

Divine Appointments

Jesus went up to Jerusalem at a time when the bible says there was a feast of the Jews. There would have been worship and fellowship and food. Jesus would have seen family and friends. He had gone to Jerusalem for a religious gathering. But as He passed by the pool of Bethesda, He saw many people who were suffering from illnesses and various physical abnormalities. Including one man who had been dealing with an infirmity for 38 years. It wasn't impossible for Jesus to see someone in this sort of situation and not feel compassion. And He realized in that moment that His visit to Jerusalem was really about much more than going to the temple.

Jesus told the man to take up His bed and walk. **John 5:9 says, "Immediately the man was made whole and took up his bed and walked."**

It doesn't say in the text that Jesus went to Jerusalem for the purpose of healing people. But He was in Jerusalem and He saw a need and He stepped in to meet that need. It is saying to us that we can find a need or see a need, virtually at anytime and anywhere. You may be going to the supermarket, but God may be bringing you into contact with someone who need your help. You may see that person at work as just a co-worker, but God sees them as someone you can share your faith with. Opportunity to serve God is often disguised as an opportunity to serve others. Or a chance to shine the light of heaven into someone's life. We all miss these opportunities because we weren't thinking that way or not praying that way. Be open for God's plan as there are divine appointments everywhere. That person in the street, that person who comes to your home. For a believer this is not just chance, but an opportunity for God to use you for His glory in that person's life. Don't miss your divine appointments when they come.

Remembering His Birth

2,000 years or so ago, the most amazing thing happened in a small town in the middle east. A baby came into the world. But not just any baby. This birth was different, this birth was the Messiah being born. Jesus came into human flesh, born of a woman. Why in the world would God do this? Why would the Messiah come to earth to live as a human being? What was God purpose in permitting this to happen? The answer is in **Matthew 1:21 – "And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins."**

Here lies the glory and yet hideous truth, in a manger. The Christmas story is yet beautifully told, but we only usually tell half the story and kind of hint at the rest. There are Christmas lights and delightful songs and maybe even attending a concert or two where they sing peace on earth and goodwill toward men. And that is all good, but we just cannot forget that Christmas is the story of a baby born to die. A child who rose up from the dead to save a sinful world.

We can only wonder if the Christmas hype is only a distraction causing us to lose sight of what Christmas is really all about. They sing, deck the halls, Rudolph the red nose reindeer, and yet none of it has anything to do with the real purpose of Christmas.

The first Christmas gift, a child born in a stable, ended in another gift. Jesus came to this world to die. He lived 33 years in a sinful world and then died, so that humanity, might live forever. Surely there is nothing more precious than life. And the Son of man died, so you can live forever. This

Christmas remember the whole story. Christmas is a time of joy, and it should be. But if you don't remember the real reason for the birth of Jesus, we may forget a whole lot more. Because of His birth, death and resurrection, you can have a blessed and Merry Christmas.

Knowing God's Will

You probably have asked this question many times, "How can a person know God's will?" Many want to know should I marry this person, should I take a certain job and move to the city. Which school should I attend?

There are sometimes obvious things you can look for that are clear signs that will help you know what to do. But at times it is not so easy to know what to do in certain cases. So, look at Matthew 2:12. The wise men has visited Jesus and His parents in Bethlehem and were going back to Herod to tell him they had found the Messiah. **Matthew 2:12 says, "Then, being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way."**

God wanted the wise men to know, and He told them what He wanted them to do. This does not mean that God speaks to everyone through dreams. But it is to say that if God wants you to know something, He will tell you. God longs to have a close relationship with His children. And if we take the time to "be still" before the Lord, He will let you know exactly what you should do about a given situation.

Be faithful, study, pray, search the bible, and you can expect that God will guide your steps. That's what He does. Many hurry along and make poor decisions because they don't wait to consult God. So, the next time you want direction, just sit before the All-knowing Father and He will guide and direct your path. That's a promise.

Jesus Only

Jesus scaled the mountainside with three of His closest friends. The bible account doesn't say they asked them where they were going or why. They couldn't imagine that a light from heaven was going to shine on Him or that Moses and Elijah were going to appear there and in Jesus's presence. [Matthew 17]

The disciples were fearful of the sight of the Transfiguration of Jesus when His countenance shined like the sun and His clothing was white as the light. **Matthew 17:8 says, When they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.**

There is something there for us as well. They saw Jesus only. It would be good for us to see Jesus only, too. No other god, nothing distracting us from our calling, but just Jesus only. Today you can do an inventory and think of how much of [Jesus only] that you see in a given day. And then look to see how much you see the other things in life that distract you. You can know that Jesus is with you, and you can see [Jesus only] in what you are going through! Jesus only; that is the only true way to live.

Battles

We read in the bible a lot about battles and warfare. Likely, if you are not a member of the armed forces you are not going to go to war today. And we really do thank God for those who do fight for our country and we pray for them as well.

But we have battles daily, don't we, with temptation and opposition and so much more? What do we do when they come? **2 Chronicles 32:7-8, King Hezekiah said "Be strong and courageous; do not be afraid nor dismayed before the king of Assyria, nor before all the multitude that is with him; for there are more with us than with him. With him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the LORD our God, to help us and to fight our battles." And the people were strengthened by the words of Hezekiah king of Judah."**

So, who is fighting your battles? When the heat gets turned up, where do you go for help? Where do you find your strength? The people were strengthened by the words spoken by the king. And we can be strengthened as well when trials come. So, when battles come, let God go before you. Let Him be your strength, today and always. Don't worry and don't be afraid. You can trust the God of this world to do exactly what He has promised you He will do. You can be strong and courageous because the Lord thy God is with thee.

Important Matters

Years and years ago people believed that the earth was flat. They believed that sailors would sail right off the end of the world. But then we became better educated and people noticed that the horizon was curved. And later we began to have the ability to take photographs of planets and we realized the earth is not flat, but round. And even today there are still people who believe the earth is flat and you can't convince them otherwise.

2 Timothy 2:23 says, **But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife.**

The earth being flat is one of those disputes. But what is even more important is that we avoid time wasted, pointless discussions about faith and the bible. If it is a dispute, it is not what God wants when sharing His word with others. God's word is God's word and it needs no defense. Our lives are all the proof one needs when it comes to the character of God. If they don't believe that, then a long drawn-out conversation about nothing won't help. Don't get bogged down with trivial matters. Stick to the important subjects and live it out in your life in front of all you see, and you will be way better off.

True Greatness

How can a person become great? Well, if they want to win a spelling bee, they study. If you want to pass an English test, you also study. But what makes someone truly successful as a person? **2 Chronicles 27:6** says, **"So Jothan became mighty, because He prepared his ways before the Lord his God."**

Jothan reign 16 years and completed an enormous construction project and won battles. But greatness came from the fact that he was faithful to God. It is right to get educated, to plan, to strive, to build, but none of that brings true greatness.

Keeping your heart humble before God is the true meaning of success. So, if you want to be great in this world, become a servant and do the things that please God. You will find that this is the only true way to obtain greatness.

The Real Cause

We see the increase of natural disasters and people say global warming. There's terrorism and people say it is because of religious fanatics. There's murder and people blame guns or maybe violence because of the media. Crimes are committed and they say parents aren't spending enough time with their children.

I am sure we understand all of these reasons. But we don't want to overlook the real cause of it all. In **Revelation 12:9**, John says, **"Satan ... was cast out into the earth, and His angels were cast out with Him."**

Where did Satan and His angels go when He was cast out of heaven? Right here on planet earth! We are in the midst of a real spiritual battle. Where there is an enemy filled with hatred and anything and everything God loves. Which includes you and me. The world's problems are ultimately spiritual. And the solution to fixing the problems in this world is spiritual too. You want to make sure that we are not ignoring spiritual reality because that is exactly what the enemy the devil wants you to do. He wants to put worry, fear and anxiety on you to figure out this world on your own. We have a mighty God who has defeated the devil. So, the next time you are faced with Satan's lies about your life, fight back spiritually with the power of God. If you are a spiritual person in Christ this should be your first method of defense. The carnal man is no match for this world's problem. Hold on to Jesus by faith and when the world finally passes away, you will live on to eternity.

Revenge

Revenge is a very human concept. It goes like this. Someone does you wrong, and you wrong them in return to settle the score. They damage your property, you damage theirs. They humiliate and embarrass you and you look for an opportunity to inflict pain upon them. But look at **Proverbs 20:22** where it says, **"Do not say I will recompense [repay] evil, wait for the Lord and He will save you."**

Joseph didn't seek revenge against his brothers and God worked things out. David went out of his way not to take revenge upon King Saul. And not even Jesus went after revenge against Judas or the religious leaders of His day.

Getting revenge lessens a person faith and their ability to hear God. It comes with a negative attitude of anger and hatred. You have to live with the knowledge that God says we all have sinned and fallen short of His glory. It is simply better to let God take care of things however He wants to, in the lives of those who have wronged you. God's way is always better, and He will take care of your

enemies for you. Just trust that today and be free of what comes with revenge. It will be a much better way to live.

Peace on Earth

Peace on Earth, and goodwill toward men..." Each year at Christmas time, the refrain is the same, but the truth is that there is little real peace on earth. Multiplied millions of people have died in wars in recent decades, and hostilities and conflicts continue to rage around the world. Society is not as safe as it was in past generations, and there is a tragic lack of peace in many homes and in the lives of countless individuals. Stress, depression, addiction, illness and much more conspire to rob people of peace. The Bible refers to Jesus as the "Prince of Peace" in **Isaiah 9:6 - For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.** Yet there seems to be a remarkable lack of peace in the world today. Does God have a way of restoring real peace into the lives of His people?

Yes, He does. And He stands at the door of the hearts of many people waiting for them to let Him in. As a true believer you can have that peace in the midst of the storm. It is yours for the asking. God is the Prince of Peace and to experience this peace that passes all understanding, just grab hold of Him today and never let go. As the world continues to take a tumble into what gives them peace, allow the power of the Holy Spirit and the love of Jesus Christ to be your peace this time of year and for always.

The Damage Lives On

In Galatians 5 Paul talks about the Fruit of the Spirit and the works of the flesh. He says in **Galatians 5:19 - Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness.**

If you look at the statistics adultery is a frightening common thing today. And if you look at the Old Testament you will see how absolutely offensive it is to God. So offensive that it was punishable by death. Sadly, adultery has almost become sociably acceptable. It is so common in spite of the fact that it ruins marriages, destroys homes and often puts kids in a tailspin.

This is one of those things where there needs to be a zero-tolerance policy. It should not be excused or made light of. The damage to society caused by adultery is massive. If you are tempted, just don't. Just don't do it. It has terrible consequences. Yes, God forgives it, but the damage lives on.