

Does God Answer Prayer "In His Time"?

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Toward a Better Understanding of the Sovereignty of God**
Taken from Chapter 7: Addressing Misconceptions
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Ecclesiastes 3:11

He has made everything beautiful in its time.

We have often heard the expression that says that God's timing is not ours. This is both true and false depending on what is being discussed. Before I do this, please note that the verse above says, "He has made everything beautiful in ITS time," not HIS time.

Does God have a timing when He does things? The answer is that in certain events He does, but for His provisions and promises He doesn't. Let's first take a look at instances in the Bible when God's timing was clearly in play. God foresaw that there was a famine coming in the time of Joseph that would negatively affect His budding nation of Israel. He sent Joseph just in time to prepare the nation of Egypt to warn Pharaoh about it and also instruct Him how to conserve food. The timing was perfect. Even though Joseph's brothers sought to undermine the will of God in Joseph's life, God caused him to succeed and prosper.

Another obvious example is the coming of Christ.

Galatians 4:4-5

But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

Even a casual knowledge of history reveals that God set the stage, making the timing for His arrival perfect. Some of these events were the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem, the spread of the Greek language over most of the world, the translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek, the revival among the Jews and their longing for the Messiah due to harsh persecution, the building of Roman roads which were an engineering marvel, and the Pax Romana, a relatively peaceful time in the Roman empire. All of these paved the way for His coming and the eventual spread of the Gospel to the Jews and later to the Greek. Considering these elaborate preparations, we stand in awe of His timing.

Jesus said that the hour of His coming is only known to the Father. We can observe the signs of His coming and conclude that it is near, but that day and hour no one knows except the Father. It will happen in His time.

God's timing can also be at play in our lives, especially when it comes to His calling in our lives. It also is not unreasonable to conclude that God's timing might be involved in other areas of our lives as well.

However, when it comes to the provisions and promises of God, we need to understand that His timing is now. Consider this major example.

2 Corinthians 6:1-2

We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain. ² For He says: "In an acceptable time I have heard you, And in the day of salvation I have helped you."

Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

It is incorrect to say that God will save someone according to His timing. The time for all people everywhere to repent is now (Acts 17:30). He is not holding off on saving someone; rather, they are holding back from receiving His free gift.

Here is another important example.

1 Peter 2:24

Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed.

Notice that healing has already been provided. Thus, now is the day of healing because Jesus already paid for it by His wounds. He is not waiting for a special timing to heal us. The passage uses the past tense for a reason.

In fact, everything for which Jesus died and all of the things He has promised are for now, not some nebulous time in the future. Let us examine this passage again.

2 Corinthians 1:20

For all the promises of God in Him ARE Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us.

God is not putting off answering what He has already provided or has promised to provide. This means that we can justly expect that He will answer our requests now with, "Yes."

Note: We respond to His "Yes" with, "Amen."