

Time Windows in the Kingdom of God

If God calls you to do a certain thing, there is often a limited time only, when you can do it, a window of opportunity. During this time it is comparatively easy to do the will of God, but if you don't obey God within that time window, obedience after it is either much more difficult or even outright impossible.

Time windows in the History of Israel

The people of Israel was freed out of the slavery in Egypt and led through the Sinai desert. After less than 2 years they came to the boundaries of the promised land. At this moment Israel would have been able to conquer the whole land under the leading of Moses. But Israel refused to obey, and God decided, that no one of these rebels could come into that land. An attempt of the Israelites to occupy the land without God's permission ended in disaster. (Num. 15). Afterwards the Israelites had to wander 40 years in the desert and the whole generation died, until they had the permission to enter the promised land.

The book of Joshua tells us, that Israel had the possibility to occupy the whole of the promised land, and that no enemy could stand against them (Jos. 1, 3 - 5) But Israel didn't take all (Judges 1, 21 - 36). The disobedience led to the fact, that Israel wasn't any longer able to occupy the rest of the land (Judges 2, 1-3). The surviving Kanaanites then were a constant temptation for Israel to fall away from God and to serve other Gods. The occasion missed once didn't come back again.

Before the destruction of Jerusalem God had given ample warnings to the Kingdom of Judah, its rulers and inhabitants. Repentance in time and obedience to God would have averted the coming disaster, but that turn around didn't happen. In the year 586 Jerusalem and God's temple was destroyed and the Jews were led into captivity.

Jesus, the Son of God, was sent to „the lost sheep of Israel“. He invited them to turn around and to come to God, and He warned them of the judgement of God, if they would stay in disobedience. The Son of God was rejected by the authorities and they let Him to be killed at the cross. But even after His resurrection God offered the possibility to turn around and to accept Jesus. If they had done so, Jesus would have come very soon, may be before the year 40, and bring the long desired times of refreshment and the fulfillment of all the good promises given by the Old Testament prophets (Acts 3, 17 - 21). The book of Acts, however, shows, that the doors for the Gospel in Israel closed more and more, and in the year 70 Jerusalem and the temple was destroyed, and the Jews became a dispersed and attacked minority. They had missed their time window.

Time Windows in the History of the Christian Church

Jesus gives a prophecy about the end times, for example in Mk. 13. There He predicts the destruction of Jerusalem and His second coming shortly afterwards (Mk. 13, 24 - 27). That means, His second return would happen may be as early as 71 or 72. The second coming of Jesus, however, didn't happen in the 1st century, and it didn't happen up to the present moment, and the whole creation has to suffer terribly because of this (see Rom. 8, 20 - 24). Was there a missed time window?

In Mt. 28, 18 - 20 Jesus states, that all authority in heaven and on earth is given unto Him, and He commands his apostles to go out and to disciple all nations, and He promises them that He will be with them all days until the finishing of the present world age. It looks as an open time window, starting with Pentecost to disciple all nations within the lifetime of the eleven disciples. That would agree with a date of the 2nd coming of Jesus at the year 70 or shortly afterwards.

When we read, however, the book of Acts, we see, that the apostles stayed in Jerusalem and didn't go to the nations. God needed the persecution after the martyrdom of Stephanus, that the rank and file Christians and a deacon appointed to food distribution went out and evangelized the Samaritans, and later other Christians evangelized also Greeks in Antiochia. Then apostles or men sent by them went out and checked the things God had already done. And it's Barnabas and Paul, who didn't belong to the eleven, but could be sent out to the gentiles. Yet in Acts 15, they were the only ones who believed to be sent to the nations. We are now in the year about 50 after Christ, 20 years after His resurrection and after Pentecost.

The ministry of the Apostles was a special ministry instituted by God and needed a special calling. In an Apostle Jesus was present and led the Church. „Whosoever hears you, hears me.“ The Church rests on the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets. Later on the church collected all existing writings of Apostles and their disciples as the New Testament, the ultimate authority today in the Body of Christ. Refusing the ministry of the Apostles ultimately meant to

refuse the Lordship of Christ. This refusal can be seen in 3rd John, 9. In addition to that turning away from the Apostles by the Church an open persecution of the Christian Church started, when emperor Nero had to find a scapegoat for the big fire that destroyed parts of Rome in 64. Christianity became a forbidden religion and all the Apostles were hunted down and killed, with exception of the Apostle John, who survived his ordeal by a supernatural miracle from God. Thus the time window for discipling all the nations shrank from 40 to mere 14 years. Many nations world wide were not reached and the discipling of whole nations didn't take place then, as far as I can see. If one compares the apostolic writings to the post apostolic writings, one has to note a terrible decline in the spiritual quality of these writings. Instead of spiritually fresh food given by the Holy Spirit the Christian Church relied mostly on canned food, the faithfully preserved tradition from the apostolic age. The Church couldn't maintain any longer its unity by driving out the Christians with a Jewish background. And in the 4th century the Church began to rely on the protecting power of the state. That dependence on worldly power made it impossible to do a successful work among the Muslims.

So few people were really ready to be sent by God, that no missionaries could be sent to the Turkish tribes in the 10th and 11th centuries. The Ruler of the Mongol empire asked for 50 Christian missionaries, and 2 only came. The empire of Japan opened to the West in the 1860s. The Christian missionaries then were too weak and too few to win Japan for Christ. That repeated itself, when 1945 Japan accepted the defeat and was for some years extremely open to the Gospel, but not enough missionaries came. Now Japan is again a very difficult field for Christian mission.

Consequences for us

If God calls us to a special task, we have to ask God, how and when we should do it. To postpone a thing, that should be done now on a later time might mean, that it might not be possible to do it later on. When God called me to go for Him to Thailand at the age of 60, a well meaning friend gave me the advice to stay in Germany, until I could go into retirement. At the age of 65 the performance of my heart was so strongly reduced, that I didn't dare to make a long distance flight from Germany to Thailand during this whole year. And we should ask God, how much preparation we really need to do our task, before we go out.

We live at the moment in very turbulent times also concerning finances. If God calls me to send a certain sum of money to support a certain missionary, delaying that action might mean, that I will not be able to pay that amount later on.

For all these points we need a very clear leading by the Holy Spirit.

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