

## **Preparing for the Latter Rain**

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### **Introduction**

Preparing—preparation—is something that we find ourselves doing all the time, isn’t it? Think about a really hard exam. What would happen if you didn’t prepare yourself properly—what would happen on test day? We all know that the results of such neglect wouldn’t be good. Even those who aren’t faced with typical exams prepare themselves in other ways—through the proactive pursuit of knowledge and a strong personal commitment to achieving their goals.

It seems that everything worth-while in life requires some kind of preparation in order to be a success. Even something as simple as a meal requires thought and preparation if it’s going to be palatable and enjoyable. Every successful endeavor must be preceded by careful planning, hard work, and perseverance. How much more so in the Christian experience?

One of the most exciting things ever to occur in human experience is the latter rain. In the closing hour of history, if we miss out on this, we’re also missing out on the seal of God and eternal life.

### **I. Rain in ancient Israel**

We read in Zechariah 10:1 that the Lord will send “rain in the time of the latter rain.” Therefore, by the word “latter,” we can infer that there must have also been a similar event preceding it—or in other words—a former rain.

The ancient Israelites lived in an agricultural society where much of their lives depended on crops—and therefore rain. If they were faithful, God promised two main rainfalls. In Deuteronomy 11:13, 14 we read: “And it shall come to pass, if ye shall hearken diligently unto my commandments which I command you this day, to love the Lord your God, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul, that I will give you the rain of your land in his due season, the first rain and the latter rain, that thou mayest gather in thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil.”

“Under the figure of the early and the latter rain, that falls in Eastern lands at seedtime and harvest, the Hebrew prophets foretold the bestowal of spiritual grace in extraordinary measure upon God’s church.”

### **II. The former rain**

To better understand the latter rain, let’s first take a quick look at the former rain, “the Lord our God that giveth rain, both the former and the latter, in his season” (Jeremiah 5:24). Therefore, there must have been a time (season) for the former rain. When was this?

We read that “the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost was the former rain.” So, what exactly happened on the day of Pentecost?

We read that the disciples “all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren” (Acts 1:14). They were actively engaged in prayer and supplication, not only individually, but also collectively.

Leaders and lay members alike were seeking God in humility. In Acts 1:23–25 we see that they were an organized group and conducted church business in a systematic, consecrated manner. In Acts 2:1, “they were all with one accord in one place” and then the Holy Ghost came upon them in tremendous measure.

“On this day of divine appointment, the Lord graciously poured out His Spirit on the little company of believers, who were the firstfruits of the Christian church.”

This is not necessarily describing a huge church with lots of people, grandiose buildings, or impressive institutions. Rather, Christ looks for those who are sincerely seeking to adhere to the present truth, and who are united in their efforts to serve Him. These are only His firstfruits, which means there are more to come.

### **III. The latter rain**

“Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God: for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month” (Joel 2:23). In reference to the former rain (also known as the “early” rain) in the days of the early apostles, we read that “the glad tidings of a risen Saviour were carried to the uttermost bounds of the inhabited world. . . . Sinners united with Christians in seeking the pearl of great price. . . . Every Christian saw in his brother the divine similitude of benevolence and love. One interest prevailed. One object swallowed up all others. All hearts beat in harmony. The only ambition of the believers was to reveal the likeness of Christ ’ s character, and to labor for the enlargement of His kingdom. [Acts 4:32, 33; 2:47 quoted.] The Spirit of Christ animated the whole congregation; for they had found the pearl of great price.

“These scenes are to be repeated, and with greater power. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost was the former rain, but the latter rain will be more abundant. The Spirit awaits our demand and reception. Christ is again to be revealed in His fullness by the Holy Spirit’s power.”

### **IV. When is the latter rain to be poured out?**

Under the former rain, “hundreds proclaimed the message: ‘The kingdom of God is at hand.’ They could not be restrained or intimidated by threatenings. The Lord spoke through them; and, wherever they went, the sick were healed, and the poor had the gospel preached unto them.

“So mightily can God work when men give themselves up to the control of His Spirit.

“To us today, as verily as to the first disciples, the promise of the Spirit belongs. God will today endow men and women with power from above, as He endowed those who on the Day of Pentecost heard the word of salvation. At this very hour His Spirit and His grace are for all who need them and will take Him at His word.”

### **V. It’s our duty to ask for it**

Seeing that it is time for us to be receiving the latter rain, what is one of our duties in this regard? “Ask ye of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain; so the Lord shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain, to every one grass in the field” (Zechariah 10:1). “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that

knocketh it shall be opened.” (Matthew 7:7, 8). “Let Christians . . . ask in faith for the promised blessing, and it will come.”

“My brethren and sisters, plead for the Holy Spirit, God stands back of every promise He has made.”

## **VI. What is the purpose of the latter rain?**

### Understanding the Holy Spirit's work

We know that the latter rain is synonymous with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in fullness. Often, however, people fail to understand how the Holy Spirit is manifested.

“There is danger of those in our ranks making a mistake in regard to receiving the Holy Ghost. Many suppose an emotion or a rapture of feeling to be an evidence of the presence of the Holy Spirit. There is danger that right sentiments will not be understood, and that Christ's words ‘Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you’ (Matthew 28:20) will lose their significance.”

So, if evidence of the Holy Spirit is not to be found in a rapture of feeling or emotion, what then is the work of the Holy Spirit?

Jesus explained that the Comforter would “reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment” (John 16:8).

#### **A. Reproves of sin**

“Whenever one renounces sin, which is the transgression of the law, his life will be brought into conformity to the law, into perfect obedience. This is the work of the Holy Spirit. . . . The line of demarcation will be plain and distinct between those who love God and keep His commandments, and those who love Him not and disregard His precepts.”

#### **B. Reproves of righteousness**

“Ministers and people, if saved at all, must be saved day by day, hour by hour. They must hunger and thirst for the righteousness of Christ, the illumination of the Holy Spirit.”

#### **C. Reproves of judgment**

“The people must be warned to prepare for the coming judgment. And for this purpose God calls for workers who are true and faithful, pure and holy, for those who have felt their own need of the atoning blood of Christ and the sanctifying grace of His Spirit.”

#### **D. Gives power for witnessing**

In Matthew 24:14, we read: “And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come” (Matthew 24:14). “The message of the third angel will be proclaimed. As the time comes for it to be given with greatest power, the Lord will work through humble instruments, leading the minds of those who consecrate themselves to His service. The laborers will be qualified rather by the unction of His Spirit than by the training of literary institutions. Men of faith and prayer will be constrained to go forth with holy zeal, declaring the words which God gives them. The sins of Babylon will be laid open. The fearful results of enforcing the observances of the church by civil authority, the inroads of spiritualism, the stealthy but rapid progress of the papal power—all will be unmasked. By these solemn warnings the people will be stirred.

Thousands upon thousands will listen who have never heard words like these. In amazement they hear the testimony that Babylon is the church, fallen because of her errors and sins, because of her rejection of the truth sent to her from heaven. . . .

“As the controversy extends into new fields and the minds of the people are called to God’s downtrodden law, Satan is astir. The power attending the message will only madden those who oppose it. The clergy will put forth almost superhuman efforts to shut away the light lest it should shine upon their flocks. By every means at their command they will endeavor to suppress the discussion of these vital questions. The church appeals to the strong arm of civil power, and, in this work, papists and Protestants unite. As the movement for Sunday enforcement becomes more bold and decided, the law will be invoked against commandment keepers.”

Is this persecution something we need to be afraid of? “Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven” (Matthew 5:10–12).

### **E. What about for us?**

“The ‘latter rain,’ or refreshing from the presence of the Lord, will come, to give power to the loud voice of the third angel, and prepare the saints to stand in the period when the seven last plagues shall be poured out” (Early Writings, p. 86). But the saints are already called saints, they are already purified, and able to be entrusted with the last message of mercy to a fallen race. This is not referring to a time for us to be still fixing our own faulty characters which we were too lazy to deal with before. Remember, we read that: “For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God” (1 Peter 4:17). The Investigative Judgment must take place . . . and probation will close for those who know this message before it does for the rest of the world.

As mentioned, those led by the Holy Spirit have pure consecration and missionary work as the primary aims in life. The apostle Paul is an example of someone who put others first: “Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing” (2 Timothy 4:8). Why did he do this? “For the love of Christ constraineth us” (2 Corinthians 5:14).

“The disciples did not ask for a blessing for themselves. They were weighted with the burden of souls. The gospel was to be carried to the ends of the earth, and they claimed the endowment of power that Christ had promised. Then it was that the Holy Spirit was poured out, and thousands were converted in a day.”

“[God] has pledged Himself to give heed to our cry when we come to Him confessing our unworthiness and sin. The honor of His throne is staked for the fulfillment of His word to us.”

## **VII. Why have we not received the latter rain yet?**

### **A. Lack of prior depth of spiritual experience**

“For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear” (Mark 4:28).

"Many have in a great measure failed to receive the former rain. They have not obtained all the benefits that God has thus provided for them. They expect that the lack will be supplied by the latter rain. When the richest abundance of grace shall be bestowed, they intend to open their hearts to receive it. They are making a terrible mistake. The work that God has begun in the human heart in giving His light and knowledge must be continually going forward. Every individual must realize his own necessity. The heart must be emptied of every defilement and cleansed for the indwelling of the Spirit. It was by the confession and forsaking of sin, by earnest prayer and consecration of themselves to God, that the early disciples prepared for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost."

### **B. Being content with mere profession**

Jesus asks, "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46).

"None can depend upon their profession of faith as proof that they have a saving connection with Christ. We are not only to say, 'I believe,' but to practice the truth. It is by conformity to the will of God in our words, our deportment, our character, that we prove our connection with Him."

### **C. Lack of interest**

"If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God" (John 7:17). We must want to do God's will.

"Christ declared that the divine influence of the Spirit was to be with His followers unto the end. But the promise is not appreciated as it should be; and therefore its fulfillment is not seen as it might be. The promise of the Spirit is a matter little thought of; and the result is only what might be expected—spiritual drought, spiritual darkness, spiritual declension and death. Minor matters occupy the attention, and the divine power which is necessary for the growth and prosperity of the church, and which would bring all other blessings in its train, is lacking, though offered in its infinite plenitude."

"If the mind is filled with other things, present truth is shut out, and there is no place in our foreheads for the seal of the living God. I saw that the time for Jesus to be in the most holy place was nearly finished and that time can last but a very little longer. What leisure time we have should be spent in searching the Bible, which is to judge us in the last day."

### **D. Lacking fruit**

"Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works" (James 2:17, 18).

"Not all who profess to keep the Sabbath will be sealed. There are many even among those who teach the truth to others who will not receive the seal of God in their foreheads. They had the light of truth, they knew their Master's will, they understood every point of our faith, but they had not corresponding works."

### **E. Unwilling to realize our need**

"Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (Revelation 3:17).

“Those who refuse to be hewed by the prophets and fail to purify their souls in obeying the whole truth, and who are willing to believe that their condition is far better than it really is, will come up to the time of the falling of the plagues, and then see that they needed to be hewed and squared for the building. But there will be no time then to do it and no Mediator to plead their cause before the Father. . . . I saw that none could share the ‘refreshing’ unless they obtain the victory over every besetment, over pride, selfishness, love of the world, and over every wrong word and action. We should, therefore, be drawing nearer and nearer to the Lord and be earnestly seeking that preparation necessary to enable us to stand in the battle in the day of the Lord. Let all remember that God is holy and that none but holy beings can ever dwell in His presence.”

## **F. Iniquity & rebellion**

“Fear ye not me? saith the Lord: will ye not tremble at my presence, which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it: and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it? But this people hath a revolting and a rebellious heart; they are revolted and gone. Neither say they in their heart, Let us now fear the Lord our God, that giveth rain, both the former and the latter, in his season: he reserveth unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest. Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have withholden good things from you. For among my people are found wicked men: they lay wait, as he that setteth snares; they set a trap, they catch men. As a cage is full of birds, so are their houses full of deceit: therefore they are become great, and waxen rich. They are waxen fat, they shine: yea, they overpass the deeds of the wicked: they judge not the cause, the cause of the fatherless, yet they prosper; and the right of the needy do they not judge. Shall I not visit for these things? saith the Lord: shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this? A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?” (Jeremiah 5:22–31).

“God wants to put His Spirit upon you, but He cannot do this while you are so full of self.”

## **G. Lack of consecration**

“The Lord does not now work to bring many souls into the truth, because of the church members who have never been converted and those who were once converted but who have backslidden. What influence would these unconsecrated members have on new converts? Would they not make of no effect the God-given message which His people are to bear?”