

Promised Revival: God's Completed Mission

Memory Text: James 5:7, 8: "Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See *how* the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. ⁸You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand."

Illustration: Long-distance swimmer Diana Nyad made history by becoming the first person to swim the treacherous miles from Cuba to Florida without a shark cage – at the age of 64. She did it in 53 hours. This was her fifth attempt. She had some good things going for her – favorable currents, fewer jellyfish. But it wasn't without challenges.

On Sunday night her handlers didn't stop to feed her because she was cold and they figured she would stay warm if she kept going. Her tongue and lips were swollen by the sun and seawater, and she had abrasions in her mouth from a special silicone mask meant to keep the jellyfish at bay. The Florida Strait has been conquered only once, by Aussie Susie Maroney, who used a protective cage during her 1997 swim.

We have an inner drive to complete what we start. I get to it (after looking at it from every possible angle), but once I'm in the middle of it it's got to be completed (no time to eat, etc.). I guess there have been a lot of unwritten books because someone commented once, "Books have both a front and a back." This person went on to say, "unfinished books are worthless." This seems to apply to any unfinished business. It was the wise man that said, "A desire accomplished is sweet to the soul," (Prov. 13:19) and, "The end of a thing is better than its beginning." (Eccl. 7:8) That is to say, there is pure satisfaction in completing a project, and getting it done.

Finishing what you start is a Divine characteristic. Creation (Gen. 2:2, 3). Cross ("It is finished" – John 19:30). Done! (Rev. 21:6).

John 4:34: "Jesus said to them, 'My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work.'"

* **Acts 3:20, 21:** "and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, ²¹whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration [returning things to their original condition] of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began."

He has to finish it. Coming to live among men, die in our stead to offer pardon, live again to provide power, then saying that's it would leave the job undone.

Problem:

Matthew 24:14: “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.”

In order for the restoration of all things to happen, Jesus must come. In order for Jesus to come the gospel (not just any, but the everlasting) must be given to everyone. Is this at all possible? Mission impossible?

Consider that the world’s population is currently over seven billion. Presently, there are over a billion people in both China and India. The continent of Africa has just topped the one billion mark. Of more than seven billion people on planet earth, only 30%, or 2.2 billion, are Christian. There are 1.5 billion Muslims, 1.1 billion secular agnostics and atheists, 900 million Hindus, and 376 million Buddhists, along with hundred of other religious groups.

Although the Seventh-day Adventist Church is one of the fastest growing Christian denominations, baptizing about a million people each year, with over 17 million members, we are approximately 1% of all Christians and only a fraction of a percent of the world’s population. This presents some challenges.

If He has called the Seventh-day Adventist Church to declare this message (and I believe He has – who else is doing it?), how will the work of God on earth ever be finished through such a small number? Is it possible for the gospel in the context of the three angels’ message to circle the globe in a relatively short time? What will give us the breakthrough in the proclamation of the gospel that we long for?

Solution:

Romans 9:28: “For He will finish the work and cut *it* short in righteousness, because the LORD will make a short work upon the earth.”

God will finish the work *and* will use us to get it done.

Sunday – The Promised Power

NE Blackout of 2003. We remember it well... There was a power outage that occurred throughout parts of Northeastern and Midwestern United States, and Ontario, Thursday, Aug. 14 just before 4:10 p.m. This was the second most widespread blackout in history, after the 1999 Southern Brazil blackout. The blackout affected an estimated 10 million people in Ontario and 45 million in 8 States.

What was fascinating to us and most Ontarian’s was the outage came from a software bug in the alarm system at a control room at the FirstEnergy Corporation

in...Ohio! What a lot of people talked about after discovering where the outage came from was why, when Ontario had perfectly suitable and functional nuclear power plants, was Ontario borrowing energy from Ohio and not what it was manufacturing locally.

Thankfully the Bible tells us we don't have to go anywhere else to receive power for a finished work. Jesus offers it to us freely. Jesus gives us a clue as to how He plans to complete the work as He's about to leave planet earth.

Matthew 28:18-20: "And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority [power] has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age.' Amen."

Jesus prefaces His command to go with the assurance of 2 things: He has power, and He will be with us always.

Luke 24:49: "Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high."

* **Acts 1:8:** "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

The Greek word here is "dunamis" - explosive, inherent power ready to be put to use. From which we get our English word "dynamite."

What were the results for the early church? Words of penitence and confession mingled with songs of praise for sins forgiven; thousands converted; hearts surcharged with benevolence; gospel taken to the ends of the earth; backsliders reconverted; desire to reveal Christlikeness, and to labor to enlarge the kingdom of heaven (gathered from Last Day Events by E. G. White). Can it be the same for us? Yes! Even today? Absolutely!

Monday - The Early & Latter Rain

We can appreciate rain after a dry summer.

Deuteronomy 11:14: "Then I will give *you* the rain for your land in its season, the early rain and the latter rain, that you may gather in your grain, your new wine, and your oil."

Early rain - this was the autumn rain that fell at the time of planting the winter crops, to sprout the seed, and give it a good start before the cold winter set in. In a

land dependent on rain the seed would not sprout until the rain fell in its season (ref. Lev 26:3).

Latter rain – This fell in the spring before the summer harvest, during the months of March and early April, and brought the crop to full maturity. The barley harvest in Palestine begins in the middle or end of April, with wheat coming in the next month, the summer fruits, then grapes and olives in the late summer and fall.

Hosea 6:3: “Let us know, let us pursue the knowledge of the LORD. His going forth is established as the morning; He will come to us like the rain, like the latter and former rain to the earth.” – God’s promise to bring abundant blessings that would nourish and revive the spiritual life through Jesus. Both early and latter rain has a personal application. The early rain refers to the daily work of the Spirit of God in converting while the latter rain brings Christlikeness.

* **Joel 2:23:** “Be glad then, you children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God; for He has given you the former rain faithfully [moderately – for righteousness], and He will cause the rain to come down for you - the former rain, and the latter rain in the first *month*.” (cp. Joel 2:28, 31) Here Joel uses rain to symbolize the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (cp. Isa. 44:3; John 7:37-39).

Now Peter applied Joel 2:28-31 to what happened on the day of Pentecost, but we know that the context for Joel 2 is the last days. Was Peter wrong? No. Under inspiration he helped us understand that *historically* the early rain fell at that time (see Acts 2:38, 39). Then in Acts 3:19-21 Peter again refers to the Holy Spirit, but this time he talks about the latter rain, or “times of refreshing,” that will fall prior to the return of Christ. So the early rain took place on Pentecost, while the latter rain will take place prior to the return of Christ (Rev. 14:14, 15).

“We need not worry about the latter rain. All we have to do is to keep the vessel clean and right side up and prepared for the reception of the heavenly rain, and keep praying, “Let the latter rain come into my vessel. Let the light of the glorious angel which unites with the third angel shine upon me; give me a part in the work; let me sound the proclamation; let me be a colaborer with Jesus Christ.” Thus seeking God, let me tell you, He is fitting you up all the time, giving you His grace.” (Upward Look, p. 283)

Tuesday – Prerequisites For The Latter Rain

What are the prerequisites for receiving the Latter Rain?

Zechariah 10:1: “Ask the LORD for rain in the time of the latter rain. The LORD will make flashing clouds; He will give them showers of rain, grass in the field for everyone.” – **We must ask.**

Acts 3:18-20: But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled. ¹⁹ Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, ²⁰ and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before..." – **We must be thoroughly converted.**

Psalm 119:25: " My soul clings to dust; revive me according to Your word." – **We must saturate our minds with the Word of God.**

Acts 1:14: "These all continued with one accord [together] in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers." – **We must put away all dissension.**

Acts 4:31: "And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness." – **We must be willing to share with others.**

"If coldness and indifference have crept over your spiritual senses, and your interest for those who are perishing in their sins is decreasing, it is time you were converted. Your best course will be to engage at once in personal effort to save others. In blessing them, you will yourself be blessed." (R & H, June 10, 1880)

What will be the results?

* **Acts 4:13:** "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus."

Wednesday – The Baptism Of Fire

Matthew 3:11, 12: "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.¹² His winnowing fan *is* in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

Not "Holy Spirit *or* fire", but "Holy Spirit *and* fire." In other words, this is an explanatory phrase, completing the idea. We are to be baptized with divine fire now to save us from destruction by consuming fire later.

Let me explain. Throughout the Bible fire is a symbol of the splendid glory, presence and power of God. The burning bush that Moses encountered, symbolized the fiery presence of God (Ex. 3:2-4). When Moses met God on Mt. Sinai, he records "the sight of the glory of God was like a consuming fire." (Ex. 24:17) Israel was guided in their wilderness wanderings by a pillar of fire at night – symbolizing the presence of God.

Also consider the fire that fell on Elijah's altar as the man of God challenged the prophets of Baal, or the fiery coal from heaven's altar that touched Isaiah's lips, or the fire of Ezekiel's imagery – fire is frequently associated with God's presence and glory.

In the NT, fire represents the presence of God through His Spirit. Fire and the Spirit are linked together on the day of Pentecost. The baptism of fire is immersion in God's presence.

God wants us to have a genuine, authentic Christian experience, which involves allowing the Holy Spirit to burn away all of the earthliness, rebellion, and lack of commitment in our lives and give us the warm glow of a genuine experience with God (cp. Mal. 3:2, 3).

Years ago in Old Dalmatia, Croatia, the houses were made of bituminous limestone. This particular type of limestone is soft and easily cut and shaped. The entire house was made of it – walls, roof, and floors – inside and out. But when it was finished it was uninhabitable, because it would reek with the strong odor of bitumen. Setting it on fire completed the structure. The fire would suck out the bitumen from the pores of the saturated stone until everything combustible was eliminated, and the fire died out for lack of fuel.

Only then was the house ready for occupancy. And it looked like white marble, severely clean and habitable. And if later it was in the midst of a fire, it wouldn't burn, because there was nothing combustible left to burn. It was fireproof.

We are by nature and through wrong choices combustible, saturated with sin. The fire of the Holy Spirit can cleanse us now from sin's dominion so we can be delivered from sin's presence when Jesus comes. Our God is a consuming fire to sin wherever it is found. In the fires of God's final judgment all elements of sin will be consumed.

Thursday – The Great Controversy Ended

Essentially, the book of Revelation is about Jesus winning and Satan losing.

Revelation 19:11-16: “ Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him *was* called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. ¹² His eyes *were* like a flame of fire, and on His head *were* many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. ¹³ He *was* clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God.¹⁴ And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. ¹⁵ Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. ¹⁶ And He has on *His* robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.”

*** Revelation 21:6:** "And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts."

God finally gets what He wants, and that is to be with His people.

Appeal

Isn't there a part of you pulling for God? Don't you want to cooperate with Him to see Him get what He's waited a long time for? Give your life completely to Him, allow the Holy Spirit to bring you to the place where you can be entrusted with more power.