

The Timing of God in Sending His Son

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The Bible says:

You see, at **just the right time**, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly (Romans 5:6 NIV84).

But when **the time had fully come**, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons (Galatians 4:4, 5 NIV84).

What made it the right time for Jesus' incarnation? Why do you think God wait thousands of years to fulfill His promise to send our Savior? (Genesis 3:15).

What ideas have you heard?

Because God is not arbitrary, because He doesn't do anything on a whim, we can be sure that He doesn't have some cosmic clock that He closely monitors, waiting for the hands to hit a certain point

and, ready or not, then He acts. No, God is intervening in human history and is acting for the purpose of eradicating sin and saving people. Therefore, God's timing is to fulfill His purposes. It is never arbitrary; it is strategic, meant to accomplish His goals.

I have heard it suggested that God waited as long as He did for Jesus to be born because God needed a human government that had pacified the world, built roads, and established commerce—all so that the gospel would be more easily spread throughout the world. Yet, this argument could be countered with Rome's limited capacity to travel to China and the Americas; one could argue that if this was the primary reason, waiting for more modern forms of communication and transportation would have been even more advantageous.

I would like to explore another possibility, one that focuses our attention on a larger aspect of Jesus' mission—the securing of His entire universe in addition to saving humanity.

For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to **reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven**, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross (Colossians 1:19, 20 NIV84).

In sending His Son, God was absolutely working to save humans from sin, but He also was acting to prevent Satan's rebellion from spreading throughout the heavenly realms, to secure the unfallen beings in their loyalty to Him.

Remember, angelic perfection had already failed in heaven. While two-thirds of the angels remained loyal to Jesus and His Father, the questions that deceived one-third of the angels had not been fully dealt with and resolved. God, through Jesus, not only had to provide what was necessary to save human beings from sin, but He also had to do it in such a way that His actions would resolve the issues raised by Lucifer and secure the unfallen angels in their loyalty to Him.

We read about this in various places like the passage in Colossians quoted above, but Jesus also spoke about it when He said:

Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all *men* to myself (John 12:31, 32 NIV84).

If your version has "men" in it, as I've highlighted it above, that word is supplied by the translators; it is not in the Greek. The passage actually says "draw *all* to myself." Jesus wasn't drawing only humans to Himself at the cross, but heavenly beings as well.

Jesus' crucifixion would pronounce judgment upon this world and the prince of this world; what kind of judgment was this? Was this judgment on this world in a legal court setting? No! It is the same judgment that Paul wrote about in Romans 3:4:

Let God be true but every man a liar. As it is written: "That You may be justified in Your words, and may overcome when You are judged" (Romans 3:4 NKJV).

The war began in heaven when Lucifer lied about God and deceived one-third of the angels into judging God falsely and rebelling against Him. While two-thirds stayed loyal, they had questions that needed answering, lest they also eventually lose trust in God and rebel.

Jesus was saying that at the cross, when He would be lifted up, He would reveal the truth about God, His character, and methods of truth, love, and liberty and, at the same time and by the same action, He would expose Satan as a liar and fraud and reveal Satan's methods to be the source of pain, suffering, and death. Then, when this truth would be fully revealed, Satan's power to deceive would be broken in the hearts and minds of all who see and embrace the truth; thus, Satan would be driven out. He would be driven out of the shadows, out into the open for all to see him for who and what he really is, and when that would happen, his power would be broken and Jesus, by being lifted up, would draw all beings who value truth to Himself, including the angels in heaven. This is what Hebrews describes "that by his [Jesus'] death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil" (2:14).

The heavenly beings witnessed this and had their questions about God answered; Satan was revealed as the liar and murderer that he is and, thus, the heavenly host judged that God and Jesus are holy, holy, holy (Revelation 4:8); Satan was cast out of their affections. From that point forward, Satan's rebellion was restricted to Earth, not by physical force or some energy shield, but by the reality that every angel in heaven was completely settled into their loyalty to God and would no longer listen to anything Satan had to say. Only on Earth are intelligent beings still listening to Satan and believing his lies about God.

Perfect Timing

So, with all this in mind, why wait until that time in human history for Jesus to come in order to provide salvation for humans and reveal truth to the angels?

What is the central issue in the war—God's trustworthiness (2 Corinthians 10:3-5)—and what is Satan's angle to undermine trust in God? His angle was never that God isn't powerful but that God is untrustworthy in using power, that God abuses His power by imposing laws that require God to punish lawbreakers.

During his temptation of Eve, we see Satan's intimation of God imposing law and punishment:

Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"

The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'"

"You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman (Genesis 3:1-4 NIV84).

Satan is saying: "There isn't anything inherently harmful about disobeying God. God wasn't telling the truth that disobeying Him would result in death. Oh, yes—it is true that God has the power to kill you for it, but it isn't true that disobedience to God harms you. The problem isn't sin; the problem is God, who will kill you for sin. But if you eat this fruit, you will become like God yourself, your eyes will be

opened, and you will be able to tell the difference between good and evil and won't need God to tell you what to do any longer—no more rules for you.”

Satan's lies about God are rooted in lies about God's law and methods of governing, specifically that God's laws function like human laws, made-up rules requiring God to use power to punish. This makes God out to be the source of death and the one from whom we need to be protected. These same lies have persisted throughout all human generations and have led to every form of paganism and every theology that teaches sacrifices must be paid to this punishing god to do something to the god so that the god won't lash out with power to torture and kill the sinner. This false law view that Satan originated undermines trust and incites rebellion against God.

How does this connect with when Jesus came in history?

It was the first time in human history that a group of people could be found to be keeping the law, the Scripture, the blueprint that God gave them through Moses. They were:

- Sabbath-keeping
- Sacrificing the right animals, in the right way, at the right times, and in the right place
- Eating the right foods
- Paying the right tithe
- Dressing in the right way
- Behaviorally obeying the right commandments
- No longer sacrificing to Baal, Molech, or any other pagan god

From the outside, from what the angels could observe, the people appeared to be keeping all the rules that God gave them. But notice what happened when Jesus came and lived among them—they hated and killed Him.

But why did they hate and kill Him? Jesus didn't teach a different day of worship, or undermine the authority of Scripture, or teach an evolutionary model of creation, or suggest other than male/female marriage, or promote alternate feasts days, or different methods to sacrifice. Jesus taught the exact same list of doctrines that those who killed Him taught. So why did they kill Him?

Because Jesus rejected the imposed-law understanding of God's kingdom. He rejected the power-over-others law, the authoritarian enforcement of law that sinful beings utilize; instead, He taught that God's kingdom is the kingdom of truth, love, and freedom and that imposed laws with external enforcement does not result in salvation. Jesus taught that what God wants is our love, trust, loyalty, devotion, and understanding friendship (John 15:15). And this cannot be achieved through law or enforcement.

Angels cannot read hearts and minds, and they needed to understand the real nature of the war and God's solution for it. They needed to realize that it is possible for the righteous and wicked to appear similar behaviorally. The righteous person who loves others will not cheat or murder, but the wicked person who is interested only in self may also not cheat or murder—but only because they are afraid of getting caught and punished, of burning in hell. But the righteous person is restored to loyalty to God; they wouldn't harm another even if there was no “punishment” for sin. They do what is right because it is right, and they are safe to have as a neighbor in heaven; but the selfish rule-keeper is disloyal to God and, despite keeping the rules, will end up murdering the Son of God. This reality had to be exposed.

When Jesus came, we finally had a group of people who were following the script God gave through

Moses. But rule-keeping of the *right* rules for the wrong reasons turned them into rebels against God who killed Jesus to protect their own power (John 11:50). In other words, the timing of Jesus' appearance, to a group of law-keeping followers of Yahweh, revealed that God's kingdom and government is not legal, is not based upon imposed law, is not rule-keeping, but is spiritual, is design law, is based upon truth, love, and freedom that operates in the deepest recesses of the intelligent being. That is why in the new covenant, the law is written upon the heart and mind (Hebrews 8:10); that is why every person must be fully persuaded in their own mind (Romans 14:5); that is why salvation is "'not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the LORD Almighty" (Zechariah 4:6 NIV84). It is only by the Spirit of truth and love that lies are purged and loyalty is established.

God cannot achieve what He wants through imposed rules and inflicted punishments. And the angels finally saw not just Satan exposed as a liar and fraud, not just God revealed in Jesus to be completely trustworthy to have all power, but also that God's laws are not imposed rules like sinful humans make and that rule-keeping of a legal religion—even if the rules are the very rules given by God—still turns people into rebels against God.

We need this lesson today as we approach the second coming of Christ. We need to return to the worship of the Creator who made the heavens, earth, sea, and fountains of water and whose laws are design laws that life is built to operate upon. We must reject the imposed-law dictator view of a legal god in which salvation is a legal process to protect us from the inflicted punishment of that god. Those who worship the legal imposed-law god will become like him and, just like the Jews two thousand years ago, will be among God's worst enemies.