

It's About Time!

God is very much into timing and scripture is filled with examples. Just after appointing twelve disciples, Jesus instructed them, "Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." (Mat 10:5,6) However, later on the mount of ascension, He would say, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature."

On another occasion, upon being prodded by His half-brothers to go the feast in Jerusalem, He said, "My time has not yet come, but your time is always ready." (John 7:6) "But when His brothers had gone up, then He also went up to the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret." (John 7:10)

God does what He wishes in His time, not ours; and He conveys His Words and His Will in His time as well. Upon explaining to His disciples that He had to "go away", Jesus said, "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear *them* now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own *authority*, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come." (John 16:12,13)

Now, this becomes quite poignant to each of us when it comes to our expectations of God and how He decides to answer our prayers. You see, He has said many things concerning His willingness to hear our prayers of faith and to respond but as you search the scripture, you'll note that He never commits to respond according to our timetable. And if you take your trust back (which you should never do) this can be disappointing, frustrating, and even disillusioning.

It's not that God is slow. It is not that He is juggling too much. It is not that you are in a queue of billions waiting for your turn. All those are human concepts and of course, we are quite prone to placing our human characters and concepts on Him. God's infinite capabilities, knowledge and presence are well beyond these notions.

But our spiritual enemy has shrewdly manipulated society, rev'd it up so to speak, so that we all want any and every thing NOW. Food, entertainment, information, money, justice, you name it – we are conditioned for instant gratification. And when God doesn't play that game with us, a game that the enemy has driven into our characters, we doubt and complain that God doesn't see or care.

Why did God wait for several thousands of years after He first alluded to it in the Garden of Eden to bring the suffering Saviour, and risen Lord, Jesus Christ? Why did the Hebrew people have to wait 400 years in Egypt before being freed? Why have these same people endured nearly 2000 years of "stupor" and "blindness" to their true King and why must they still endure seven years of horrendous rule by a false king?

Timing. It is so real and so important and yet, for us, it is so mysterious. Can you imagine being with Mary when the angel Gabriel told her, 'You're the one. You will give birth to the Messiah.' Or with Noah when the Lord said, 'Come into the ark.' Or with John at the foot of the cross when Jesus said, "It is done." Timing is a mysteriously important part of all that God does. Existing outside of time gives Him complete perspective and full control. This is clear from the following verse provided in two translations:

"While we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly." (Rom 5:6 RSV)

“You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.” (Rom 5:6 NIV)

Now all of this is simply an introduction into the purpose of this message – you see, we have yet another time to be aware of, to “Watch” for and to be prepared for. Jesus Christ is going to return to take possession of this world. He will resurrect His faithful ones from their graves, rapture those who are waiting and found faithful, and will conquer Satan and his loyalists. The former two will occur in an instant.

And our waiting for this reminds me of a story in scripture.

He was a truly godly man. We don’t know if he was a priest or member of any select group of religious/pious people. He may have been a devoted Levite or simply a farmer or even a beggar. In any event, he was in the temple at the right time.

In all likelihood, Simeon had earnestly desired to witness the coming of the Messiah. He probably longed for it for many years. Surely, he had pleaded with God to let him see Christ and perhaps days strung out into weeks, into months and years. At some point, he struggled with believing that God had heard his prayers as his own life waned and he grew older. He knew his time to pass was close and it would seem that he hung out continually in the temple, hoping and waiting and hoping.

One day as he stumbled along, making his way to the temple courtyard. Something Holy drove him to come this time - perhaps in great faith, perhaps in great expectation, perhaps in despair, perhaps in the midst of a spiritual battle – the greatest of his life. The Holy Spirit moved him and I’ll bet as he entered, he sensed a glorious presence that grabbed his heart and lifted his step. A lifetime of waiting was culminating in the most amazing moments he could ever have imagined – a baby. And he supernaturally recognized this child instantly. His waiting was over in an instant.

“And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name *was* Simeon, and this man *was* just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ. So he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said: ‘Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word; for my eyes have seen Your salvation which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, a light to *bring* revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel.’” (Luke 2:25 – 32)

In like manner, our waiting for the true King of Israel will soon be over. Like Simeon, do you want to “depart in peace?”

What are you waiting for? God’s timing is perfect and usually mysterious, but your time is easy to understand - it is right now. That is, you have no guarantee of tomorrow. If you don’t know that you have a right relationship with God via Jesus Christ, your time is now. Pray for God to forgive you for all you have erred in and to redeem you by the sacrifice of His Son.

If you’re already saved through faith in Christ and waiting on an answer to prayer, wait in patience and peace – if you asked in faith, God heard you and He will answer.

All our waiting will be over soon.