

One of the most difficult things in our spiritual career is to seize the right time to execute a task coming from the Lord, or to realise when the Lord's promises to us are coming into fruition. The devil is always at readiness to confuse us and obscure our view so as to prevent us from grasping the Lord's right time.

The Lord has a specific time for each task.

Eccl 3:1 - There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the sun.

Hebr. 4:16 - Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Luke 19:44 - They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognise the time of God's coming to you.

Matt 8:29 - Have you come here to torture us before the appointed time?

Ps. 75:2 -I choose the appointed time; it is I who judge uprightly.

I would like to quote three examples from the scriptures - one where the person was too late, one where he was too early and one where he was on time.

Too late. John the Baptist came to pave the way for the Lord Jesus, after which he had to disappear from the scene or become part of the Kingdom of God. However, he let the opportunity for either pass by and continued preaching until the children of God became confused and also to such an extent that the meaning of the baptism was lost and only a baptism of John remained.

Firstly, we read that John believed that he had to be baptised by the Lord Jesus, but made the mistake of asking Him at the wrong time (the time had arrived for the Lord Jesus to be baptised). Later, however, when the disciples of the Lord Jesus also started to baptise people, he did not grasp the opportunity.

Secondly, he did not join the Lord Jesus and his disciples, but continued on his own with a message way past its expiry date. This then caused the Lord Jesus' disciples to argue about the fast (Matt 9:14) and confusion was furthermore created concerning the baptism. John 3:26 - They came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, that man that was with you on the other side of the Jordan - the one you testified about - well, he is baptising and everyone is going to him." Later on we hear the people say that Jesus is baptising more people than John.

Thirdly, the people were no longer sure who Jesus really was and some said he was John the Baptist (Matt 16:14).

Finally, we note in Acts 19:3 that the people let themselves be baptised with the baptism of John the Baptist, and that they had to have themselves re-baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus.

John's end as a result of this is very unfortunate - he lands in prison, loses faith (Are you the one who was to come?) and the Lord Jesus considers him to be less than the least in the Kingdom of the Heavens. Matt 11:11 - yet he who is the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

Isaac and Jacob were too early. In Gen. 27 we see that Isaac had grown old and his eyesight weak and that he decided to bless Esau before dying. Rebecca quickly concocted a scheme and had Jacob blessed instead. It was to be a long time still before Jacob passed away and he pre-empted the Lord (who wanted to bless Jacob).

This premature plan of Rebecca's cost her and Jacob dearly, as Jacob had to pay a high price for his cheating while with Laban (who changed his wages ten times) and Rebecca never saw him again. It was not really necessary for Rebecca and Jacob to help the Lord to realise his promise, because we see that after Jacob had worked for Laban for 20 years, he once again met his father at Mamre, while Rebecca had already passed away!

David was on time. In the scriptures we see that, when matters were at their gloomiest for the Israelites, David arrived there BY CHANCE and destroyed the mighty philistine with one pebble!

Although the time was right for David, we should also note the factors which granted David victory.

1. He had to bear the scorn of Israel (1 Sam 17:26 - of Christ), the scorn of his brother and the scorn of Goliath.

His brother says, 1 Sam 17:28 - Why have you come down here? And with whom did you leave those few sheep in the desert? I know how conceited you are and how wicked your heart is; you came down only to watch the battle.

2. Having fought many a battle he must already have known what it cost him to conquer the giant (devil) in his life. 1 Sam 17:34 - Your servant has been keeping his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, I went after, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it and killed it.

3. He recognised the battle as the battle of God and not of man. The scriptures say that Goliath challenged the battle lines of Israel, but Davis says: Goliath challenged the battle lines of the Living God.

4. The time had to be right. The scriptures say that Goliath challenged the battle lines of Israel for 40 days. Forty days stand for a period of preparation and David knew that "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies."

5. He did not conquer Goliath with might or violence, but through my Spirit so says the Lord!!

6. He was the smallest among the children (also in himself). The scriptures say: 1 Cor 1:27 – God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.

7. He achieved victory through the wounds of the Lord Jesus (the five pebbles).

8. He had to stand up in the name of the Lord, even though it could have meant his death. 1 Sam 17:45 – You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel.

9. He came in faith and without fear. 2 Cor 1:9 – Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. He has delivered us from such a deadly peril and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us.