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Article of the Month August, 2023

God's Timing

We know the Bible teaches of a divine plan so marvelous that it parallels Anselm's definition of God, Himself, as "*nothing greater can be thought*." God has promised that, during His coming Kingdom, all mankind -- all who have ever lived -- will have the opportunity to come to know God, to understand His plan, and to bring themselves up to the level of perfection that will enable them to have eternal life here on earth (Matthew 6:10). They will have ample time to do this, and they will be able to do it without the influence of Satan that is so prominent today, because Satan's ways will be "bound" during the thousand years of God's Millennial Kingdom (Revelation 20:1-3). No one will be allowed to hurt another as mankind grows and develops into the perfect human race God intended us to be from the very beginning (Isaiah 11:9).

So why doesn't the world understand this plan? Why do so many Christians read the Bible but do not see the wonderful future our God has in store for the entire race?

One of the keys to understanding scripture is understanding the importance of time and timing, and how God uses these to accomplish His ends. He does not rush. He gives each aspect of His plan exactly the amount of time it needs to fully develop His purpose. If we do not understand God's timing, it is impossible to understand His plan.

Our race began with the creation of the perfect Adam. It did not take long, however, for Adam to disobey God and lose that perfection. That began Adam's (and his children's) dying process. By the second generation, a murder had been committed (Genesis 4:8), and mankind was notably on its way to the sinful and dying condition we find ourselves in today.

Why would a loving God allow this? It is because He knew that the best teacher is experience. He knew that mankind's time of bitter experience with sin and death would help him, in the future Kingdom, to choose his actions and decisions wisely as he has the chance (given by Jesus' redemption price) to strive toward that level of perfection that was lost by Adam's disobedience.

During the thousands of years that man has been on earth, the Lord has worked with different groups of people to accomplish different purposes. After the Flood, God worked with the patriarchs of the Old Testament. Genesis tells us that God dealt directly with Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Jacob had twelve sons, and they became the twelve tribes of the nation of Israel. For the rest of the Old Testament time period, God worked exclusively with the descendants of Abraham, developing the Jewish nation. (Amos 3:2) He instructed them, protected them, sent prophets to them, and punished them when they turned against Him to worship idols. But He also repeatedly forgave them when they turned away from idol worship and once again began worshipping Him (Exodus 32:7-14).

Why did God set aside time to work with the Jewish nation? One reason is that God intends very shortly to use them as the epicenter of the Kingdom on earth. Their modern return to the land of Israel is preparation for that event. Another reason is that their example was a lesson for the true Church and all mankind. Through Israel's experience with the Law given to them by God through Moses, it became evident that in mankind's sinful condition, it was impossible to fulfill the Law and live in perfect harmony with God's righteous requirements. This should have brought them to a realization that a Savior was needed to restore the relationship between God and man, since God cannot deal with imperfection, and mankind cannot live up to perfection (Romans 3:21-23). The Law was a teaching tool, and the sacrifice of animals to take away sins was a picture of the real Redeemer who would actually take away the sin of the world (John 1:29, Hebrews 10:1-4).

Jesus' life and death here on earth initiated a new age, a new time in God's plan where the gospel message was opened up to any (not just Jews) who would listen, beginning with Cornelius as the first Gentile convert (Acts 10). And from the time of Jesus until now, God has been developing the true Church among peoples from all over the world as "the bride of Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:2, Revelation 21:9) which will be privileged to work alongside Jesus in the Kingdom age to bring the restoration of mankind to the level of perfection that was lost in Adam -- so that all who will attain this perfection will be given eternal life (Acts 3:19-21). Because of the time we have had to experience sin and death, following the laws of righteousness will be the obvious choice for all except the truly incorrigible.

So we can see that God has been dealing with different groups of people in different eras of history. The Bible teaches that His plan has specific time segments, each with its own purpose, and He gives each segment the duration it needs to be fully developed. If we cannot grasp this truth, it is very difficult to appreciate the beautiful arrangement God has made for the human race. By delving into His word and exploring how He has worked with humanity through the ages, we can understand this marvelous, breathtaking, "*nothing greater can be thought*" plan that God has intended for us since the world began.

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