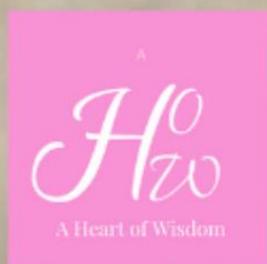


Understanding The

WATCHES OF THE DAY

And How to Man Them



'Arise, cry out in the night, at the beginning of the watches...' Lamentations 2:19

We typically measure a day as a period of 24hours, but in studying the Bible we will notice that there are often references to 'watches' when it comes to identifying periods of time in a day. Specifically, we see references to the first, second, third and fourth watches of the day and night.

This series we are digging a bit deeper as we look at the watches of time and their significance.

We pray that the Holy Spirit will open our eyes and grant us understanding and the ability to implement what we learn during this study.



Day 1 Evening & Morning

'God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. So the evening and the morning were the first day.' Genesis 1:5

To understand the watches of the day, it helps to see things from God's perspective. Genesis 1 tells us consistently that the first day actually began in the evening and this sequence continued throughout the scripture detailing God's creation process. In keeping with this principle throughout the Bible we see that the measurement of time for the Jewish day begins in the evening, specifically at sundown.

'Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming—in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning— ' Mark 13:35
'Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours in the day?..." John 11:9

Beginning and ending at sundown, the Jewish day is further broken down to 8 'watches' with four watches for the day and four for the night. Both evening and daytime watches have their significance and knowing these will help us put the Bible in perspective and aid our understanding of scripture. As our understanding of scripture increases, so does the efficacy of our prayers.

'I will stand my watch and set myself on the rampart, and watch to see what He will say to me...' Habakkuk 2:1

While we can pray at any time, knowing the purpose of a 'watch' can aid the effectiveness of our prayers. It may also help us understand why the Holy Spirit leads us to pray certain types of prayers at different times of the day. It will also help us appreciate our personal prayer watch – the time when we are most spiritually alert and given to prayer. Over the next few days we will look at the significance of each of the evening and day watches and the principles we can start applying to our lives.

Prayer: Lord please open up my understanding so I see what You are saying. Make the Bible real to me as I grow in comprehension of the significance of each watch.

Day 2

6-9PM

First Watch of the Night

Significance: Time for Covenants

“Arise, cry out in the night, at the beginning of the watches; pour out your heart like water before the face of the Lord. Lift your hands toward Him for the life of your young children, who faint from hunger at the head of every street.” Lamentations 2:19

This watch represents the foundation of the new day, a time of bringing the day before the Lord and putting everything in His care. As believers we shouldn't just accept what the day throws at us. At this watch we prophetically take charge of what we will permit in our lives in the hours to come by seeking divine direction for the day and aligning with the Holy Spirit's agenda. This watch acts as a gate to the new day and is the time to take charge of the other watches, partnering with the Holy Spirit to align the day to His agenda and releasing the ministry of angels to go into operation on our behalf.

'In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread, until the twenty-first day of the month at evening.' Exodus 12:18

'When evening had come, He sat down with the twelve... For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.' Matthew 26:20,28

In the Old Testament this watch was when the Israelites had the Passover meal and in the New Testament, the period where Jesus broke bread with His disciples and instituted a new covenant. This watch also represents the renewal of covenants, a time to take hold of the provisions in our covenant with Him even as we lay the foundation for the upcoming hours.

Prayer: Lord I thank you for new beginnings and a new watch. I bring myself and all that concerns me under Your complete control as I renew my covenant with You (state the specific covenant you're renewing). I ask Lord that You bless my day so that it reflects the values of Your kingdom. Restrain me from sin today Lord and equip me to schedule my day according to Your divine agenda. I pray for newness and freshness in every area of my life and your preservation and protection throughout the night watches. By Your grace I take control of each gate of the night and day and bring every watch under the total authority of the Holy Spirit.



Day 3

9-12pm

Second Watch of the Night

Significance: Time of Provision & Favour

'Speak now in the hearing of the people, and let every man ask from his neighbor and every woman from her neighbor, articles of silver and articles of gold.' And the Lord gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians...' Exodus 11:2-3

When the Israelites were about to leave Egypt after their Passover supper (before the firstborn of all Egypt died) they went to the Egyptians and asked the for items of silver and gold and the Egyptian responded favourably. This was clearly the work of the Lord especially as the Egyptians were not only their slave masters, but had also been through the several plagues the Lord inflicted upon them. This is a time of provision for needs and projects as the items plundered by the Israelites was what they used to build the tabernacle in the wilderness.

'That night the Lord appeared to Paul and said, "Be encouraged, Paul. Just as you have been a witness to me here in Jerusalem, you must preach the Good News in Rome as well."' Acts 23:11

'Then the commander called two of his officers and ordered, "Get 200 soldiers ready to leave for Caesarea at nine o'clock tonight. Also take 200 spearmen and 70 mounted troops. Provide horses for Paul to ride, and get him safely to Governor Felix." ' Acts 23:23-24 NLT

Paul was in a Roman fortress when a plot to kill him was uncovered and the commander gave his men the instruction to safely escort Paul out of the city. The amount of protection give to one man was mind boggling, but necessary in order to fulfil the Lord's mandate for Paul to get to Rome and preach. Are there projects you're working on that require divine intervention? Use this watch to pray specifically that they be accomplished to God's glory. It is also the time to take up plundering those who have oppressed you and demand multiple restorations for what has been lost. This is also the time to release angels to go ahead and counter the midnight operations of the enemy.

Prayer: Father I ask for a release of Your favour over my life and my destiny. Release Your provision to me so my needs will be met over Your assignment for my life and doors of divine favour opened for my projects.



Day 4

12-3am

Third Watch of the Night

Significance: Heightened Spiritual Activity

'but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way' Matthew 13:25

'They come out at night, snarling like vicious dogs as they prowl the streets. Listen to the filth that comes from their mouths; their words cut like swords. "After all, who can hear us?" they sneer.' Psalms 59:6-7

At this watch spiritual activity is at its peak, especially for demonic activities as this is when most people are fast asleep and their defences are down. Many demonic things that happen during the day are orchestrated in the spirit during this watch. We often hear of those involved in occultic practices etc releasing incantations and engaging in devilish activities during this period. However, this is also the period for supernatural interventions for the believer and the time given to rebuke storms and execute divine judgement.

And that night at midnight, the Lord struck down all the firstborn sons in the land of Egypt... Exodus 12:29

'Around midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening. Suddenly, there was a massive earthquake, and the prison was shaken to its foundations. All the doors immediately flew open, and the chains of every prisoner fell off! ' Acts 16:25-26

'I rise at midnight to thank you for your just regulations.' Psalms 119:62

As believers we should use the opportunity of this watch to engage in spiritual warfare to frustrate the plans of the enemy and also call forth divine interventions and judgements as this is the time to stop the demonic activities right at the start. It is also time to ask for the miraculous to take place in our lives. We see this in Acts 12 5-12, the church prayed when Peter was in jail, and at night while he was sleeping, an angel showed up to free him. Jesus also shared several parables around the believer being alert at midnight (Mk 13:35, Mtt 25:6, Lk 11:5) so this is a watch we should pay attention to.

'He speaks in dreams, in visions of the night, when deep sleep falls on people as they lie in their beds. He whispers in their ears...' Job 33:15-16

It's also a time to pray for our dreams as the Lord may 'whisper' instructions to us concerning the future which can save our lives and impact our destinies and those of people He has put in our care.

Prayer: Lord I ask that you keep me spiritually alert even when my body is asleep. Keep my spiritual ears open so I hear Your instructions and give me the heart to obey immediately. Deliver me from any prison where I may be bound. Expose any area the enemy may have stolen from me and grant me total restoration. Calm every raging storm and remove the wind from any storm the enemy is planning so it doesn't even arise. Help me to discern and destroy any ungodly structures in my life and environment. I praise You Lord because You are all powerful and You have promised never to leave or forsake me. Thank You Lord for your grace, mercy and favour upon my life. In the name of Jesus.

Day 5

3-6am

The Fourth Watch of the Night

Significance: The time for deliverance and execution of judgement

'O house of David! Thus says the Lord: "Execute judgment in the morning; and deliver him who is plundered out of the hand of the oppressor..." Jeremiah 21:12

The last watch of the night is a sensitive time for the believer because this is the period God in His wisdom has instituted a principle of the daybreak which calls forth an end to and judgement upon demonic activities and for believers to demand deliverance from oppression.

'Have you made daylight spread to the ends of the earth, to bring an end to the night's wickedness? The light disturbs the wicked and stops the arm that is raised in violence.' Job 38:13,15

'Now it came to pass, in the morning watch, that the Lord looked down upon the army of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and cloud, and He troubled the army of the Egyptians.' Exodus 14:24

'Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea.' Matthew 14:25

The watch that leads to the break of dawn is the time to execute God's divine judgement upon and uproot whatever the enemy has planted (see also Isa 17:14, 1 Sam 11:11, Mtt 14: 25-33). This was the period God executed judgement on the Egyptians and when Jesus calmed the storm troubling the disciples at sea. As darkness diminishes and light comes forth in the day, we also have the authority to demand an end of darkness and a new dawn in our lives.

'Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed...He said to them, "Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth.'" Mark 1:35,38

Dawn speaks of freshness, newness, so this is also a time to pray for clarity and divine counsel so we don't miss God's agenda for our lives or walk into the traps of the enemy. Jesus functioned a lot during the night watches (Mtt 14, Mk 1:35, Lk 6:12) and we see the results He experienced during the waking hours. He was always clear on the purpose for the day and performed many deliverances from different types of oppression. There's a lot for us to learn from His prayer life.

Prayer: Lord I repent of any area I may have acted unjustly and ask that the blood of Jesus speak mercy over my life and cleanse me. Let your dayspring arise and consume every form of darkness and stronghold in my life. Execute Your divine judgement upon all the activities of the enemy in my life and in all that concerns me. Cripple every plan and strategy of the enemy to bring destruction my way. I declare my release from every form of oppression working in or around me and that every reproach in my life be rolled away. Lord train my hands for war and my fingers for battle so I can contend for my faith and destiny against any wickedness released against me and all that concerns me. Let your light shine and bring enlightenment, uncover any hidden wisdom I need to function in to align with Your purpose for my life. In the name of Jesus.



Day 6

6-9am

First Watch of the Day

Significance: Equipment for Service

'These people are not drunk, as some of you are assuming. Nine o'clock in the morning is much too early for that.' Acts 2:15

The disciples received the outpouring of the Holy Spirit around this watch which equipped them to fulfil the commission Jesus gave them. We don't know what we will encounter as the hours proceed so with the help of the Holy Spirit we can engage the day and pray to receive equipment for service.

'Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge.' Psalms 19:2

'...Morning by morning he wakens me and opens my understanding to his will.' Isaiah 50:4

As believers we shouldn't be waiting for the day to bring whatever it wants our way. This is a time to speak out and instruct the day on how it should go for us. Each day has a divine agenda and we can activate our effectiveness by keying into God's will early in the day to receive understanding for the day's assignment. When we do this, it helps us deal with issues of time wasting, procrastination and other obstacles as we put our schedule in the hands of the Holy Spirit and move according to His instructions.

'...We ask God to give you complete knowledge of his will and to give you spiritual wisdom and understanding. Then the way you live will always honor and please the Lord, and your lives will produce every kind of good fruit. All the while, you will grow as you learn to know God better and better.' Colossians 1:9-10

Notice that Jesus was never hurried or confused, He knew exactly what He was supposed to do per time. During this watch we ask the Lord to give us not just clarity on the knowledge of His will but also the wisdom and understanding required to successfully execute His will to perfection.

Prayer: Lord as the sun is rising let it release the blessing of the day on me. Clothe me with the garment I need for today. Let the day release its full potential to me and yield its productivity to me. I declare that today I walk with total clarity of God's agenda and declare that the day will be to my spiritual and physical advantage.



Day 7

9am-12pm

Second watch of the Day

Significance: Time for purpose

'At nine o'clock in the morning he was passing through the marketplace and saw some people standing around doing nothing.' Matthew 20:3

In the marketplace most enterprises are open for business by 9am, and the average workday is already tagged '9 to 5'. As such this is the period designated for work and fulfilment of purpose as majority of people are expected to be in their place of assignment at this time. It's critical to note that just being present at work and being busy doesn't automatically equal accomplishment.

'...Then they called on the name of Baal from morning until noontime, shouting, "O Baal, answer us!" But there was no reply of any kind...' 1 Kings 18:26

'It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him.' Mark 15:25

When Elijah confronted the prophets of Baal, they spent all morning calling on their god yet there was no answer- it was an exercise in futility. Jesus was also crucified during this watch, and it led to the fulfillment of His purpose for coming to earth. What makes the real difference to our day isn't just our activity. There are times an entire day can go by and by evening we are wondering where the hours went and cannot really account for the value of all the working hours. Therefore our focus should be on productivity rather than activity. Are we walking in purpose or just killing time?

'Those who believed what Peter said were baptized and added to the church that day—about 3,000 in all.' Acts 2:41

'It's not important who does the planting, or who does the watering. What's important is that God makes the seed grow.' 1 Corinthians 3:7

This is the time to also call forth the type of growth only the Holy Spirit can provide. The disciples were empowered by the Holy Spirit during the first watch and by the second watch 3000 were added to their number. This type of growth isn't just about material things but also the more important spiritual things that will enable us sustain the growth and continue growing. It's a time to ask for the grace to live a crucified life so that we aren't selfish in our endeavours, but seek to make God's agenda our priority.

Prayer: Father I ask for the strategy and ability to be spiritually and physically productive today. Establish the works of my hands. Help me to crucify my selfish nature so my focus is on fulfilling Your purpose today.



Day 8

12-3pm

Third Watch of the Day

Significance: The fullness of Day

“But the path of the just is like the shining sun, that shines ever brighter unto the perfect day.” Proverbs 4:18

At this watch the sun is at its fullest and the day should yield its best. This is a sensitive watch for both believers and the kingdom of darkness. For believers this should be the time of optimum productivity, when the day should yield its best to us (Deuteronomy 33:4). For the kingdom of darkness this is the period the destruction programmed at night is released.

“You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, nor of the arrow that flies by day, nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness, nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday.” Psalms 91:5-6

“The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night.” Psalms 121:6 NKJV

Every day is pregnant with spiritual activity. The fact that we don't see things with our natural eyes doesn't mean they don't exist and aren't in operation. Remember the devil doesn't have any new ideas, he simply takes the things of God and perverts them. So while the righteous are meant to shine brightest during this period, the enemy also schedules negativity to manifest at this time as well.

“And it shall come to pass in that day,” says the Lord God, “That I will make the sun go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in broad daylight” Amos 8:9 NKJV

“At noon, darkness fell across the whole land until three o'clock” Matthew 27:45

It's interesting to note that the activities of the crucifixion of Jesus also followed the watches of the day. Even as Jesus hung on the cross bearing the full weight of our sin, He was fulfilling His purpose and aligning with God's agenda. He was no less powerful on the cross than when healing the sick, raising the dead etc. He chose to give His life for us. So even though the enemy thought he'd won, Jesus still had the upper hand. This is why we need to be dwellers of the secret place where no power of the enemy can touch us.

Prayer: Lord make me a dweller of the secret place. I recognise Your power over all things and ask that the day yield its maximum benefit to me. Let the pattern of my life be that of moving from glory to glory and let me realize my full potential. I bring myself under your cover and ask that you lead me away from every destruction the enemy has planned for me and all that concerns me today.



Day 9

3-6PM

The Fourth watch of the Day

Significance: The hour of Prayer

'Peter and John went to the Temple one afternoon to take part in the three o'clock prayer service.' Acts 3:1 NLT

This watch ushers in the hour of prayer in Jewish custom. As believers, prayer is our lifeline, it's what connects our physical environment to the supernatural. In the place of prayer destinies of individuals, families and nations can be transformed. It's the time to ask for divine opportunities, healing and the miraculous.

'At the usual time for offering the evening sacrifice, Elijah the prophet walked up to the altar and prayed... Immediately the fire of the Lord flashed down from heaven...' 1 Kings 18:36-38

Elijah called on the Lord at the hour of prayer and the Bible records that immediately fire came down and burnt everything up, even the water. Similarly while Cornelius was praying during this watch, the Lord was sending Peter an instruction through a vision (Acts 10:30-31). We cannot underestimate the power of prayer to change even the most seemingly impossible situation.

'At about three o'clock, Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" ...Then Jesus shouted out again, and he released his spirit. At that moment the curtain in the sanctuary of the Temple was torn in two, from top to bottom...' Matt 27:46,50-51

At the hour of prayer, Jesus released His spirit concluding His crucifixion and at the same time the veil in the sanctuary which separated the Holy of Holies was torn in two, significantly from top to bottom. This means that the Lord Himself would allow people to access His presence directly because of the price Jesus paid for us. This is the reason we can be dwellers in the secret place and appropriate all the blessings God has for us and be His representatives here on earth because we can hear from Him directly.

Prayer: Thank You Lord for access to Your presence through the blood of Jesus and for the gift of the Holy Spirit who daily empowers me as I yield. Let every veil of hindrance in my life be removed in the name of Jesus so that I can declare at the end of my days that I have finished Your assignment for me. Thank You Jesus our High priest, ever making intercession for me. Thank You for Your immeasurable power at work in us to do the impossible.



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