God opened. We forget the addictions He broke. We forget the nights we cried at the altar. We forget what it felt like when we first encountered the Holy Spirit.
- j. Revival says: REMEMBER. Before we're asking God for something new, we remember what He has already done.
- k. Application: Remember your encounter. Compare your present hunger with previous seasons. Come into revival prepared. Before Sunday night, write down three significant things God has done in your life.
- l. Declaration: "God, I haven't forgotten what You've done, and I refuse to live on yesterday's encounter!"

II. WE NEED EXTRAORDINARY SEASONS BECAUSE CONCENTRATION PRODUCES WHAT ROUTINE ALONE MAY NOT

- a. Tabernacles — Stay in His Presence
- b. [Lev 23:33-36, 39-43 NASB95] 33 Again the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 34 "Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'On the fifteenth of this seventh month is the Feast of Booths for seven days to the LORD. 35 'On the first day is a holy convocation; you shall do no laborious work of any kind. 36 'For seven days you shall present an offering by fire to the LORD. On the eighth day you shall have a holy convocation and present an offering by fire to the LORD; it is an assembly. You shall do no laborious work. ... 39 'On exactly the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the crops of the land, you shall celebrate the feast of the LORD for seven days, with a rest on the first day and a rest on the eighth day. 40 'Now on the first day you shall take for yourselves the foliage of beautiful trees, palm branches and boughs of leafy trees and willows of the brook, and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God for seven days. 41 'You shall thus celebrate it [as] a feast to the LORD for seven days in the year. It [shall be] a perpetual statute throughout your generations; you shall celebrate it in the seventh month. 42 'You shall live in booths for seven days; all the native-born in Israel shall live in booths, 43 so that your generations may know that I had the sons of Israel live in booths when I brought them out from the land of Egypt. I am the LORD your God.'"

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- c. [2Ch 7:8-10 NASB95] 8 So Solomon observed the feast at that time for seven days, and all Israel with him, a very great assembly [who came] from the entrance of Hamath to the brook of Egypt. 9 On the eighth day they held a solemn assembly, for the dedication of the altar they observed seven days and the feast seven days. 10 Then on the twenty-third day of the seventh month he sent the people to their tents, rejoicing and happy of heart because of the goodness that the LORD had shown to David and to Solomon and to His people Israel.
- d. The Feast of Tabernacles lasted seven days. Think about that. God could have said: "Come for an hour." Instead, He built extended time into their spiritual lives.
- e. This teaches us an important distinction: CONSISTENCY vs. CONCENTRATION
- f. Consistency says: "I seek God regularly." Concentration says: "For this season, I am giving God extraordinary attention."
- g. We need both.
- h. A marriage needs everyday conversation, but sometimes a husband and wife need uninterrupted time together. A student studies throughout the semester, but there are moments of concentrated preparation. An athlete trains consistently, but there are seasons when training intensifies.
- i. And spiritually, there are moments when we say: "For the next few days, other things can wait. I am seeking God."
- j. Look at the biblical pattern. Israel had Sabbath and feasts. The disciples prayed regularly and waited together in Jerusalem. The early church gathered regularly and entered extraordinary seasons of prayer. (Acts 2:1-4; Acts 4:23-31)
- k. We cannot manufacture revival. We cannot manipulate the Holy Spirit. We cannot schedule an outpouring. But we can schedule ourselves to seek God.
- l. I cannot promise what God will do Monday night. But I can decide where I will be Monday night.
- m. I cannot manufacture the fire. But I can put myself on the altar.
- n. Application: Maybe you have felt spiritually dry. Don't condemn yourself; recognize the hunger. Ask what currently receives your concentrated attention. Work? Sports? Entertainment? Social media? If we can give hours to what entertains us, is several consecutive nights seeking God unreasonable? Make the decision before revival begins: Sunday night through Wednesday belongs to God. Don't decide every afternoon whether you "feel like going." Decide now.
- o. Declaration: "For these four days, God has my attention!"

III. WE NEED EXTRAORDINARY SEASONS BECAUSE SPIRITUAL BREAKTHROUGH SOMETIMES REQUIRES LINGERING

- a. [Gen 32:24-30 NASB95] 24 Then Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. 25 When he saw that he had not prevailed against him, he touched the socket of his thigh; so the socket of Jacob's thigh was dislocated while he wrestled with him. 26 Then he said, "Let me go, for the dawn is breaking." But he said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." 27 So he said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." 28 He said, "Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel; for you have striven with God and with men and have prevailed." 29 Then Jacob asked him and said, "Please tell me your name." But he said, "Why is it that you ask my name?" And he blessed him there. 30 So Jacob named the place Peniel, for [he said,] "I have seen God face to face, yet my life has been preserved."
- b. [Luk 11:5-10 NASB95] 5 Then He said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and goes to him at midnight and says to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves; 6 for a friend of mine has come to me from a journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; 7 and from

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inside he answers and says, 'Do not bother me; the door has already been shut and my children and I are in bed; I cannot get up and give you [anything.]' 8 "I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him [anything] because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will get up and give him as much as he needs. 9 "So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 10 "For everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it will be opened.

- c. [Act 1:4, 12-14 NASB95] 4 Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, "Which," [He said,] "you heard of from Me; ... 12 Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away. 13 When they had entered [the city,] they went up to the upper room where they were staying; that is, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James [the son] of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas [the] [son] of James. 14 These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with [the] women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.
- d. Our culture trains us to leave quickly. If the food takes too long, we're irritated. If the webpage loads too slowly, we refresh it. If the service goes longer than expected, we check the clock.
- e. But some biblical encounters happened because somebody stayed. Jacob said: "I will not let you go unless you bless me." Genesis 32:26
- f. Jesus told His disciples: "...stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high." Luke 24:49
- g. Jesus didn't tell them exactly how long they would wait. He simply told them to stay until. Acts 1 finds them praying. Acts 2 finds them still there. Then suddenly: "...there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind..."
- h. What if they had stopped one day earlier? That question is speculative historically, but spiritually it exposes something in us: We often want "suddenly" without "until."
- i. We want Pentecost without the upper room. Power without waiting. Breakthrough without persistence. Encounter without inconvenience. Sometimes the first service exposes the hunger.
- j. The next service deepens it. Another service brings surrender. Another brings healing. Another brings clarity. Another brings breakthrough. Not because God needs four nights to do something. Sometimes we need four nights to become ready for what God has wanted to do all along.
- k. Application: Don't judge the entire revival by what you feel in the first service. Don't confuse immediacy with authenticity. Don't just attend the service; engage the service. Worship. Respond. Pray. Come to the altar. Stay a little longer. Come back the next night.
- l. Declaration: "I'm not leaving the place of pursuit because the answer hasn't come yet!"

IV. WE NEED EXTRAORDINARY SEASONS BECAUSE GOD MOVES AMONG A GATHERED PEOPLE

- a. [Lev 23:2 NASB95] 2 "Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, 'The LORD'S appointed times which you shall proclaim as holy convocations--My appointed times are these:
- b. [2Ch 7:8-10 NASB95] 8 So Solomon observed the feast at that time for seven days, and all Israel with him, a very great assembly [who came] from the entrance of Hamath to the brook of Egypt. 9 On the eighth day they held a solemn assembly, for the dedication of the altar they observed seven days and the feast seven days. 10 Then on the twenty-

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third day of the seventh month he sent the people to their tents, rejoicing and happy of heart because of the goodness that the LORD had shown to David and to Solomon and to His people Israel.

- c. [Act 2:1-4 NASB95] 1 When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. 2 And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.
 - d. [Act 4:31 NASB95] 31 And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and [began] to speak the word of God with boldness.
 - e. [Heb 10:24-25 NASB95] 24 and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, 25 not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging [one another;] and all the more as you see the day drawing near.
 - f. Leviticus repeatedly calls these feasts holy convocations. They were gatherings.
 - g. Yes, you can pray at home. You should pray at home. Yes, God can touch you in your car.
 - h. He can touch you while you're mowing the grass. He can speak to you sitting alone in your bedroom. But there is something biblical about the assembled people of God seeking Him together.
 - i. Acts 2:1: "...they were all together in one place." Acts 4:31: "And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken..."
 - j. There is personal prayer. And there is corporate prayer. There is personal worship. And there is corporate worship. There is personal hunger. But something happens when hungry people get around other hungry people.
 - k. Hunger becomes contagious. Your worship strengthens someone else's worship. Your faith encourages someone else's faith. Your testimony creates expectation in somebody sitting behind you.
 - l. Your response to the altar gives courage to someone who was afraid to move. And your children see that seeking God isn't something Mom and Dad merely talk about. This is especially important for families.
 - m. What if our children grow up remembering: "I remember those weeks when everything changed in our house because we were going to revival." "I remember seeing Dad at the altar." "I remember watching Mom worship." "I remember staying a little later than usual because people were praying." "I remember when God touched me."
 - n. We schedule vacations that our children will remember. We schedule birthdays they will remember. We schedule sporting events they will remember. Let's give them some encounters with God they will remember.
 - i. Application: Your hunger may be the permission someone beside you needs to become hungry again. Christianity is personal, but it was never designed to be merely private. Bring somebody with you. Bring your family. Invite the person who needs encouragement.
 - j. Declaration: "As for me and my house, we're going after God!"
- **God gives His people regular rhythms for consistency and extraordinary seasons for concentration, because there are moments when we must interrupt the ordinary to give God our extraordinary attention.**
 - Israel had: Daily devotion. Weekly rhythms. Extraordinary seasons.
 - And we need all three.

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- There are things God forms through CONSISTENCY. But there are moments when God calls us into CONCENTRATION.