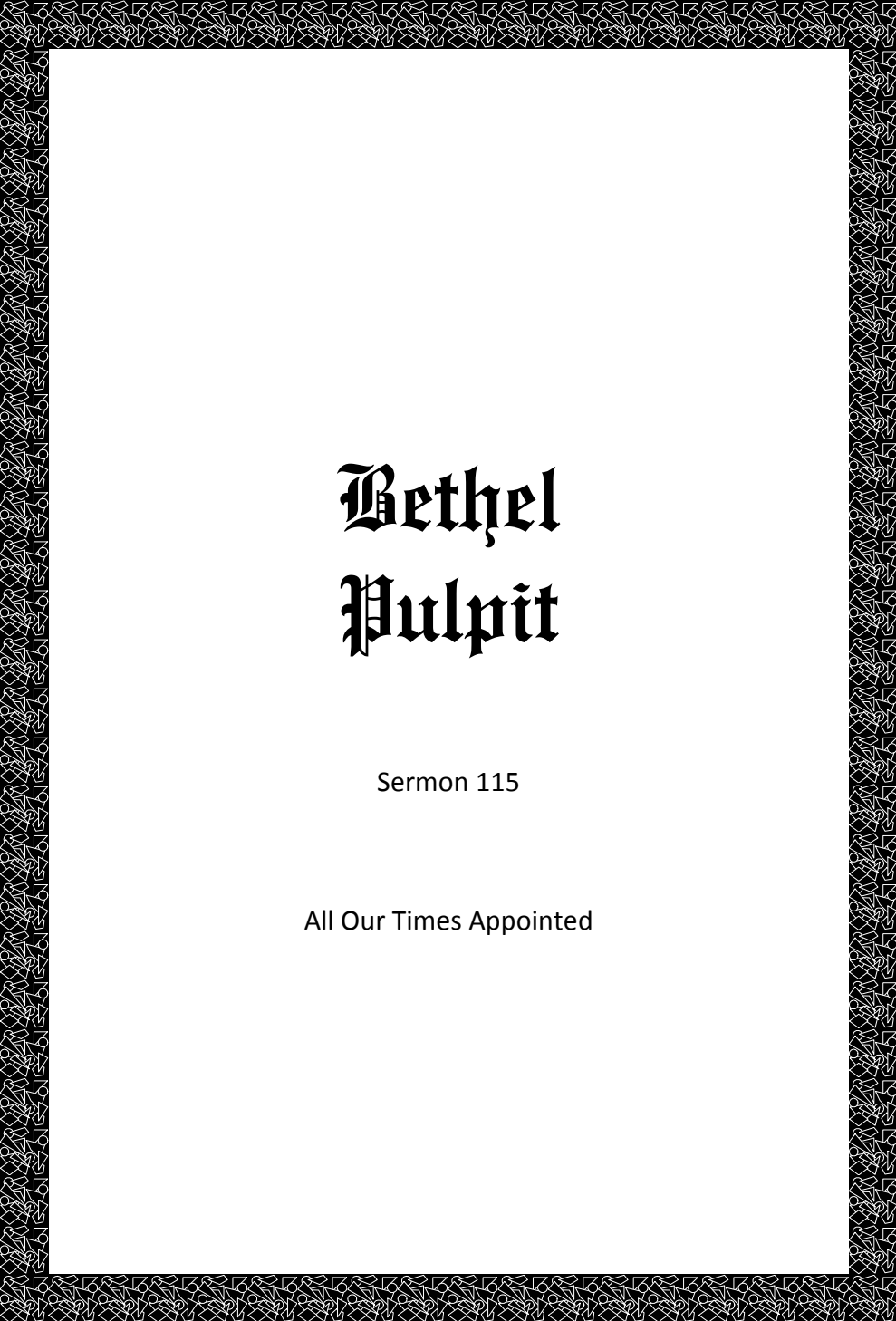




Bethel Pulpit

Sermon 115

All Our Times Appointed

**Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,
on Thursday, 17th November, 1994**

Text: *“In which time Moses was born” (Acts 7. 20).*

None of us chose the time when we were born and none of us will choose the time when we shall die. These times are divinely appointed and nothing can ever alter them. Neither did we choose the circumstances in which we were born; neither can we choose the circumstances in which we shall die. All these things are divinely appointed. The wise man says, “To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die.” He does not say, a time to live; he does not put anything in between. “A time to be born, and a time to die.” One thing is very clear, that as surely as once we were born, so surely one day we shall die.

I remember meeting an aged, godly lady at Brighton. She was not far from one hundred years old. She told me that when she was a little girl in bed one night, she began to think. She thought, I am, so I must have been born. As she thought in bed, If I was born, if I am, if I live, then it means one day that life must end and I must die. And then the great question, what then? She was relating this over ninety years after it happened. Some of God’s people have such simple beginnings but they are very real. We have been born. We live. Because we have been born, because we live, one day we must die. What then? “It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.” The great thing is this: if there was a time appointed when we were born, and there was, and if there is a time appointed when we must die, and there is, O has there been a time appointed when we must be born again? Because “ye *must* be born again.”

“Am I quickened by His Spirit;
Live a life of faith and prayer?
Trusting wholly to His merit;
Casting on Him all my care?
Daily panting,
In His likeness to appear?”

“In which time Moses was born.” It was a time appointed by God, and nothing could prevent Moses being born. Nothing can prevent any vessel of mercy being born. “In which time Moses was born.” Well, it was a very dark time, a very terrible time, when Moses was born, wasn’t it? We read, “Another king arose, which knew not Joseph.” We read, “The same dealt subtilly with our kindred, and evil entreated our fathers, so that they cast out their young children, to the end they might not live. In which time Moses was born.” It was a terrible time, a dreadful time in Israel. We read all about it this evening in Exodus chapter 1: the affliction, the hard labour, that word which kept coming in – the rigour – the cruelty of Pharaoh, the murdering of new-born children.

“In which time Moses was born.” It is a terrible day in which you and I have been born, but that was God’s divine appointment. God appointed that each one of us here this evening, whether we are older or younger, should be living in these wicked, evil 1990’s. That was God’s appointment. “In which time Moses was born.” He was born in a terrible day. We have been born in a terrible day, and it is by divine appointment. Perhaps sometimes we stop and we think and perhaps we wish we had lived in other days, in different times. Perhaps you have sometimes thought you would have liked to have lived when there were perhaps a couple of thousand people verging on the house of God on the Sabbath and the ministry was so powerful, the power and influence of the Holy Spirit, sinners being called, the tenderness of their walk, the love of the brethren, those wonderful days of spiritual prosperity. Perhaps some of you have wished for that at times. But it is not right for us to wish we lived in any other times. The word of the wise man, “Say not thou, What is the cause that the former days were better than these? for thou dost not enquire wisely concerning this.” I wonder really if we should have liked all the appalling poverty and hardship there was in those days of spiritual prosperity, or if we should have liked the dreadful persecution there was in those days of spiritual prosperity.

“In which time Moses was born.” God has appointed that your life and my life should be lived in this dark, degenerate day. Who would have thought of shops opening on the Sabbath? Who would have thought of a national lottery? Who would have thought of all the dreadful divorce? Who would have thought of all this appalling abortion, and so on?

“In which time Moses was born.” It was a dark time then; it is a dark time now. The point is this: if the Lord has dealt with us in love and mercy, our witness is to be born in *this* day, in *this* generation and in *this* time. One of the old divines said it was a great honour for any child of God to be called by the Lord to witness in times of darkness and declension and distress. He said that rather we should count it an honour, a privilege. I think he made the analogy that the stars shine all the brighter when the night is dark.

“In which time Moses was born.” In which time we were born. There is a word in the Psalms; I have never spoken from it although I have looked at it often over the years. “Behold, bless ye the Lord, all ye servants of the Lord, which by night stand in the house of the Lord.” Some of God’s people are called by Him to serve Him in a dark night in the history of the church of God, and it is a dark night now. O may we see it to be an honour, a privilege. “Behold, bless ye the Lord, all ye servants of the Lord, which *by night* stand in the house of the Lord.”

“In which time Moses was born.” It was a time when Israel needed a deliverer. Let us be clear, beloved friends, when the Lord needs a man, that man will always be appointed, that man will always be provided, that man will always be raised up, and not all the powers of hell or Pharaoh or anyone else can stop it. We are told that “the time of the promise drew nigh, which God had sworn to Abraham.” “The time of the promise drew nigh.” God had decreed four hundred and thirty years’ bondage and captivity in Egypt. He told Abraham that. “The time of the promise drew nigh, which God had sworn to Abraham,” that after four hundred and thirty years He would bring them out. What were the days like just before it, when four hundred and twenty five years had gone and four hundred and twenty six and four hundred and twenty seven? Well, things were worse than they had ever been before and deliverance was more impossible than it had ever been in all those centuries. They sometimes say that the darkest hour is before the dawn.

“In which time Moses was born.” But when the Lord would raise up a man, that man will be raised up, whether it is a Martin Luther, a popish monk in a monastery trying to save himself by works, or whether it is a William Huntington, born of a double adultery and brought up in squalor and poverty. If the Lord needs a man, that man will be provided.

“In which time Moses was born.” And nothing could prevent that birth. Also, Moses’ life could not be taken away from him. A child of God is immortal till his work is done. There Moses was born, and it seemed as if his life hung by a precarious thread and there he was hidden by his parents for three months. It is recorded in Hebrews 11 that it was “by faith.” But Moses could not die; it was impossible. All the power of Pharaoh, all the power of Egypt, all the power of Satan, all the power of hell could not destroy Moses. There was a work before him and nothing could prevent it. It is so with all God’s people. They cannot die until God’s work is performed in them and through them. Perhaps some of you look back to the days of your unregeneracy when you were without God and without hope in the world, and perhaps there were escapes from death. Perhaps it seemed certain you must have died. Perhaps there were others with you and they did die. Now you could not die.

“Preserved in Jesus when
My feet made haste to hell;
And there should I have gone,
But Thou dost all things well.”

“In which time Moses was born,” and not only born, but he could not die, he could not be destroyed. That watchful providence, that tender care, that sovereign Protector, unseen yet for ever at hand. “In which time Moses was born.” So the time of his birth was appointed and the time of his death was appointed and the time of his life’s work was appointed. It was a strange time.

I am jumping ahead, but when Moses was forty, he made that wonderful choice. Mind you, it was by precious faith. God enabled him to make that choice. It was not a freewill choice. “By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ better riches than the treasures in Egypt.” And Moses thought that was the time. Moses knew, there was that inward realisation, what his life’s work was. There was a time when he was born and he was born for a purpose. It was God’s divine appointment. He was to be a deliverer. Moses had the realisation of it. When he was forty, by precious faith, he sacrificed everything for Christ’s sake. He sacrificed his reputation. He sacrificed

the palace. He sacrificed his honour, his pleasures, his riches. Now this was the time in which he thought he was going to deliver Israel out of Egypt, so much so that he even slew a man who was ill-treating one of his brethren. He identified himself with the poor, despised people of God. But that was not God's time. You say, Why? God gives no account of His matters. You say, Why? His way is in the sea, and His path in the great waters, and His footsteps are not known. You say, But why? Moses is willing. Here are the people of God groaning in captivity, in bondage. Surely this is the time. O that decree that ordered Moses' birth, that ordered his deliverance from an early death in the River Nile, that ordered that he should be the leader of God's people, it ordered that his life's work should not begin when he was forty years old, but when he was eighty years old. You say, People were different then. But it was Moses who said, "The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow." It was Moses who wrote that. He had to wait until he was fourscore years of age, until he was eighty years old, before his life's work should begin. "In which time Moses was born." God makes no mistakes in ordering all things by the counsel of His will. Your time, my time, is always ready. God says, "I the Lord will hasten it in His time." God is never in a hurry; God is never too late.

You see the wonderful circumstances of Moses' birth, the wonderful circumstances of Moses' choice – forty years old, the prime of life. What did Stephen say here? "Learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians." "When he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren." Who put it in his heart? Yet this was not God's time. God's time was another forty years. You and I read it in two or three verses, but Moses in the backside of the desert, day by day doing a job a little boy could have done, looking after a few sheep, he who not long before had been prince in Egypt – O the trial of that man's faith! But it was all appointed, and until that time came, Moses could not move. The Lord may have a purpose for you and you are straining and striving, but until that time comes, you cannot move, neither will the door be opened, neither will you be set free. O those long, trying, wearisome forty years in the wilderness! And we just have this: "For he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible."

“In which time Moses was born.” “All my times shall ever be ordered by His wise decree.” God makes no mistake in ordering the times, the seasons in the lives of His people, in eternal love, in infinite wisdom, every detail appointed, and so much hanging on so little. Now go right back to the beginning of Moses’ life and see the mysterious unfolding of providence ordering every time in Moses life for the honour and glory of God and for the comfort of his parents Amram and Jochebed, that Moses life should be spared.

“In which time Moses was born.” But do you believe it, the Lord can watch over and preserve a person’s life in the midst of Egyptians and Pharaohs and crocodiles and devils just as much as He can in the comfort of a loving home? Do you believe it? A wall of fire round about: Satan cannot get through. A sovereign Protector: Satan cannot overthrow Him. Well, may that be a help to you in your prayers. Perhaps you have to be with ungodly people. The Lord can keep you there. Perhaps your children are away from home. The Lord can keep them there. Perhaps there is that new-born baby and you fear what might happen. The Lord can watch over that little one. Perhaps someone is going into hospital. The Lord can care. Do you believe it?

“In which time Moses was born.” It was not just his birth and his death and his leaving the palace and his appointment to be ruler over Israel, but all those details of his early life. We find a time when his mother is making an ark of bulrushes. Whatever for? What a foolish idea really, to make an ark of bulrushes and put a baby in it and put it down by the River Nile. It is just like one of you putting a baby in a carrycot and leaving it by the motorway. “In which time Moses was born.” And that time was appointed, and that circumstance. Who told Moses’ mother how to make an ark of bulrushes? I could not make one; could you? But she did. It needed to be properly done, or the baby would have been drowned or devoured.

“In which time Moses was born.” “All my times shall ever be ordered by His wise decree.” Do you believe that Moses’ God still lives and reigns, and that He still lives and reigns in your life? And do you believe that He cares for you and orders all your times and the times of your loved ones? Do you believe all these things work together for your good, and nothing can overthrow His divine, eternal purpose?

“In which time Moses was born.” Well, the timing here was the timing of infinite wisdom. Moses’ mother puts the infant Moses into the ark of bulrushes and then she puts it among the flags by the river’s brink. And as she puts that baby into the ark and as she puts the ark into the River Nile, she puts it right into the hands of almighty God. Do you believe it? Moses was never safer in the whole of his long life than when he lay in that place exposed to every danger. Perhaps some of you know something of this: “Commit thy way unto the Lord” – Jochebed with Moses as she put him right into the hands of God – “Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass.” “And she laid it in the flags by the river’s brink.”

“In which time Moses was born.” Now that divinely-appointed time was the very time when the daughter of Pharaoh came down. If she had come a little earlier or a little later, it would have been all in vain, but she came at that very time, at that very moment. And so it was appointed that she saw the ark, and so it was appointed that she was constrained to send her maid to fetch it. And at that very time the babe wept, and at that very time an almighty finger touched the heart of the Egyptian princess and her heart melted with compassion. Do you believe it? Do you believe that God is in control? Do you believe what you do believe? Do you believe that “all my times shall ever be ordered by His wise decree”? Do you believe the sentiments of that beautiful hymn we have just sung?

“Thrice comfortable hope
That calms my stormy breast;
My Father’s hand prepares the cup,
And what He wills is best.”

“In which time Moses was born.” And then the wonderful unfolding of it all. Miriam watches. She comes forward, offers the services of a Hebrew woman to be nurse. Pharaoh’s daughter accepts. Miriam hastens home. The infant Moses is taken back to his mother and there she is paid wages for looking after her own child, and also in complete safety, with the protection of the king. The mystery of divine sovereignty, the mystery of divine wisdom!

“His providence unfolds the book,
And makes His counsels shine;

Each opening leaf and every stroke,
Fulfils some deep design.”

“In which time Moses was born.” And the time of his birth, the time of his death, and every single detail in between were ordered by his God.

Well, beloved friends, what is it? “This God is our God for ever and ever: He will be our Guide even unto death.” May some of you sweetly feel this evening, “My times are in Thy hand” – God’s hand, the hand of Moses’ God, the hand of an all-wise God, the hand of an all-loving God. And may you and I be able to commit all our times where God Himself has placed them from all eternity. Your times of joy, your times of sorrow, your times of bereavement, your times of trial, your times of perplexity, your times of need – O may you be enabled sweetly, solemnly, to commit all these things into the hand of Moses’ God, knowing that He rules, that the government is upon His shoulder, that “all must come, and last, and end, as shall please my heavenly Friend.”

“In which times Moses was born.”