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### The Four Seasons

**I**n the creation story of Genesis, we read that God not only created the sun, but he also created days, seasons and years<sup>1</sup>. This makes it clear that God did not want man to have a monotonous existence, which would have been so boring, but that he wanted man to live an abundant and varied life. Even so, the variation brought in by God in human life was not a random change but it had a rhythm that worked through natural laws.

In physical terms, the earth has different seasons because of the fact that its spin axis is tilted with respect to its orbital plane at an angle of 23.5 degrees. Hence, at any time of the year, some parts of the earth are nearer to the sun and so have summer, while other parts of the earth are away from the sun and so have winter. When the northern hemisphere has summer, the southern hemisphere has winter and vice versa.

In meteorological terms, the year is divided into four quarters of three months each. The summer season is the warmest three-month period and the winter season is the coldest three-month period. The quarter following winter is called the spring season and the quarter following summer is called the autumn or fall season. In the northern hemisphere, the four seasons are: summer (June-August), autumn (September-November), winter (December-February), and spring (March-May). In the southern hemisphere, these seasons come in the opposite quarters of the year.

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<sup>1</sup> Genesis 1:14

Many parts of the globe do not have such clearly defined four seasons. Near the earth's equator, there is hardly any seasonal variation of the weather. In the polar regions, there are six-month long summers and winters. In monsoon-dominated countries like India, there is a four-month rainy season (June-September) preceded by a hot summer season (March-May) and followed by a short post-monsoon season (October-November. Winter (December-February) is severe in north India but moderate over south India.

In the Old Testament Hebrew, the words for 'season' are 'mowed', 'moled' or 'mowedah'. They also mean an appointed or fixed time. In New Testament Greek too, the word 'kairos' for 'season' also means a due time. That is why the Bible says: *There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven.*<sup>2</sup>

No wonder that human life has evolved over the ages so as to suit the seasons. Our living, clothing, eating, all change according to the seasons. Even our music changes with the seasons. In Indian classical music, we have different *ragas* like *basant*, *bahar*, or *hemant* for the respective seasons. *The Four Seasons*, a set of four violin concertos composed by Antonio Vivaldi in 1723, remains highly popular even today. The texture of each concerto is such that it resembles a different season and the music evokes its characteristics.

It is not only human life but nature itself that is tuned to the seasons. There are many such references in the Bible: *Flowers appear on the earth; the season of singing has*

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<sup>2</sup> Ecclesiastes 3:1 (King James Bible)

*come, the cooing of doves is heard in our land.<sup>3</sup> Even the stork in the sky knows her appointed seasons, and the dove, the swift and the thrush observe the time of their migration.<sup>4</sup>*

Even for the word of God there is a season.

*Timothy says: Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage - with great patience and careful instruction.<sup>5</sup>*

*Titus writes: At his appointed season he brought his word to light through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our Saviour.<sup>6</sup>*

In the current debate over global warming and climate change, fears are being expressed about the earth's future itself. In this context, is very reassuring to recall that God has promised again and again through various books of the Bible, that the natural order of days, seasons and years will never be altered.

*I will send you rain in its season, and the ground will yield its crops and the trees of the field their fruit.<sup>7</sup>*

*The Lord will open the heavens, the storehouse of his bounty, to send rain on your land in season and to bless all the work of your hands.<sup>8</sup>*

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<sup>3</sup> Song of Solomon 2:12

<sup>4</sup> Jeremiah 8:7

<sup>5</sup> 2 Timothy 4:2

<sup>6</sup> Titus 1:3

<sup>7</sup> Leviticus 26:4

<sup>8</sup> Deuteronomy 28:12

But let us stand upon the most enduring promise that God has made:

*As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, will never cease.*<sup>9</sup>



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<sup>9</sup> Genesis 8:22