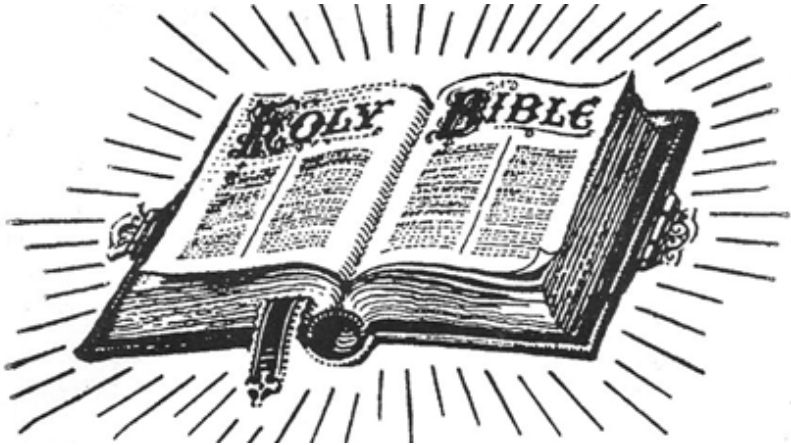


Bible Lessons



**“Truly my soul waiteth upon God:
from him cometh my salvation.
He only is my rock and my salvation;
he is my defense; I shall not be greatly moved.
My soul, wait thou only upon God;
for my expectation is from him.”**

Psalm 62:1, 2 and 5

**Volume 52, No 2
April • May • June
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Quarterly Bible Lessons for Adults and Young People

Bible Lessons for Adults and Young People

Volume 52

April • May • June

No 2

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Publishing the Bible truths in the interest of Jesus Christ and His Church

In this issue: Lessons written by Angela Gellenbeck; *Reflections* contributed by LaDawna Adams, Fari Matthews, Darrell Johnson, Bob Wilson, James Bell, Charlotte Huskey, Toney Samons, and Jeanie Samons

NOTICE

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THEME FOR BIBLE LESSONS 2ND QUARTER 2020

My Soul, Wait Thou Only Upon God

I thought I had the idea for the theme for this quarter. But when I began to write, there was nothing. So I waited. And prayed. And waited some more. Just when I was feeling quite desperate, the Spirit awakened me one morning with a song, "...Watching and waiting, looking above..." and one scripture after another that spoke of waiting upon God.

The realization hit me that we are all in a time of waiting. Waiting for His second coming. Waiting for answers to prayer. Waiting and watching for souls to be saved. Enduring afflictions. Seeking for direction and guidance. Looking for grace, wisdom and revelation. Hoping, trusting—waiting.

While we are in God's waiting room, let us take courage and be inspired by the many admonitions and promises from His Word. "In your patience possess ye your souls" (Luke 21:19).

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

APRIL 5, 2020

WAITING FOR THE MESSIAH

Vigilant Hope

Genesis 49:18 I have waited for thy salvation, O LORD.

Isaiah 8:17 And I will wait upon the LORD, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him.

Isaiah 25:9 And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

Isaiah 56:1 Thus saith the LORD, Keep ye judgment, and do justice: for my salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed.

Zephaniah 3:8 Therefore wait ye upon me, saith the LORD, until the day that I rise up to the prey: for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger: for all the earth shall be

devoured with the fire of my jealousy.

9 For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one consent.

Luke 2:25 And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him.

26 And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

27 And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law,

28 Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said,

29 Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word:

30 For mine eyes have seen thy salvation,

31 Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people;

32 A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.

MEMORY VERSE: Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.

—**Malachi 3:1**

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The Messiah, the Redeemer of Israel and Savior of mankind was promised to Adam and Eve, Abraham, Jacob, and foretold by other Old Testament patriarchs, kings and prophets; consequently, a recurring theme of waiting on the coming of the Messiah can be noted in the writings of the Old Testament. The New Testament describes those in Jesus' day who, because they were also "waiting," were able, by Holy Spirit revelation, to identify Him when they saw Him.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Genesis 49:18 "I have waited for thy salvation": an interjection of

prayer and praise in the middle of Jacob's last message to his sons. "To [the Messiah] all the Targums apply the words, which are to this purpose: 'said our father Jacob, not for the salvation of Gideon, the son of Joash, which is a temporal salvation, do I wait; nor for the salvation of Samson the son of Manoah, which is a transitory salvation; but for the salvation of Messiah the son of David, (which is an everlasting one) who shall bring the children of Israel to himself, and his salvation my soul desireth'" (*Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*). Also, "...The thought of the serpent wounding his prey in the heel [Genesis 49:17] carried the mind of the patriarch back to the fall of man, and the promise made to Eve..." (*Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers*).

LESSON BACKGROUND

In past lessons we have studied the prophecies about Jesus and can recall the promise given by God after Adam and Eve sinned, that the serpent which had beguiled Eve was cursed and his head would be bruised by Eve's seed, which is Christ. In our lesson today we have quoted a few verses from the Old Testament establishing a line of thought tracing back to that original prophecy. Through the ages, patriarchs and persons of faith constantly pointed toward, sought for, and adjusted their whole lifestyles around the belief in the coming Messiah. Three of our verses are from Isaiah, "the Gospel Prophet." Many of his prophecies had to do with the deliverance of Israel from the Babylonian captivity, but ultimately they pointed to Christ and His kingdom.

Zephaniah and Malachi both add triumphant assurances to the coming and mission of the Messiah. "Wait ye upon me, until the day I rise up!" "Behold, he shall come!"

In the Gospel of Luke we find the touching story of Simeon who "waited for the consolation of Israel," along with the prophetess Anna who "spoke of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem (Luke 2:38);" and Joseph of Arimathaea, a just man, "who also himself waited for the kingdom of God" (Luke 23:51). Zacharias, Elizabeth, Joseph, and Mary joined the company of those who watched and waited and believed; and the wise men from the East were also "seekers" of that long-awaited event.

“Oh, come, oh, come, Emmanuel; And ransom captive Israel
Who mourns in lonely exile here, until the Son of God appear!
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel has come to thee, O Israel!”

“Come, thou long expected Jesus, born to set thy people free;
From our fears and sins release us, let us find our rest in thee.
Israel's strength and consolation, hope of all the earth thou art;
Dear desire of every nation, joy of every longing heart.”

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

DISCUSSION:

1. Who is the speaker in Genesis 49:18, and to what prophecy may he have referred?
2. How did Simeon experience the fulfillment of the prophecy given in Isaiah 25:9?
3. What positive words did Malachi use referring to the Messiah?
4. Zephaniah's prophecy to those who waited spoke of a day when He would assemble the nations and devour the earth with the fire of His jealousy. In Isaiah 40:2 a warfare and double recompense is mentioned. What is meant by these things, and would these two prophecies be speaking about the same mission of the Messiah?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

It is significant that those who waited with expectancy and faith at the time of Jesus' coming—those who were seekers—were able to *recognize* the One for whom they waited! There was also a waiting, obviously, that wasn't of faith, but mere orthodoxy, mere tradition, that blinded its adherents to the event when it happened. We mentioned Simeon's faith-turned-into-sight in the reading today, but there were others. The shepherds on the Judean hillside; Nathanael under the fig tree. He identified the Messiah right away! And while Jesus' "own" did not receive him, there were foreigners who had faith: the Roman centurion, the Syro-Phoenician woman, and later, Cornelius and the Ethiopian eunuch.

Again, the point can be made that those who identified Him were

diligent seekers. If there was a germ of information, they followed a slim lead until they discovered more. They adjusted their lifestyles around their focus. They were passionate; they were deliberate.

Would you or I have been among those who knew Him? Would we have been ready in our hearts to receive Him or would we have rejected Him? How is it with His truth today? Do I have preconceived expectations or ideas that render me incapable of saving faith or reliance on His promises? Do I have a vision of His church, His spiritual body on the earth? Can I perceive holiness—where it is, and where it is not? Am I able to see His hand working and discern His miracles when they happen?

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

REFLECTIONS

My first year in college was a defining time for me. I was no longer under the supervision of my parents. It was the first time I could choose to go to church or not. I had the freedom to choose my own spiritual destiny and I was enjoying it.

I knew that I wanted to be “saved” but wasn’t quite convinced that I wanted to be a “saint”, as defined by the church and by scripture. I saw the perks of mainstream Christianity and it appealed to me. I gravitated in that direction until I was halted by the mercy of God.

One night He spoke very clearly to me: “Break up your fallow ground and sow not among thorns.” I wept as He spoke my language on a level that I understood. I was not in church. There was no preacher. I was alone in a dorm room.

But I “saw” the Lord that night. I was able to clearly identify Him. It is what I had been waiting for but hadn’t realized it until then. I wanted to see Him for myself. I wanted to know Him for myself, not just through the eyes of my parents or the preachers. I wanted to see Him for *me*!

It was a transformative experience. I saw that He had patiently waited for me. I saw that at various times He had approached me, and I had missed Him or simply dismissed Him.

Christ makes a clear and distinct appeal to us all. He introduces Himself in a manner where there is no chance for mistaken identity.

What we do after that is our choice. Do we wait for a more convenient time? Do we justify our unbelief? Or do we with honesty of heart, seize the opportunity?

Christ is coming again, despite the scoffers and the naysayers! His final appearance is on the horizon. All signs point to it. Will you be ready? Will you be waiting with glad anticipation?

“Surely I come quickly.”

—Bro. Darrell Johnson

APRIL 12, 2020

WAITING FOR SALVATION AND DELIVERANCE

Undeterred Confidence

Psalm 13:1 How long wilt thou forget me, O LORD? for ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me?

2 How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? How long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?

5 But I have trusted in thy mercy; my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation.

Psalm 25:1 Unto thee, O LORD, do I lift up my soul.

2 O my God, I trust in thee: let me not be ashamed, let not mine enemies triumph over me.

3a Yea, let none that wait on thee be ashamed.

5 Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day.

21 Let integrity and uprightness preserve me; for I wait on thee.

Psalm 27:14 Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.

Psalm 40:1 I waited patiently for the LORD; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry.

2 He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings.

3 And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord.

Psalm 119:81 My soul fainteth for thy salvation: but I hope in thy word.

82 Mine eyes fail for thy word, saying, When wilt thou comfort me?

83 For I am become like a bottle in the smoke; yet do I not forget thy statutes.

Isaiah 40:31 But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint.

Micah 7:7 Therefore I will look unto the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me.

MEMORY VERSE: The Lord is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD. It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth. —**Lamentations 3:25-27**

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The Bible records the distress and longing of many saints who were in great trouble, danger, imprisonment, persecution, and affliction; the promises they embraced, and their praises when deliverance finally came.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Psalm 13:5 “Mercy”: unfailing, constant, faithful love and devotion. “Salvation”: something saved; deliverance, aid, victory, prosperity.

Psalm 25:2 “Ashamed”: confounded; disappointed; made pale.

Psalm 119:83 “A bottle in the smoke”: “Bottles in the East were commonly made of skins. Such ‘bottles,’ hanging in tents where the smoke had little opportunity to escape, would, of course, become dark and dingy, and would thus be emblems of distress, discomfort, and sorrow. The meaning here is, that, by affliction and sorrow, the psalmist had been reduced to a state which would be well represented by such a bottle” (*Barnes’ Notes on the Bible*).

LESSON BACKGROUND

Not only did the ancient saints look forward in faith for their long-expected Messiah and Redeemer, they also went through many experiences of trial and affliction, out of which poured forth writings of anguish and longing as they waited for deliverance.

Joseph, captured and sold into slavery by his own brothers, was

made, for a season, an honored steward in a fine home. He was then plunged again into shame and imprisonment and forgotten for two years by one who promised to remember him. Surely during those dark days he cried out to the Lord, much like David did in today's scripture reading.

The Israelites, held for over four hundred years in Egyptian bondage, waited and sighed for God's salvation. Later in Canaan, their iniquities brought them many times into years of bondage under one enemy or another. Scripture records that they would cry to the Lord, and He would send a hero to deliver them. Their seventy years of Babylonian captivity was foretold by prophets who lamented over them, reproved them and comforted them during that long time.

The book of Job doesn't tell us exactly how long he suffered before God turned things around, but it was certainly more than a few days; some scholars think it was several months, and some say years.

David was anointed future king of Israel, but it was fifteen years before his kingship became a reality. He was a fugitive from King Saul for four years and then spent the next four years with the Philistines in Ziklag. Several times he had an opportunity to do away with King Saul. His men begged him to; the chance seemed of Divine providence. Yet David, who bore in his spirit an unwavering trust and confidence in the wisdom and the will of God, refused to proudly and foolishly take matters into his own hands. The tragedy at Ziklag—when he and his men returned to see their homes in flames, their wives and children taken captive, and the desperate men, sobbing until they could no longer cry, threatened to kill David—was the last major trial of those desperate years of David's life. Soon afterward Saul died, and David was crowned king in Judah. Psalms 7, 27, 31, 34, 52, 54, 57, 59 and 63 were very likely written during those fugitive years. The process of David becoming king over all of Israel lasted several years; they were long years of waiting and shaped the life, prayers and writings of David.

The prophets Isaiah and Micah predicting the dark days of bondage, and Jeremiah, going through them with the Israelites, were able to look up and see the faithfulness and steadfast love of God. They recorded and affirmed their faith and confidence as they waited.

The 119th chapter of Psalms was very likely written by Ezra. We know his story—after long years of exile, the Persian king, Cyrus, fulfilling the prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah, gave command for the temple of the Lord to be rebuilt in Jerusalem. The work started and trouble began, which caused the work to cease for some years. Disobedience to God’s commands had caused chaos among the children of Israel, and Ezra’s work of making them understand God’s forgotten laws and helping them to rebuild not only their broken city but their broken lives, as well, turned out to be a huge undertaking and a long process. I’m sure he felt faint and shriveled in soul as the days and weeks of toil seemed unending. Praise the Lord for the hope Ezra found in God’s Word!

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

DISCUSSION:

1. Explain the kinds of troubles David had, out of which came the Psalms of waiting for and receiving deliverance from God.
2. Name the prophet who wrote the memory verse.
3. Share additional stories of Bible saints who had to wait long before their deliverance.
4. Share a personal experience of long-awaited deliverance.

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

The Old Testament saints took comfort in the promises of God, available to them by stories passed down by their fathers or written down by Moses and other scribes. Now we have access to their experiences through their writings, divinely preserved for us in our time. “His truth endureth to all generations.”

The strength of God’s Word and promises to them was such that it (1) kept them from speaking hot words of desperation and rebellion against God; (2) kept them from desperate actions, such as bitterness, taking revenge, or suicide; and (3) gave them a strong hope in a life beyond this life, an eternity with God where there is no pain or sorrow.

There is nothing as strong as God’s Word to change situations, steady the will, give stamina to endure, or provide understanding, compassion and even love for enemies. Many encouraging songs

have been written because of that divine strength given in the time of prolonged trial. The great, noteworthy men and women in history who were able to benefit humanity with their writings, inventions or moral leadership were usually people who had come through a very difficult period of waiting and found hope in God's Word.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

REFLECTIONS

There is an old story of a king who had no son to succeed him. The king announced that he would choose an heir from the young men of the country. Various tests were given which weeded all out but three young men who appeared equally qualified. The king announced that the final selection would be determined by a foot race on a certain day.

Race day arrived filled with enthusiasm and excitement. The three young men anxiously aligned on the starting line, each with hope that he would win and become the next king. The king privately sent each runner a message saying, "Do not run on the signal, but wait until I give you a sign."

On the signal, one of them bolted off and then hesitated; then a second began running, upon which the first resumed his race. The third man kept waiting and watching the king for the sign; however, the king had his eyes on the two men running and seemed to forget him. The waiting young man, in shame and embarrassment, felt that all was lost for him.

At the end of the race, the king addressed the three young men. He congratulated the first two and the one who had run the best. "But," he told them, "My choice for king is *you*," he said to the third one who had kept his place. "I knew that all of you could run well, but I didn't know if you could wait."

Unfulfilled desire, patiently and submissively met, is often a powerful factor in character building. Waiting is one of the hardest things for humans to do. We tend to want to hurry matters! While awaiting for the promised son, Sarah threw Hagar into the mix which brought in many problems and heartache. Waiting on God's time and God's way is so vital for us. One verse says, "In your patience possess ye your souls." We fail, when we do not wait on the Lord for His directions and deliverance.

—Bro. Bob Wilson

APRIL 19, 2020

WAITING FOR THE HOLY SPIRIT

Persistent Quest

Luke 24:45 Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures,

46 And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day:

47 And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

48 And ye are witnesses of these things.

49 And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.

50 And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them.

51 And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.

52 And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy:

53 And were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen.

John 14:16 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;

17 Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

18 I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.

26 But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

Acts 1:4 And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me.

5 For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

6 When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?

7 And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.

8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

Acts 2:38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

39 For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.

MEMORY VERSE: Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the LORD, till he come and rain righteousness upon you. —**Hosea 10:12**

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Jesus told His disciples to remain in Jerusalem and wait for the Holy Spirit to be poured out upon them before they went out preaching and teaching the good news and commands of the Lord Jesus; likewise, we who believe are to immediately seek God and not stop until He fills us with His Spirit, that we might have His power within us for witnessing, serving, and overcoming.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Luke 24:46 “Behoved”: a word that is omitted by some authorities; the phrase should read: “Thus Christ should suffer,” meaning that it was proper or necessary for Christ to suffer.

Luke 24:47 “Repentance”: reversal; a change of mind resulting from a deep sorrow for sin. “Remission of sins”: to send away; to dismiss or release; complete forgiveness.

Luke 24:49 “Promise”: an announcement; officially sanctioned promise. “Endued”: put on; clothed, in the sense of *sinking into a garment*.

John 14:16 “Comforter”: called to one’s aid; advocate; advisor;

helper; intercessor.

John 14:18 “Comfortless”: orphans; bereaved; parentless; desolate.

Acts 1:5 “Baptized”: immerse; dip under; submerge.

Acts 1:8 “Power”: miraculous power; strength; ability.

“Witnesses”: one who avers, or can aver, what he himself has seen or heard or knows by any other means. (*Aver*, according to Webster’s, means “to affirm with confidence.”) The word *witness* also came to mean “martyr.”

Hosea 10:12 “Fallow ground”: unplowed; uncultivated; unsown; neglected.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Jesus the Messiah had come fulfilling the many prophecies and promises of the Old Testament. As the time came for His death and resurrection, He prepared His disciples for what would take place. He promised that although He would “go away,” He would “come again”—He would send His Spirit as a Comforter and Guide. The Spirit would teach them and abide with them. He promised to baptize them with the Holy Spirit, give them power, and make them witnesses both at home and abroad.

The disciples gathered in the upper room; possibly, as some scholars maintain, the same room in which Jesus had eaten the Passover with them. Not just the eleven remaining apostles, but other close followers and the women who had ministered to Jesus—his mother, Salome, Joanna and Mary Magdalene—also gathered. There were 120 who prayed and waited, as Jesus had commanded them, for seven days. They would not leave to go about any business, pleasure or distraction. Jesus had said He would come and dwell in them and guide them. There was nothing going to stand between them and their realization of that promise!

Then, it happened. On the day usually set apart by the Jews for consecrating the harvest to God—to those who were gathered together praying, consecrating, setting themselves apart for Him, dying with Him and denying themselves for Him—on that day, Pentecost, suddenly He “came to His temple.” The promise of the Father was poured out upon them, immersing them, filling them; refining them, purifying them; dwelling among, beside and within

them. They began to pour out of the building, preaching the wonderful works of God to the seventeen different nationalities of people gathered in Jerusalem. As the people began to hear the Gospel message in their own languages, they were very stirred and cried out,

“What shall we do?”

“Repent and be baptized and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost!” Peter proclaimed.

Just as Jesus had said that the world could not receive the Holy Spirit, so Peter was letting the people know they must be believers who had repented and were baptized—a description of someone who has “turned around” from following and belonging to the world and is now following Jesus alone—in order to receive the “promise from heaven,” the Holy Spirit.

The prophet Hosea had also shown the people that their hearts must be prepared for the Messiah and His kingdom of righteousness. They needed to plow up their neglected, hardened ground and sow Christ’s seed into their hearts, and then they were to seek God until He rained His righteousness down upon them.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

DISCUSSION:

1. From the account given in Luke 24, describe the setting of Jesus’ message.
2. The promise about the Comforter comes from which three chapters of John?
3. Give the background of Peter’s message of repentance, baptism and the Holy Ghost.
4. What key does Hosea give us in our quest for the Holy Spirit?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

The two words from Jesus, “wait” and “tarry” and Hosea’s words, “Seek...till He come” let us know there is a special waiting very connected with our personal quest for God to come to us individually and fill us with His Spirit. Pentecost was fifty days after Passover. Jesus was crucified on Passover, resurrected the third day, and seen

for forty days. On the day of Pentecost, the disciples had been waiting and tarrying in the upper room, not one, nor two, but seven days from the day they saw him lift off the ground and rise until the clouds enveloped him. He said to wait. How they waited! And prayed! And would not go anywhere or do anything else until He had come!

With that same focus, with that same passion, and with that same desire, we also should seek Him until we are sure He has rained His righteousness down into our hearts. We should also realize that we cannot be a witness, or have power, or be guided, or comforted, until we have been filled with His Spirit. Even after His initial coming into our hearts by the baptism of the Holy Spirit, we should seek Him every day of our lives with the same intensity for fresh and new outpourings of His presence, knowing He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

REFLECTIONS

Below is an excerpt from the book, *Why God Used D. L. Moody* by R. A. Torrey describing how Dwight Lyman Moody, an American evangelist ministering in the late 1800s, received the Holy Spirit:

"The seventh thing that was the secret of why God used D. L. Moody was that, he had a very definite endowment with power from on high, a very clear and definite baptism with the Holy Ghost. Mr. Moody knew he had the 'baptism with the Holy Ghost;' he had no doubt about it. In his early days he was a great hustler, he had a tremendous desire to do something, but he had no real power. He worked very largely in the energy of the flesh. But there were two humble Free Methodist women who used to come over to his meetings in the Y.M.C.A... These two women would come to Mr. Moody at the close of his meetings and say: 'We are praying for you.' Finally, Mr. Moody became somewhat nettled and said to them one night: 'Why are you praying for me? Why don't you pray for the unsaved?' They replied: 'We are praying that you may get the power.' Mr. Moody did not know what that meant, but he got to thinking about it, and then went to these women and said: 'I wish you would tell me what you mean,' and they told him about the definite baptism with the Holy Ghost. Then he asked that he might

pray with them and not that they merely pray for him.

"...And he not only prayed with them, but he also prayed alone. Not long after, one day on his way to England, he was walking up Wall Street in New York (Mr. Moody very seldom told this and I almost hesitate to tell it) and in the midst of the bustle and hurry of that city his prayer was answered; the power of God fell upon him as he walked up the street and he had to hurry off to the house of a friend and ask that he might have a room by himself, and in that room he stayed alone for hours; and the Holy Ghost came upon him filling his soul with such joy that at last he had to ask God to withhold His hand, lest he die on the spot from very joy. He went out from that place with the power of the Holy Ghost upon him, and when he got to London (partly through the prayers of a bedridden saint in Mr. Lessey's church) the power of God wrought through him mightily in North London and hundreds were added to the churches, and that was what led to his being invited over to the wonderful campaign that followed in later years..."

—Bro. Fari Matthews

APRIL 26, 2020

WAITING FOR WISDOM AND DIRECTION

Consecrated Trust

I Samuel 13:5 And the Philistines gathered themselves together to fight with Israel, thirty thousand chariots, and six thousand horsemen, and people as the sand which is on the sea shore in multitude: and they came up, and pitched in Michmash, eastward from Bethaven.

6 When the men of Israel saw that they were in a strait, (for the people were distressed,) then the people did hide themselves in caves, and in thickets, and in rocks, and in high places, and in pits.

7 And some of the Hebrews went over Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. As for Saul, he was yet in Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling.

8 And he tarried seven days, according to the set time that Samuel had appointed: but Samuel came not to Gilgal; and the people were scattered from him.

9 And Saul said, Bring hither a burnt offering to me, and peace offerings. And he offered the burnt offering.

10 And it came to pass, that as soon as he had made an end of offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came; and Saul went out to meet him, that he might salute him.

11 And Samuel said, What hast thou done? And Saul said, Because I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that thou camest not within the days appointed, and that the Philistines gathered themselves together at Michmash;

12 Therefore said I, The Philistines will come down now upon me to Gilgal, and I have not made supplication unto the LORD: I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt offering.

13 And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the LORD thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would the LORD have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever.

14 But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the LORD hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the LORD commanded thee.

Proverbs 3:5 Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

6 In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

Proverbs 8:1 Doth not wisdom cry? And understanding put forth her voice?

3 She crieth at the gates, at the entry of the city, at the coming in at the doors.

34 Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors.

Hosea 12:6 Therefore turn thou to thy God: keep mercy and judgment, and wait on thy God continually.

Habakkuk 2:1 I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reprov'd.

2 And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it.

3 For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will

surely come, it will not tarry.

4 Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.

James 1:2 My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;

3 Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.

4 But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

MEMORY VERSE: If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.

—James 1:5-6

CENTRAL THOUGHT: King Saul had been told by Samuel to wait, but before the time was up, he foolishly, arrogantly, and without faith, disobeyed, a vivid example to the teaching set forth in other scriptures about waiting on God for direction and seeking His wisdom, instead of rushing ahead relying upon one's own understanding.

WORD DEFINITIONS

I Samuel 13:5 “Thirty thousand chariots”: a term which most scholars and commentators think is a misreading by the copyists, since the Arabic and Syriac versions have “three thousand,” and compared to other armies (Jabin had 900, Pharaoh pursued Israel with 600, King Solomon had 1400) seems an unbelievable number. “People”: infantry.

I Samuel 13:8 “The set time that Samuel had appointed”: a time which many commentators believe was designated by Samuel when he had anointed Saul king (I Samuel 10:8). Others believe there was a different appointment meant by this verse. However this may be, Saul understood that he was to wait seven days. Tragically, he preempted Samuel's coming by a few minutes.

Proverbs 3:6 “Acknowledge”: know; recognize; discover; be acquainted with.

James 1:2 “Divers”: of different colors; manifold; various.

James 1:3 “Patience”: cheerful endurance.

James 1:4 “Perfect”: mature; fully instructed; not a child; not a novice. “Entire”: sound; complete in every part.

James 1:5 “Liberally”: generously; unfolded; holding nothing back.

LESSON BACKGROUND

If indeed the appointment made in I Samuel 10:8, when Samuel anointed Saul to be king, was the command in reference to this momentous day, Saul was most responsible and had been duly warned and prepared—a year or two prior and probably more recently repeated—to be circumspect and cautious about his actions. Yes, he was in great distress. Yes, his support was dwindling alarmingly. But his regard for God’s commands should have been uppermost in his mind; a settled, no-bargaining-allowed commitment. For the person in command of God’s people, this was a grievous error, and God must forfeit this king in favor of another, who had a heart “after God’s heart,” the commitment Saul lacked.

The Proverbs, written in the God-given wisdom of Solomon, contain the instructions of wisdom. Wisdom is personified as a messenger standing in the gate calling to passersby. Warnings were issued to seek for wisdom as people pursued wealth; to cry unto God for it because He is its only source; to choose to allow Him to direct one’s steps, instead of depending upon one’s own strength and understanding. We are instructed to “watch” daily at wisdom’s gates, and “wait” at wisdom’s doorposts for guidance and direction in life. Why? There are dangers ahead; there are traps leading to death and hell. We can consider ourselves forewarned, as Saul was.

Hosea, reproving Judah and Ephraim for their apostasy, cited Jacob’s prevailing supplication at Peniel, and admonished God’s backsliding people to wait on God continually.

The passage in Habakkuk is striking. Habakkuk had cried to the Lord in chapter one, “How long shall I cry and thou wilt not hear!” But now he speaks as a watchman who stands up on something high so he can see out over everything. Habakkuk’s words have ever been encouraging to those who wait upon God.

Matthew Henry’s commentary on Habakkuk 2:1 adds interest:

“When tossed and perplexed with doubts about the methods of Providence, we must watch against temptations to be impatient. When we have poured out complaints and requests before God, we must observe the answers God gives by his word, his Spirit, and providences; what the Lord will say to our case. God will not disappoint the believing expectations of those who wait to hear what he will say unto them. All are concerned in the truths of God's word. Though the promised favour be deferred long, it will come at last, and abundantly recompense us for waiting.”

This leads us to the admonition from James in the New Testament. Temptations lie in every direction; caution is of life-and-death importance. To navigate safely, we must have wisdom from God. Thank God for this wonderful promise! He is the source, and He has promised to give to those who lack, copiously, abundantly, without shaming, chiding or reproaching. “My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him” (Psalm 62:5).

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

DISCUSSION:

1. According to James, what do we encounter from every direction, and of every kind?
2. What was Saul's “test,” what was its importance, and how did he score?
3. What did Saul's actions reveal about the “want” or “lack” in his heart?
4. Tell which prophet received this instruction when he stood and waited for God's Word: “Though it tarry, wait for it.”
5. Which prophet said, “Wait on God continually”?
6. Share real-life decisions and circumstances which require waiting for God's wisdom.

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

What are the “gates” and “doorposts” of wisdom in our lives today, at which we are advised to watch and wait daily? I thought of several; perhaps you can add to the list.

God's Word should be the first one. A young person, seeking to decide upon a career, a lifelong companion, or any matter in life,

should study and seek every day for direction through earnest Bible study.

Closely adjoining Bible study is *earnest prayer*. In over thirty years of observing people, I have seen many fatal mistakes made by those who simply didn't do much praying; and watched joyfully the successes of those I knew had diligently sought the Lord in prayer.

Seeking sound counsel and advice from godly examples is certainly a safety precaution well worth one's while before plunging ahead into important decisions. I have seen young people who obeyed an older person's "Don't!" and were so glad of that decision later! Likewise, there were young people who had been told to "Wait!" who decided to go ahead, and there has been heartache.

The Spirit's still, small voice inside. If you keep bumping your head against a strong, internal impression that you need to step back and reconsider, you would do best to obey it. If you're fighting to get your way, you can pretty much know that you won't be happy if you get it. It is better to go slowly and let the "waiting" accomplish a complete work in your life.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

REFLECTIONS

I was raised as an evangelist's daughter and had many experiences of witnessing God directing in the direction of the "whens and wheres" of life. My daddy's mantra was, "Be willing to go or be willing to stay." Even as teenagers we were encouraged and included in seeking God's will in where we needed to move. Or if we had temporal needs, we prayed. And God answered prayer. Our family has numerous "faith-building" stories.

That, and the fact that I married an evangelist's son, who shared similar stories, provided us with a safe base of seeking God when we needed to make changes in our lives. We were fearful to move anywhere out of the will of the Lord. Prayerful consideration and the belief that God opens doors led us through several relocations in our married life.

The one that stands out the most was about 12 years ago when we were living in Kentucky. We had only lived there for 3 years and relocation wasn't inviting. But circumstances were leading to a need

to go to Missouri to be with my 90-year-old mother who was failing physically and needed help.

In a heartfelt, but maybe not-so-expectant prayer, I asked the Lord to send a buyer for our house, right to our door, if it was His will for us to move. We didn't even have it "For Sale." Within days, a lady left a note on our door asking if we would like to sell, along with her phone number. The Lord worked His will almost faster than we could think. A phone call, a couple of walk-throughs, a cash sale, a loaded U-Haul, and we were in Missouri in a month! We didn't have time to question God. He wanted us in Missouri and fast!

Likewise, we have stories where God closed doors and we were helpless to open them. From experience, we challenge others by these stories, to watch those doors. Don't push them open. Wait on God to open them and walk through. Or go back to life when they close on you. It's a safe way to live and avoid a lot of heartache.

—Sis. Jeanie Samons

MAY 3, 2020

WAITING AND WATCHING UNTO PRAYER

Expectant Perseverance

Psalm 5:3 My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up.

Psalm 123:1 Unto thee lift I up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens.

2 Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the LORD our God, until that he have mercy upon us.

Isaiah 64:4 For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him.

Daniel 10:2 In those days I Daniel was mourning three full weeks.

3 I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled.

10 And, behold, an hand touched me, which set me upon my knees and upon the palms of my hands.

12 Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words.

13 But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia.

14 Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days: for yet the vision is for many days.

Ephesians 6:18 Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

Hebrews 6:15 And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.

MEMORY VERSE: But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer. —**I Peter 4:7**

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Earnest prayer often involves waiting and watching; waiting for the assurance one is being heard and for the word of promise; and watching until the expectation is fully realized.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Psalm 5:3 “Will look up”: watch expectantly.

Psalm 123:2 “As the eyes of servants”: “Watch for the slightest sign that he may give of his will. Such signs were usually given by some movement of the ‘hand.’ Masters were waited on by male slaves; their wives by handmaids—both equally anxious to do their will, and therefore equally watchful of all the signs that indicated it. ‘So our eyes wait upon the Lord our God, until that he have mercy upon us.’ We wait for the least sign that he is about to help and deliver us” (*Pulpit Commentary*).

Daniel 10:3 “No pleasant bread”: “bread of desires,” such as was made of the finest of the wheat, and was eaten in the courts of princes where Daniel was. According to some [Jewish Rabbins], hot bread is meant; but in general it means the best of bread, such as had good qualities to make it desirable” (*Gill’s Exposition of the*

Entire Bible).

Ephesians 6:18 “Watching thereunto”: keep awake; stay alert.
“Perseverance”: steadfastness; persistence.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Our beginning scriptures for this lesson from Psalms and Isaiah suggest the concepts of praying with expectancy and looking to God for the slightest movement of guidance or command from His hand, and they give an awesome reminder that He has prepared wondrous and glorious treasure stores for those who thus wait in expectancy upon him.

We then move to Daniel and the account of Daniel’s three-week fast. There are several suggestions as to the cause of his burden: the Jews remaining in Babylon who had not taken advantage of the freedom granted them to return to Jerusalem; the opposition being met by those trying to rebuild the city and temple which had slowed or even stopped progress altogether; and the vision of the future of his people and the Messiah, which showed their sin in cutting off His life. This story is encouraging to us because it shows clearly how God heard Daniel’s intercession at its very beginning. He explained to Daniel the spiritual warfare going on and the reason for the delay in bringing an answer to him.

The New Testament verses show the necessity of the persevering kind of prayer that is alert to the opposition of the adversary, and aware of both the soundness of mind required of saints living in the end times, and the patient endurance which sees the fulfillment of the promise.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

DISCUSSION:

1. The Psalmist shows us two things which characterized his prayer. What are they?
2. Discuss the quality of heart (expressed by the illustration of a servant looking to his master in Psalm 123) necessary for the waiting spirit we must maintain in fervent prayer.
3. Describe the quality of what God has prepared for those who wait for him. How can that thought encourage us when we pray?

4. What lessons can we learn from Daniel's experience in his three-week fast?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Not only the importance of praying is expressed by these scriptures, but also the characteristics of expectancy, vigilance and perseverance are clearly set forth as vital elements of the prayer that avails with God.

I have been made aware of the difference between having *expectations* of God (keeping our control on things), and having an *expectancy* of God (releasing control to God). With one, we severely limit God and what He will do for us, while with the other, we free God to surprise us with answers we have never seen, heard, or imagined. When we wait before Him in this manner as we pray, we find our prayers mingled with more faith and praise.

Sometimes our attitude in prayer has been like a petulant child.

"I doubt you'll ever give me anything that good."

"I've prayed and prayed, but I'll never get it."

The secret to long-unanswered prayer is revealed to us in Daniel's experience. There are workings of God we do not realize or see. We think He is not hearing, but the truth is, He hears us! There are good reasons for being patient! Let us believe the truth in this passage and be willing to persevere in prayer, watch with a ready and sound mind, and wait with expectancy.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

REFLECTIONS

Our late sister Edith Cole Lara's life was an example showing us that waiting on the Lord is the best choice to make. Edith's heart's desire was to do God's will. Instead of thinking of having a career that would make life easy for herself, she wanted to do something for God. What should she do? Where was a place for her to work?

Soon after she finished nursing school a door opened up for her to care for an elderly sick sister. It wasn't what she had envisioned as working for the Lord. Her visions were perhaps working in an orphanage in some country far away. She was from a large family, loved children and wanted many children of her own. However,

taking care of the elderly lady had opened up for her, so she accepted it as being where God needed her.

She moved 1600 miles across the United States to California, and was confined to helping one sick woman, while she dreamed of helping many children. In times of discouragement these verses encouraged her to keep waiting on God: “Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass” (Psalm 37:4-5).

While she was patiently nursing, the Whittenborn family moved to Baja California to work with the Pia-pia Indians. When they realized they needed a teacher for their children, they asked Edith to come live with them. In a few years Edith had mastered Spanish and was not only the head teacher in the public school on the Santa Catarina Indian Reservation, but was also teaching the adult Bible class as well as sewing, gardening, etc.

Later she moved away from the reservation and built up a congregation near Mexicali. A few years later, she married a widower in that congregation. He had five children that she already loved. Later they adopted five more children.

Edith now had the desire of her heart—to help many children and have a large family.

—Sis. Charlotte Huskey

MAY 10, 2020

WAITING FOR PROVISION

Serene Dependence

Psalm 37:3 Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.

4 Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.

5 Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass.

7 Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass.

9 For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the

LORD, they shall inherit the earth.

Psalm 78:15 He clave the rocks in the wilderness, and gave them drink as out of the great depths.

16 He brought streams also out of the rock, and caused waters to run down like rivers.

17 And they sinned yet more against him by provoking the most High in the wilderness.

18 And they tempted God in their heart by asking meat for their lust.

19 Yea, they spake against God; they said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?

20 Behold, he smote the rock, that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed; can he give bread also? can he provide flesh for his people?

21 Therefore the LORD heard this, and was wroth: so a fire was kindled against Jacob, and anger also came up against Israel;

22 Because they believed not in God, and trusted not in his salvation:

23 Though he had commanded the clouds from above, and opened the doors of heaven,

24 And had rained down manna upon them to eat, and had given them of the corn of heaven.

Matthew 6:30 Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?

31 Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?

32 (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

MEMORY VERSE: The eyes of all wait upon thee; and thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing. —**Psalm 145:15-16**

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Every living thing waits upon the Lord for provision, and He is faithful to all His creation; therefore, we are

exhorted to wait patiently for Him to supply our needs without fretting, murmuring, doubting or worrying.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Psalm 37:3 “And verily thou shalt be fed”: “Taken literally this promise may be addressed to the Levites, and may contain allusion to their precarious condition, dependent as they were on offerings and tithes, but the Hebrew may also have the meanings: (1) Thou shalt feed on (or enjoy) stability (or security). (2) Thou shalt pasture on faithfulness, i.e., be supported by God's truth and righteousness as by a rich pasture. Possibly both were combined in the psalmist's thought, for the faithfulness of God is the security of man” (*Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers*).

Psalm 37:4 “Delight:” from a root meaning soft, delicate, dainty; to take exquisite delight; spend in enjoyment. “Desires of thine heart”: “Our innermost desires are here meant, not our casual wishes; there are many things which nature might desire which grace would never permit us to ask for; these deep, prayerful, asking desires are those to which the promise is made” (*The Treasury of David*). “A deep lesson lies in that word *distraction*, which has come to be so closely attached to *desires*; the lesson that all eager longing tears the heart asunder. Unbridled and varying wishes, then, are the worst enemies of our repose. And, still further, they destroy tranquility by putting us at the mercy of externals. Whatsoever we make necessary for our contentment, we make lord of our happiness. By our eager desires we give perishable things supreme power over us, and so intertwine our being with theirs, that the blow which destroys them lets out our life-blood” (*MacLaren's Expositions*).

Psalm 37:5 “Commit”: roll; as in rolling a heavy burden from ourselves onto another. “He shall bring it to pass”: He will work; He will accomplish.

Psalm 37:6 “Rest”: be still; be silent; quiet yourself.

LESSON BACKGROUND

The directives given in Psalm 37 are a happy balance of action and repose. Not only do we trust, but we “do” what is good and

right. Not only do we commit, trust and rest, but we “delight” or immerse ourselves wholeheartedly in the pleasure of knowing God’s presence and doing His will. *Clarke’s Commentary* puts it, “Have a sedate care and an industrious confidence.” This leaves no room for idleness or slothfulness in business!

But there is a part of “busyness” which those of us who know God must refuse, and that is the fretful, distracting anxiety that entangles us in the affairs of this world. It seems the Israelites (Psalm 78) couldn’t—or wouldn’t—let go of their desires for the things of Egypt and delight themselves in the provisions of the Lord, rejoice in the miracles and relish the special care He gave them.

“Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?”

We should shout the answer to their skeptical question: “YES, HE CAN!”

Jesus addressed the worldly attitude of doubt and scrabbling for the things of this world and taught His disciples to PRAY about their daily bread and CONSIDER how He fed the birds and clothed the flowers. The heathen people seek after these things, He added, but “your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.” His promise was that if we seek Him first—seek the heavenly things of the kingdom; seek His righteousness—all our food, clothing and other needs would be added.

Our memory verse reminds us that in reality, all forms of life around us are dependent upon God for sustenance. He provides, constantly, “in due season,” right on time; and what’s more, with a generous, open hand He SATISFIES the desires of every living thing.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

DISCUSSION:

1. List the seven positive actions in Psalm 37:3-7.
2. What were the attitudes and actions of the Israelites after God “opened the doors of heaven” for them, and what was God’s response?
3. Share your story of how God fulfilled the promise of Matthew 6:33 in your life.

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

“My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him.” There is such a deep truth expressed here when we apply these words to this area of our lives. When we can truly recognize with our hearts and confess with attitudes, words and actions that Jesus is the One who supplies all of our needs, it is life-transforming. I’ve seen it take the back-breaking, overwhelming burden out of the heart of a husband who works so hard to supply for his home. It puts a radiance and child-like softness into the heart and countenance of a housewife, replacing the hard lines of worry and discontent. It gives the Lord an opening to surprise us with miracles when we take EVERYTHING to Him in prayer. Every item on our want/need list. Every time crunch, every financial crisis, every impossibility, every fear.

When want does come, when disaster hits, I’ve seen those who knew God was their supply stay serene and composed. Their life-blood didn’t drain out from the physical loss, because their life-blood was Jesus Christ.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

REFLECTIONS

Waiting on God’s timing to provide is one of the most difficult challenges in this life of faith. We know he can provide and know he promised to do so, but there are still times we struggle with the question, “When.”

I’m reminded of a recent event that took place at Pearl of Grace Ranch. We had just started this journey of faith and had seen God miraculously supply thousands of dollars for needed building materials, staff and labor crews to make this ministry a reality. But just as the children of Israel saw God perform miracle after miracle in their deliverance out of Egypt but when they got hungry they started complaining, I found myself doing the same thing. We opened our doors and shortly after found ourselves low on operating funds.

In fact, we were scraping the bottom of the barrel. We had been praying for God to provide but I was getting anxious and felt like maybe I should help things along a little bit. I contacted some of the

board members to let them know that something had to be done!

Shortly after that impatient intervention (30 minutes), my wife called to tell me a \$15,000 check had just come in the mail! I shouted, then cried, and then had to ask God to forgive my lack of trust and my impatience. God always comes through—never too late and rarely early, but on time.

—Bro. Toney Samons

MAY 17, 2020

WAITING FOR HARVEST

Industrious Patience

Psalm 126:5 They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.

6 He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.

Ecclesiastes 11:4 He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap.

6 In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.

Mark 4:26 And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground;

27 And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how.

28 For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.

29 But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.

Luke 8:15 But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.

James 5:7 Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain.

MEMORY VERSE: And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. —**Galatians 6:9**

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The spiritual truth of sowing and reaping contains in it the concepts of toiling, waiting, and watching, while hoping and trusting for the planted seed to germinate, grow, and produce fruit that ripens until the time for harvest.

WORD DEFINITIONS

James 5:7 “The early and latter rain”: “The first showers of autumn, which revived the parched and thirsty earth, and prepared it for the seed; and the latter showers of spring, which continued to refresh and forward the ripening crops and the vernal products of the fields” (*Robinson*).

LESSON BACKGROUND

The scriptures in Psalms and Ecclesiastes give us the precious promises which we know are pointing toward a spiritual truth. The authors are not speaking merely of literal seed-sowing. Rather, they are referring to the Word-seed which is sown into the hearts of men and women. A seed is sown in hope. In spiritual things, the seed represents powerful life potential. The seed, sown into a human heart, if it is combined with the warmth and softness of faith and receptivity, and the moisture of repentance, swells and bursts into new life. As it grows it brings promise of fruitfulness, a yield greater than itself.

There is “waiting” involved with a seed. Physically, the seed is sown, and for a while there is nothing. But if you start with viable seed corn and the other conditions are met—if there is constant moisture and warmth—just as Jesus described in Mark’s account, pretty soon you see a tiny green shoot. Just a blade. Almost imperceptible. A few days later, you find two long, curling leaves where the blade was. After a while, in the middle of the growing leaves next to the stalk, you find a tiny ear forming. In several weeks you can peel back the outer leaves and reveal full, juicy corn kernels, several hundred on one ear, and possibly two ears per plant. The

total yield is truly worth the wait.

Jesus told another agricultural parable about waiting. This time it involved a fig tree whose owner was about to cut it down because of unfruitfulness. “Let it alone,” pleaded the caretaker, “and I will cultivate the soil around it, fertilize it and prune it. Then just see if it doesn’t bear fruit.” This story illustrates how Jesus works in our lives to produce fruitfulness. Have you felt the pruning shears and the cultivator working you over? That’s the Lord having patience with you instead of pulling you up and throwing you away. Be patient with Him. He’s cultivating fruit.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

DISCUSSION:

1. What three-fold promise is given to those who sow good seed and water it with their tears?
2. What two things must we disregard when we go out to sow?
3. What times of the day are mentioned for sowing? What spiritual lesson can be read here?
4. Explain the “early and latter” rain.
5. Name the two dangerous tendencies against which we are warned in our memory verse. Tell how they would affect the hoped-for yield.

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Think how today’s lesson illustrates so many aspects and relationships of life: friendship, marriage, child/parent, business, church. You spend twenty or so years of your child’s life sowing—loving, forgiving, correcting, teaching, practicing, repeating. Sometimes it seems there will be little or no yield after all your efforts. But remember the verse: Don’t be weary in well-doing. There will be a “due season” in that child’s life when the hard work is forgotten and such precious fruit is a daily, delightful enjoyment.

In marriage it is also this way. For optimal results, each spouse must sow into the relationship precious seed. It must be watered with the tears of our intercession and prayer. The cultivator of self-denial must be at work daily, and the pesticide spray of forgiveness

must be applied often. Every day add the fertilizer of laughter, mutual enjoyment, things done “just for love,” and physical affection. Stay expectant and hopeful for a wonderful harvest.

Our very first priority, of course, is God’s kingdom in us and its spread to the world around us. We must not let the wind or threat of storm hinder us from sowing the seed or going out to the field to gather the ripened grain! We shouldn’t be discouraged from sowing in the morning of our lives or in the evening time—young or old, we can be about the Father’s business of saving souls. Let us not be discouraged by the time it takes for growth and harvest!

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

REFLECTIONS

We live in a world today that is quite the opposite of *patient*. We no longer have to wait for a garden to grow in order to obtain produce to eat; we simply go to the grocery store and purchase what we need. We do not have to walk to town or rely on a horse to get us there. We are able to travel with rapid speed. We even cook differently since a meal can be readied in a matter of minutes rather than hours. Our information is no longer something we have to wait for, since we can have it at the touch of a fingertip. All of these things can be a detriment to our patience quotient. Many times we simply do not know how to wait.

Abraham and Sarah had been promised a child by the Lord himself, but in their long days of waiting, they decided to manipulate the plan. The end result brought great devastation. Impatience brings doubt and sometimes anger. Moses' lack of patience caused him to strike the rock instead of speaking to it and he lost his chance to enter into the Canaan land.

Jesus said, "In your patience possess ye your souls." The Lord works in his own time and his own plan. James 1 states, "Let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." Patience is a virtue that can only be accomplished when we have trusted and rested in the Lord.

—Sis. LaDawna Adams

MAY 24, 2020

WAITING FOR HIS JUDGMENTS

Cautious Deliberation

Isaiah 11:1 And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots:

2 And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD;

3 And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears:

4 But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.

Isaiah 26:7 The way of the just is uprightness: thou, most upright, dost weigh the path of the just.

8 Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O LORD, have we waited for thee; the desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee.

9 With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early: for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.

Ecclesiastes 5:1 Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil.

2 Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few.

Ecclesiastes 7:8 Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof: and the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit.

9 Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry: for anger resteth in the bosom of fools.

Ecclesiastes 8:5 Whoso keepeth the commandment shall feel no evil thing: and a wise man's heart discerneth both time and judgment.

6 Because to every purpose there is time and judgment, therefore the misery of man is great upon him.

I Corinthians 4:3 But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self.

4 For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord.

5 Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.

MEMORY VERSE: Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment. —**John 7:24**

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Jesus, the supreme example of one who judged righteous judgment, didn't make hasty decisions based on the sight of His eyes or the hearing of His ears; therefore, we are cautioned to be patient rather than hasty, waiting on the Lord to bring the hidden things to light so that we may judge righteous judgment.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Isaiah 11:3 "Quick understanding": "or, *his smelling shall be*. *Smelling* is put for judging, because the sense of smelling, where it is quick and good, is more exact and sure in the judging of its proper objects, than the senses of seeing and hearing are...So the sense is, He shall not judge rashly and partially, but considerately and justly, as the fear of God obligeth all judges to do" (*Matthew Poole's Commentary*). Another meaning is suggested: "He shall delight in the fear of the Lord." *Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible* expresses it as, "'Cause him to smell the fear of the Lord'; that is, to discern in whom it was: this is one effect of the Spirit's resting upon him, and particularly as the spirit of understanding, and of the fear of the Lord, whereby he has a quick and sharp discerning of it; so as to discern where and in whom it was, and was not; he could distinguish between him that feared God and him that feared him not."

Isaiah 11:4 “Reprove with equity for the meek of the earth”:
“And with equity will He decide in favor of the earth’s
oppressed” (*Berean Study Bible*). Equity means *fairness; justice*.

I Corinthians 4:4 “I know nothing by myself”: nothing against
myself.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Today’s lesson examines the way Jesus Christ weighs the spirits of all men and discerns them; not by outward appearances only because that can be deceiving; nor by what he hears from this one or that one, but by what they are inside—their spirits, which can only be “smelled” or discerned by God. Judging or discerning between right and wrong for ourselves is an obligation for which we must individually take serious care. Discerning others requires even more cautious deliberation. Examples in the scriptures illustrate the solemn contemplation and waiting before God practiced by holy men of God when faced with judicial decisions. Moses and Aaron once had to decide what to do with a man who had cursed. Did they cut him off immediately? No, they put him “in ward, that the mind of the LORD might be shewed them.” They prayed until God showed Moses exactly what to do (Leviticus 24:10-16).

There are precedents in Scripture where God gave individuals space for repentance before He struck with a judgment sentence. The very words, “Thou dost weigh the path of the just” suggest the slow but sure methods in which God works. Isaiah recognized this when he said, “In the way of thy judgments have we waited for thee.”

The Ecclesiastes writer also admonished against being hasty with the utterances of our mouths or the anger of our spirits. Being “soon angry” implies that a quick judgment has been made and a hasty decision to act in vengeance or harm has taken over good sense. The word “prejudice” contains the idea of a judgment made or an attitude taken without all the facts being considered or the full story heard and understood.

Paul instructed the Corinthians to wait for the Lord to come and make things clear before passing judgment on one another. I don’t believe he is saying to wait for the second coming of our Lord; rather, we must wait for *His coming to the individual situation with His wisdom and direction*. In our own personal judgment, he is saying, we

tend to go very easy on ourselves and may not find anything worthy of judgment against ourselves. We tend to go to the opposite extreme with others. He exhorts to judge nothing before “the time.” It is true that a judgment must necessarily be made. But there is “a time.” And a wise man will discern the correct timing *and* method of judgment.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

DISCUSSION:

1. How did Isaiah say the Messiah would judge?
2. What is meant by “quick understanding?”
3. What is the effect of God’s judgments being manifest in the earth through our lives?
4. A wise man discerns both _____ and _____.
5. In judging others, for what are we to wait?
6. What is meant by righteous judgment?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

The scriptures in this lesson, together with the preceding lessons about waiting on God, give a clear picture of the *spirit of waiting* so necessary for the people of God. How we err when we are hasty! Hasty to condemn others, hasty to utter hurtful words, hasty to retaliate, hasty to be angry. The wrath of man just doesn’t work the righteousness of God! Prejudices or decisions made because of surface appearances are never fair or balanced. Running ahead of God’s timing can be disastrous, even fatal.

When my husband and I were young people, we were troubled to learn that some individuals in a congregation did not get along with some others. It was easy to watch their actions and draw conclusions, which is what we did one night in campmeeting when, in a packed auditorium, one family arrived late and stood looking for an empty seat. We could see one—so we thought. But half of the bench was occupied by the “other people” and it looked for all the world that the latecomers saw the vacant place, decided they wouldn’t sit there because of “who” was also there, and stood against the wall for the remainder of the service. How we judged their motives and

attitudes from our viewpoint across the chapel! As the congregation stood for the closing hymn, we noticed a very important fact that we had missed: small children sleeping on the “vacant” pew. Our conversation driving home was very sober. We had just been delivered a “wake-up call!” That incident has influenced the way we have dealt with others unto this day. God, make us patient in spirit!

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

REFLECTIONS

William Tyndale was burned at the stake because of his passion for translating the Bible into the English language. He gave his life for a great cause, and in his lifetime, as he waited for the judgments of the Lord, the fulfillment never came to pass as he desired. He was burned at the stake before all his desires were fulfilled. But as the flames were consuming his flesh, this cry came out of his mouth: “LORD OPEN THE KING OF ENGLAND’S EYES!” Within three years King Henry VIII licensed English Bibles to be placed in the parish churches of England. God is not slack concerning his promises!

John Huss became a hero to Martin Luther and many others. He was also burned at the stake waiting for God’s judgments. He turned to his executioner and said, “Today you burn a goose”—speaking of himself, as his last name meant *goose*—“But in a hundred years a swan will arise which you will prove unable to boil or roast.”

True to his word, Martin Luther came with his 95 theses and nailed them to the door, protesting the Catholic Church’s stand on vital issues. These three men waited on the judgments of God and never saw all the fruits of their labor.

—Bro. James Bell

MAY 31, 2020

WAITING ON MINISTRY

Patient Faithfulness

Galatians 1:11 But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man.

12 For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by

the revelation of Jesus Christ.

13 For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it:

14 And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.

15 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace,

16 To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood:

17 Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus.

18 Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days.

19 But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother.

20 Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not.

21 Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia;

22 And was unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ:

23 But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed.

24 And they glorified God in me.

Galatians 2:1 Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also.

2 And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain.

MEMORY VERSE: How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! —**Romans 10:14-15**

CENTRAL THOUGHT: We shouldn't be discouraged when other people misunderstand or do not receive our ministry; rather, we should wait on God's revelation, labor diligently, live faithfully, and patiently wait for God's validation and His direction for our ministry to progress.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Our lesson today is illustrated by Paul's experience among the early church when, as persecutor-turned-preacher, he began to minister to the very people he had once opposed. You can follow the story in the book of Acts and in the epistle to the Galatians, as he explains how God arrested him on the road to Damascus, how Ananias received God's message and plan for Saul and came and prayed for him, and how he then preached to the Damascus Jews, proving that Jesus was the Messiah. Born in Tarsus, Paul had been brought up in Jerusalem, studying under an eminent doctor of the Jewish law, Gamaliel. By his own testimony, he had been a "Hebrew of the Hebrews" and a Pharisee. He had been right there participating in the trial and execution of Stephen. However, when he came face to face with Jesus in the vision, Paul surrendered to Him, counted his former high status and education as a loss, and never looked back.

The verses in Galatians tell us that soon after his conversion at Damascus he went for three years into Arabia. This is probably the period of "many days" mentioned in Acts 9:23. Scripture doesn't fill in what he did for three years in this desert area. But he says in Galatians that he conferred not with flesh and blood. He didn't want his authority to be from the disciples, but directly from Jesus. It was time well spent in personal study and communion with the Lord.

Acts 9:23-25 and II Corinthians 11:32-33 tell us that it was danger of the Jews lying in wait for him that forced him to flee Damascus at night, being hidden in a basket and let down through a window over the wall. He then went to Jerusalem, was regarded with apprehension by the other disciples, and taken in by Barnabas, who pleaded his case before the apostles and recommended him as a true convert and preacher of Jesus Christ. He spent some time preaching and doing God's work faithfully until he was fully understood by the

brethren in Judea.

I am reminded of an Old Testament prophet whose ministry seemed to have a slow take-off. For years Elisha labored with Elijah—quiet, behind-the-scenes, and low-profile. Elijah put Elisha through a series of tests to see whether he would go out on his own or faithfully stay through every kind of situation. Elisha stayed. He endured. He waited on Elijah. He attended to his needs as a servant unto a master. He was rewarded for his patient continuance in well-doing when he was able to see Elijah go up in the chariot of fire, caught up his mantle and proceeded to do God’s work empowered with a double portion of Elijah’s spirit. He performed miracle after miracle and reached kings and important military men, lowly widows and children.

The spirit of patient waiting on God is particularly necessary in the lives of those who are messengers of God. Our memory verse reminds us of this important truth: in order to preach the gospel to others, we must receive it directly from God and then be *sent*. We can’t go on our own whims or in our own timing. Thank God for the example of Paul and the other apostles who would stay if God said, “Stay” and would lay down their lives and go when He said, “Go.”

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

DISCUSSION:

1. Was Paul immediately received by all the Apostles and the church at large?
2. What did Paul do for several years after his conversion?
3. What did he NOT do after his conversion?
4. What Old Testament prophet demonstrated the spirit of waiting on God?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

When Paul wrote letters of instruction to his spiritual “sons,” Timothy and Titus, he often mentioned the importance of enduring hardship, fighting the good fight, and attending faithfully to the duties and studies of men of God. He gave instructions about the ordination of ministers: they were not to lay on hands “suddenly,” they were not to ordain “novices,” or ones newly come to the faith; they were to hear a matter completely through, with two or three

witnesses, before making condemnations. All of these instructions were about waiting for the Lord's correct time. As we have studied in this lesson, Paul was an example of what he taught these younger ministers. He knew the importance of waiting on God.

In I Corinthians 14 Paul instructs about the order of worship services. Again, the spirit of waiting on God was enjoined. Things were to be done decently, in order, and for edification. There was a time to keep silent and a time to speak. The atmosphere in the church was to be one of peace and not confusion. Wives were to be in submission to their husbands; the younger were to be in submission to the elders. Also, as the apostle Peter wrote, "all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility" (I Peter 5:5).

What a beautiful picture and precious privilege is laid out for the people of God in these teachings! It is His will that all strivings cease, all personal agendas are laid aside, and all hearts are tuned to His leading. Our responsibility is to make sure that when we preach we are truly being "sent." My spirit should be in submission to what God is doing on the whole; my self-interests are to be surrendered and my heart quiet and still before him, waiting for His voice.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

REFLECTIONS

In less than a year after I entered the ministry, I inherited a congregation. I had moved to Dallas to assist the ailing pastor who died shortly thereafter. All hopes of me easing into the ministry died that day as well. I had hoped to be mentored—to work under someone older until I had gained sufficient experience. Now I was alone and felt it keenly.

The congregation was going through a major transition, from having an older "seasoned" minister to a young inexperienced one with only a handful of sermons to his credit. I felt the weight of my own inadequacy and they felt the struggle. Within the next year, the congregation would lose all but two families and there would be many Sunday mornings when my family worshiped alone.

Those were difficult times. Times when we questioned the Lord about the purpose for us being there and requested permission to

leave, only to be reproved by His silence. We were certain that He had sent us and were convinced that we could not leave without His express permission. So, we stayed and waited—in the dark, in a place that felt deserted.

As we waited, we learned. We learned that waiting is an essential ingredient of faith. We learned that obedience is a vital component as well. We learned the imperative of distinguishing the voice of God above the cacophony of all other voices—even our own.

We learned that there are times when God removes the “middleman” and personally guides us to a more intimate revelation of Himself. We must truly know Him for ourselves and not merely through the revelation of those in whom we’ve had confidence.

We learned that eventually, our faith becomes sight. What we cannot see during the dark time, God illuminates in due time. What we didn’t understand before, we see clearly now.

The lessons are universal. We must all learn to accept and embrace our own desert places where we abandon ourselves to God and He reveals Himself to us. It is upon this personal revelation of himself that God builds the ministry He has chosen for us.

—Bro. Darrell Johnson

JUNE 7, 2020

WAITING FOR THE MORNING

Earnest Longing

Psalm 16:7 I will bless the LORD, who hath given me counsel: my reins also instruct me in the night seasons.

Psalm 30:5 For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.

Psalm 42:8 Yet the LORD will command his lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life.

Psalm 59:16 But I will sing of thy power; yea, I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning: for thou hast been my defence and refuge in the day of my trouble.

Psalm 63:6 When I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate

on thee in the night watches.

7 Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice.

Psalm 130:5 I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope.

6 My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning.

Psalm 143:8 Cause me to hear thy lovingkindness in the morning; for in thee do I trust: cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul unto thee.

Isaiah 21:11 The burden of Dumah. He calleth to me out of Seir, Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night?

12 The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will enquire, enquire ye: return, come.

MEMORY VERSE: This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope. It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness. The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him. The LORD is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him.—**Lamentations 3:21-25**

CENTRAL THOUGHT: In the “night seasons” of life—sickness, adversity, financial difficulty, death, depression, spiritual upheaval—we find ourselves waiting for the morning; the literal dawn of a new day, a spiritual sunrise, a light in the darkness of inner turmoil or heavy affliction.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Psalm 16:7 “Reins”: literally, the kidneys; figuratively, the seat of emotion or affection; the mind. Some translations have “conscience.”

Isaiah 21:11 “Dumah” and “Seir”: Dumah was a son of Ishmael, and while both of the cities in Judah named “Dumah” are not located close to Seir, a mountain range in Edom, Dumah is used here to refer to Edom, the country inhabited by Esau’s descendents. Dumah means “silence,” referring to the desolation foreseen in Isaiah’s vision. Both Ishmael’s descendants and Esau’s descendants are types of spiritual enemies of God’s people.

Lamentations 3:22 “Compassions”: soft; gentle; tender mercies; the Hebrew root is “a mother’s womb.”

LESSON BACKGROUND

As we stated in an earlier lesson, David’s time of waiting for the promised kingship was often filled with deep distress. The psalms in the lesson today were his expressions during those dark “night seasons” when he would meditate on God’s law and promises. Comparing the long night vigil of an afflicted person and that of his caregivers—the longing one feels for the morning to come, and the renewal of strength and hope that comes with the light of early dawn—to his own anxious longings for his fugitive lifestyle to end and the long-awaited promise to be fulfilled, David would draw his strength and endurance from God’s word. His knowledge of God’s law would give him counsel and instruction. His ability to stay his hand from slaying King Saul was the remembrance of God’s commandment, “Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm,” an expression which is not found verbatim in Moses’ law, but was generally understood from the time of the patriarchs—Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

In Isaiah’s prophecy, “The morning cometh, and also the night,” a morning of light and hope is foreseen, followed quickly by the blackness of night. This points forward to the brilliant light of the morning church which was soon eclipsed by a spiritual night of apostasy. The hidden saints, prophets and poets who cherished the light of truth looked forward to and earnestly awaited the time when the light appeared again.

To Jeremiah and the chastened Israelites carried away into Babylonian captivity, their dark spiritual night and deep sufferings were only made bearable by the hope they cherished of a “morning” of new mercies. This passage in Lamentations has been a comfort to many afflicted saints down through the ages.

Waiting for the joy that comes in the morning was also the experience of the Israelites in Egyptian bondage, Job in his trial of affliction, Daniel in his den of lions, those who watched for the birth of the Messiah, the disciples on the sea of Galilee in the fourth watch of the night, Jesus’ followers after Calvary, and Paul during his long night on a stormy sea.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

DISCUSSION:

1. What is promised in the morning, after a night of weeping?
2. What comforted and instructed the Psalmist in the night seasons?
3. David's waiting for relief was compared to what kind of waiting?
4. Can you think of a song or songs in the Evening Light hymnal that expresses the morning and night time mentioned by the prophet Isaiah?
5. Share a testimony of how God sent songs in the night or deliverance in the morning.

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

When there is sickness in the family, it seems like the fever is worse at night; the pain is more keen, the breathing is more labored. Those hours between three and six, just before dawn, seem so dark and draw out so long, as the eye looks anxiously at the clock or toward the window, watching for the pale ribbon of light to appear on the horizon. One brother, remembering his vigil at the bedside of his wife's father, said, "You can't rush the sunrise."

That is so true. That period of waiting is how the saints of old described their darkest days. You can't rush the process. It is slow, intense, and seems hopeless, were it not for the promises, the blessed counsels of God's Word, hidden deep within the soul, flashing onto the window of the mind; and the songs, the night songs, sung over and over by a blessed choir of mercy.

One such song comforted a family as the dear mother drew near her last breath. "And the sun's coming up in the morning! Every tear will be gone from my eyes. This old clay's gonna give way to glory, and like an eagle I'll take to the skies." Sure enough, sometime after sunrise, her spirit did break away, and her suffering ended.

During this time of waiting, let us take courage and hope in the Lord, whose mercies are new every morning.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

REFLECTIONS

"My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up" (Psalm 5:3).

"From the earliest ages God's servants have thought of the morning as the time specially suited for the worship of God. It is still regarded by Christians both as a duty and a privilege to devote some portion of the beginning of the day to seeking seclusion and fellowship with God. Many Christians observe the 'Morning Watch.'

"Next to receiving Christ as Savior, and claiming the baptism of the Holy Spirit, we know of no act attended with larger good to ourselves and others than the formation of an ind discourgeable resolution to keep the watch, and spend the first portions of the day alone with God.

"When we realize how impossible it is to daily live out our life in Christ as our Savior from sin, or to maintain a walk in the leading power of the Holy Spirit, without daily, close fellowship, we soon see the great value of keeping the 'Morning Watch.' It is not an end in itself, but a means of securing the presence of Christ for the whole day!"

—Adapted from Andrew Murray

—Selected by Bro. Bob Wilson

JUNE 14, 2020

WAITING FOR RECOMPENSE

Meek Endurance

Leviticus 19:18 Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD.

Deuteronomy 32:35 To me belongeth vengeance, and recompence; their foot shall slide in due time: for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste.

43 Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people: for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries, and will be merciful unto his land, and to his people.

Psalms 94:1 O LORD God, to whom vengeance belongeth; O

God, to whom vengeance belongeth, shew thyself.

2 Lift up thyself, thou judge of the earth: render a reward to the proud.

3 LORD, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked triumph?

4 How long shall they utter and speak hard things? and all the workers of iniquity boast themselves?

5 They break in pieces thy people, O LORD, and afflict thine heritage.

6 They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless.

7 Yet they say, The LORD shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it.

22 But the LORD is my defence; and my God is the rock of my refuge.

Proverbs 20:22 Say not thou, I will recompense evil; but wait on the Lord, and he shall save thee.

Matthew 5:44 But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.

Romans 12:17 Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.

18 If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

20 Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.

21 Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

Revelation 6:9 And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held:

10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?

11 And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as

they were, should be fulfilled.

MEMORY VERSE: Let not thine heart envy sinners: but be thou in the fear of the LORD all the day long. For surely there is an end; and thine expectation shall not be cut off. —**Proverbs 23:17-18**

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The doctrine of waiting upon God for vengeance to one's enemies was taught by Moses, repeated in the Psalms and the Proverbs, enlarged upon by Jesus and Paul, and reaffirmed by God in the revelation vision seen by John on Patmos.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Deuteronomy 32:35 "At hand": is near. "So the Scripture often speaks of those things which are at many hundred years' distance, to signify, that though they may be afar off as to our measures of time, yet in God's account they are near, they are as near as may be; when the measure of their sins is once full, the judgment shall not be deferred" (*Benson Commentary*).

Romans 12:19 "Give place unto wrath": leave room for God's wrath. "Stand aside, yourself as a mere spectator, and let the wrath of God have free course to accomplish itself as He shall think well" (*Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers*).

Proverbs 23:18 "Expectation": hope; longing; literally, a cord (*Strong's Concordance*). It is the same word as the "scarlet thread" in Joshua 2:18, by which Rahab let down the Israelite spies over the wall; which also served as a signal for her and her family's salvation when Israel returned to destroy Jericho.

LESSON BACKGROUND

The verse from Leviticus is from a long list of various commands regarding the daily life of God's people. Many of the concepts in Leviticus 19 contain a deeper spiritual meaning that is applicable in principle to us today. The principle "Love thy neighbor as thyself" in verse 18 was repeated by Jesus as one of the two greatest commandments, "like unto" the first, which was "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." He also said, "On these two

commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (Matthew 22:35-40).

“To me belongeth vengeance” is at the core of this sound doctrine. It is a recognition of the power of God to deal with His enemies in His own time and way. It teaches an humbling of ourselves and our desires before Him and a willingness to wait on Him to come to our defense, instead of having an attitude of retaliation and revenge. God spoke this to Israel in Moses’ last message to them. The Psalmist affirmed this—twice, as part of the title with which he addressed Jehovah: “O LORD God, to whom vengeance belongeth.”

God had promised to avenge His covenant when it was broken by His people (Leviticus 26:25). His threatenings were sure; the curses came to pass just as He had promised in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28. The 94th Psalm addresses God as an acknowledgement of Israel’s sins and a recognition of His just and true ways; yet, in a longing and a plea—“How long?”—for His mercy.

Twice in the New Testament—once in Romans 12:19 and again in Hebrews 10:30—the concept is repeated. It was a hallmark of the morning church that they practiced nonresistance and sacrificial love for their enemies and those who persecuted them. The scene in Revelation 6 is of the martyrs who cried to God in their sufferings, “How long?” It goes on to say that white robes, which are later described as the righteousness of saints, and rest are given to them. It also speaks of a later time of fulfillment when their brethren would be killed as they were. That has been fulfilled in the persecution during the Papal dark ages when millions of saints were killed by the Inquisitors, but it is also being fulfilled today, as *there are more Christians suffering persecution worldwide than at any time in history*. The question is, dear reader, when will it also come to you and me in America?

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

DISCUSSION:

1. Which Old Testament commandment was repeated by Jesus as part of the “greatest commandment”?
2. Which concept was established in Deuteronomy and repeated

- several times later in the Bible?
3. What question was asked by God's people, both in the Old Testament and again in the New Testament?
 4. Explain the literal illustration of the word "expectation."

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Do we really believe this doctrine? Do we have it securely established in our hearts as we live from day to day? How does this belief affect our choices when it comes to military involvement, self-defense, or legal action? How about our feelings when we are done wrong? Do we justify carrying a grudge? Do we rejoice when an enemy is hurting?

This is the patience that will save our souls. This is part of the endurance we must have within us as iniquity abounds. This is part of the fervent love we must have that must not wax cold as we draw closer to the end. This kind of waiting involves, first, a genuine fear of God that keeps us from envying sinners. It requires an unwavering faith in God's ways, in His wisdom, His methods, His time. It requires a meek spirit that will suffer wrong rather than do wrong. It necessitates a real rest of the soul, a settled dependence upon God to defend, protect and bring all things to an end.

"Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us" (Hebrews 12:1).

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

REFLECTIONS

"Revenge is a dish best served cold." Have you ever heard this statement? According to the *Urban Dictionary* it is "an old, widely-used phrase expressing the sentiment that revenge that is delayed and executed well after the heat of anger has dissipated is more satisfying than revenge taken as an immediate act of rage."

Some of the most notable literary works of our world today use revenge as the basis of their plot, such as a number of the works penned by the noted playwright William Shakespeare. The classic literary work *The Count of Monte Cristo*—a book detailing the

exacting vengeance of a man wrongfully imprisoned who escapes and methodically carries out a complex plan to get even with his four enemies—is considered by many literary critics to be one of the most satisfying tales of revenge ever written.

As Christians, we know what the Bible teaches and know we aren't to seek vengeance because it belongs to God. Yet, many a heart, while maybe not actively seeking revenge, still often harbors ill will towards those that have mistreated us. I remember reading a story for Christian youth when I was young concerning two children who were being bullied by another child, and they sought out to "heap coals of fire on his head" as a method of getting back at him. However, they came to learn that what the Bible really teaches is showing love for Love's sake, and desiring God to be merciful to those that have wronged us.

When we are persecuted, can we, like Stephen, say, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge" and be at peace with leaving all judgment and recompense in the hands of God? Only then will we be practicing the patience and trust in our Heavenly Father that He so desires in us.

—Bro. Fari Matthews

JUNE 21

WAITING FOR REDEMPTION

Living Hope

Job 19:25 For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth:

26 And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God:

27 Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me.

Psalms 49:15 But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave: for he shall receive me. Selah.

Isaiah 25:8 He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken it.

9 And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have

waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

Hosea 13:14 I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.

Romans 8:18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

19 For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.

20 For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope,

21 Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

22 For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.

23 And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.

24 For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?

25 But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.

II Corinthians 5:1 For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

2 For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven:

3 If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked.

4 For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.

MEMORY VERSE: Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

—I Corinthians 15:51-52

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The time spent in this earthly, corruptible body is a waiting period in which the children of God look forward in hope and faith to the resurrection when God will redeem this body and clothe our spirit with a new body.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Job 19:27 “Whom my eyes shall behold and not another”: and not a stranger; which could mean several things: “This privilege shall be granted to me and to all other sincere servants of God, but not to strangers, i.e. to wicked men, who are oft called strangers” (*Matthew Poole’s Commentary*); or, “I shall not see God as a stranger;” or, “I myself, retaining my personal identity, and not another, shall see him for myself.” “My reins be consumed within me”: The margin renders this, ‘my reins within me are consumed with earnest desire for that day’ (*Barnes’ Notes on the Bible*).

Isaiah 25:8 “He shall swallow up death in victory”: quoted and applied to Christ by Paul in I Corinthians 15:54.

Hosea 13:14 “O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction”: quoted and applied to Christ by Paul in I Corinthians 15:55.

Romans 8:19 “Creature”: creation. “Manifestation”: unveiling; revelation.

Romans 8:23 “Adoption”: “sonship; “It also includes the blessed state looked for in the future life after the visible return of Christ from heaven; the consummate condition of the sons of God, which will render it evident that they are the sons of God” (*Thayer’s Greek Lexicon*). “Redemption”: release effected by payment of ransom. “The redemption which will come to his possession, or to the men who are God’s own through Christ (Ephesians 1:14); deliverance of the body from frailty and mortality (Romans 8:23); deliverance from the hatred and persecutions of enemies by the return of Christ from heaven (Luke 21:28); deliverance or release from torture (Hebrews 11:35)” (*Thayer’s Greek Lexicon*).

II Corinthians 5:1 “Tabernacle”: a tent, showing the transitory character of the habitation; figurative of the human body. “House”: something more substantial, more permanent.

LESSON BACKGROUND

The concept of God being the redeemer of the body and redeemer of the soul at the final resurrection, was the hope and belief of ancient saints such as Job, whom we have quoted in the lesson. They firmly held that the spirit left this body and went upward to God, and that one day they would see God and their departed loved ones. David stated when his baby died, “I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me” (II Samuel 12:23). The psalmist and the prophets Isaiah and Hosea echoed this hope, and Apostle Paul expanded the thought in I Corinthians 15.

Paul’s discourse about the groanings of creation and the projected hope could generate a long discussion, as one considers all the details of his message. Who is the creature? who subjected the creature to vanity? what is meant by adoption, by redemption, etc.?

Verse eighteen clarifies this for us. We suffer. We groan and travail; “we” meaning Jews, Gentiles—all people. Could it also take in earth’s creatures or the aging earth upon which the wickedness of mankind has wreaked havoc? But those of us who believe in Christ, who have his Spirit as the earnest, or down-payment with a promise to pay in full, of eternal glory dwelling within us—we have hope. Our expectation is that one day the sufferings of believers will be over. No more pain, no crying, no disappointment, no earthly cares, no temptations, no persecution.

The verses from II Corinthians bring that hope even closer and make it more personal and definite: “We KNOW.” Perhaps Paul’s fingers were at that moment tightening the cords and knotting the threads on the canvas of the tent he was finishing. Maybe his eyes lingered on the welcome lights of a sprawling family home on the distant hillside, while his hand rubbed absently over the scars from his past beatings. The realization that his battered body was as temporary as the tent and thoughts of an eternal home blazing bright with hope before his mind may have given inspiration to these words!

Our memory verse reminds us of the triumphant end which Paul described with confidence: “We shall be changed.” Our waiting will be over, the trumpet will sound and we shall rise, incorruptible. Oh, glory to God!

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

DISCUSSION:

1. Who is the Redeemer of whom Job speaks?
2. How has Christ fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy, "He will swallow up death in victory?"
3. Give the two opposites mentioned in Romans 8:21.
4. If *redemption* carries with it the idea of release, repurchase, or trade-in, explain when and how that will be done in reference to this literal body and the new, glorious body.
5. Explain the analogy Paul used to describe the difference between the physical body and the heavenly one.

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

"Not worthy to be compared." The comparisons in this lesson grip my heart with excitement, hope and comfort! When I consider a collapsible, flimsy tent, not really able to keep out the weather, in contrast to a stately mansion complete with comfortable furnishings, stately gardens and all the latest amenities—and when I consider this body, which is fearfully and wonderfully made, so intricate, so miraculous, in contrast to the new body Christ has redeemed for me—there are no words! I mean, think about the delicate cycles of the body, the blood, lymph, and digestive systems, the fingerprint, the wonder of skin, the capabilities of the brain, the ear, the eye! And this is described as a *tent*? Then what must the mansion be? "Men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him" (Isaiah 64:4).

Praise be to our Lord and Savior who is the great Redeemer! He has not only ransomed us and purchased our souls from the slavery of satan and sin, but He has promised to deliver us from the corruption of mortality. This is why we hope. This is what gives us the patience to wait and endure, though we groan, though we earnestly desire to be clothed with our new, celestial mansion!

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

REFLECTIONS

II Corinthians 5:1-4 “For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.”

It won't be long till our waiting time is over. We are desiring and waiting for our redemption from this mortal to the immortal. This mortal is temporary and our soul is crying out for the immortal.

“Bright Anticipation” (*Evening Light Songs* #370) says, “I am waiting, I am longing for the summons to come, when from trouble and sorrow I'm free; When with Jesus I am reigning in that heavenly home, Where forever its beauties I'll see.”

One day soon, our faith will be lost in sight and we will see Him as He is, in more love and beauty than we could ever have imagined here on earth. We will be reunited with our loved ones gone on before us; then it won't seem like it was so long and far away.

—Bro. James Bell

JUNE 28, 2020

WAITING FOR HIS COMING

Enduring Love

Luke 12:35 Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning;

36 And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately.

37 Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.

38 And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants.

39 And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through.

40 Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.

41 Then Peter said unto him, Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all?

42 And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season?

43 Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.

44 Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath.

45 But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken;

46 The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.

II Peter 3:8 But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

11 Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness,

12 Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?

13 Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

14 Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.

15a And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation;

MEMORY VERSE: Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. —**James 5:8**

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Although the promise of Christ returning again was made so many years ago, the time of waiting and tarrying in which we live is a sign of His longsuffering; during which time we should remain ready, be diligent, keep busy serving Him, do what it takes to keep our lights burning, and patiently wait and endure unto the very end.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Luke 12:35 “Let your loins be girded about”: “Your attitude in life must be that of servants, at once loyal and devoted, whom their employer has left in his house while he is absent at a great wedding-feast. The day of his absence passes into evening, and evening shades into night; and even the night wears slowly and tediously away, and still the master of the house comes not back from his festival. But the **faithful** servants all this while never slumber, or even lie down to rest. All the time of his absence, with their loose flowing Eastern robes taken up, and the skirt fastened under the girdle, with their lamps all trimmed and burning, these watchers wait the coming of their lord, though he tarry long, that they may be ready to receive him and serve him the moment he arrives. All kinds of busy house service, too, carried on during the long night of watching, is implied by the girt-up robes and the lit lamps of the tireless watchers” (*Pulpit Commentary*).

Luke 12:38 “Second watch”: from 9 p.m. to 12 midnight. “Third watch”: from midnight to 3 a.m.

II Peter 3:12 “Looking for and hasting”: looking for and earnestly desiring (the same words Paul used in II Corinthians 5:2!). “Melt”: loosed.

LESSON BACKGROUND

The Lord gave several parables illustrating the manner of His coming and the responsibility of His servants to be ready and waiting. In Matthew 24 He gave the parable of the fig tree, compared the conditions at the time of His coming to the time of Noah, and made an analogy using a master and servants to represent Him and His kingdom. In chapter 25 He depicted His kingdom as ten virgins who waited for the bridegroom to come and give them entrance to the wedding feast. They were to be alert and with lamps burning when he returned. Five of them were wise and prepared enough oil to supply them through a long delay; the other five foolishly presumed that all would be well and they could deal with a need for extra oil at the last minute. It is this parable that seems to be the background of the first verse in today's lesson, "Let your lights be burning." In the same chapter Jesus gave another analogy of a householder and servants; in this one the master went away and entrusted each of his servants with a sum of money which they were to invest and gain a profit to give him when he returned. He compared the judgment scene at His return to a shepherd separating his sheep from the goats. Finally, He told what it would take for Him to say to His servant, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom..." and what would make Him have to say, "Depart from me, ye cursed."

Peter questioned the Lord as He spoke about the day and the hour of His coming. Jesus again compared the time of waiting on His return to a household of servants expecting their master to return any time. When he seemed to delay, some of the servants got unruly and began to fight with each other and indulge in drunkenness. This warning may have been what Peter had in mind when he reminded the saints of the danger of becoming scornful and fleshly-minded when it looked like the coming of the Lord just wasn't happening. He repeated Jesus' words, "A thief in the night," when he described that last day.

Our memory verse is from James' epistle, exhorting us to be patient and have our hearts established as we keep in mind that Jesus' coming is near.

Waiting for Jesus to come again was the theme of the apostles' writings. As time went on, professors of the faith of Jesus have

proven Jesus' warnings true: the time of delay is the most dangerous test. We are tempted to become sleepy, unbelieving, unmerciful, quarrelsome, intemperate, and slothful. The abounding iniquity around us will make our fervent love for Christ and one another slowly grow cold, but frequently contemplating and reminding ourselves of Jesus' counsel to "watch and be ready" will keep our love fervent and our souls on guard.

"And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ" (II Thessalonians 3:5).

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

DISCUSSION:

1. What three things are we to observe in Luke 12:35-36?
2. What reward is promised in Luke 12:37 and what does this mean to you?
3. What dangers are posed by the delay?
4. Peter warned us not to be ignorant of an important fact about God. What is it, and how will this knowledge help us understand the importance of being ready?
5. List the five things in Peter's description of Jesus' coming.
6. What two things are to be part of our attitude toward Jesus' coming?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

This concludes our series, "My Soul, Wait Thou Only Upon God." What have we learned?

We have considered the long years of waiting for the fullness of time of the Messiah endured by the ancient people of God, and have seen that God keeps His promises.

In spirit we have waited with the saints in their trials and afflictions, as they cried, "How long?" and have been comforted by the promises that God will bring salvation and deliverance.

We have seen the necessity of waiting for the fire of the Holy Spirit to fall on us and endue us with power.

We have been convicted that we cannot depend upon ourselves, but must wait on God for wisdom and direction in all the decisions of life.

We have learned more fully of the spirit of watching and waiting so necessary for intercessory prayer.

In that same spirit we have realized that the God who sustains all creation will also supply our needs and fulfill our hearts' desires as we wait expectantly on Him.

The concept of *waiting* taught us by a tiny seed has encouraged us to be faithful until the harvest.

Realizing that we cannot judge even the slightest matters righteously, we have learned to wait for the Lord's time and method of judgment.

Acknowledging that we can't minister God's Word unless we are sent by Him, we have seen the worth of waiting on God to open the doors of ministry.

In the night seasons of life we have been comforted by the promises and counsels of God as we wait for the light of morning.

The cries of saints, both present and ancient, who have suffered according to the will of God, meekly trusting and waiting on God to avenge them, have challenged us to a deeper consecration.

Our faith and endurance has been fueled by the reminder of the glorious redemption of the resurrection, for which we wait and hope.

Finally, our vigilance and determination has been bolstered by the admonition to be alert and ready, even through the dangerous time of delay; earnestly desiring the return of our Lord.

I want to end by pointing to verse 37 in Luke 12: "Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them." Brother and sister, this is why we wait. If we can keep this picture before us, with all the beauty and glory contained therein; if we can serve Him faithfully, depend on Him trustfully, endure patiently, and hope confidently, we shall not be disappointed. There is coming a day when all that is now mysterious will be bright and clear, when our labors are over and our waiting is fulfilled, and we shall see the end of the Lord. We will experience what we cannot now even see, hear or imagine.

"Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a

little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry” (Hebrews 10:35-37).

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

REFLECTIONS

While we eagerly await the Lord's return, let us be up and doing. Here are a few ways we can busy ourselves to be ready when Jesus comes to get His bride:

- Keep your lamp trimmed and burning, daily. Maintain an up-to-date experience with the Lord. There will be no time for mercy on that last day. Thus, we must have the blood of the Savior on the doorposts of our hearts NOW.
- Thank the Lord for the present world we reside in. Thank Him for the love of family and friends and the beautiful Church of God. Take time each day to praise the Lord for the magnificent wonder of the earth and environment in which we live. Be thankful for the beauty of the seasons, the wonder of the animals and nature itself.
- Keep your eyes on the sky. Take time to ponder on the things ahead. Encourage yourself in the Lord by looking into his Word and thinking about the wonders of the new heaven and the new earth that will be enjoyed for all eternity. Foster hope and excitement in your soul.
- Have a determination to point as many souls as possible to Jesus. "Rescue the perishing, care for the dying, snatch them in pity from sin and the grave; weep o'er the erring one, lift up the fallen, tell them of Jesus the mighty to save."

The Judgment Day will usher all souls into eternity. There will be no turning back, nor will we be able to speak of it as a historical event. We must be sober and vigilant, but may we also view this final happening with great anticipation.

—Sis. LaDawna Adams

