

THE LATTER RAIN AND THE FORMER RAIN

SOME IMPORTANT CONCEPTS

To understand this concept of the Former Rain and the Latter Rain, it is helpful to realize that the Jews for the most part lived with agriculture, worked in the fields, and for the most part depended on an agrarian way of life. Israel had predictable weather patterns, including heavy rains in both the spring and the fall. When a Jew planted crops in the fall (Oct-Nov), the spring rain in Feb-March (the Former Rain) was expected and necessary to germinate their seeds. Without this spring rain -- they simply would have nothing.

A seed needs water to germinate and after it germinates it patiently grows until harvest. This early spring rain causes this germination and growth and illustrates the work of the Holy Spirit in our souls and lives. There would be no hope of harvesting a crop in the fall (April/May for Barley or in June/July – for Wheat) without it.

A little before the harvest (March and May) a healthy rain will make all the difference between a mediocre crop and a vibrant, healthy and mature crop - swelled with goodness. The Holy Spirit, if not grieved, causes the believer to bear fruit for the harvest. This waiting requires patience and dependance on the Lord through the precious work of the Holy Spirit. This pre-harvest rain is called the Latter Rain.

What happens to the seeds in the ground who/which failed to germinate (the lost)? Will the Latter Rain benefit them? Could this seed that did not germinate in the spring suddenly germinate in the fall? What chance does that seed/plant have of surviving the winter! These are sobering questions with obvious answers.

THE BELIEVER and the CHURCH

The Former rain represents the grace from heaven and the work of the Holy Spirit that a believer in Jesus Christ receives causing the seed to germinate and then grow – *“but, holding the truth in love, we may grow up to him in all things, who is the head, the Christ”* Ephesians 4:15 JND.

It also refers to the same work of the Holy Spirit forming and nourishing the Church on the Day of Pentecost. The former rain nourishes it also causing it to grow in obedience and grace.

“And when the day of Pentecost was now accomplishing, they were all together in one place ... And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave to them to speak forth... but this is that which was spoken through the prophet Joel”. Acts 2:1, 4a, 16 JND

“... in whom all the building fitted together increases (groweth) to a holy temple in the Lord” Ephesians 2:21.

In the book of James these rains are used to teach us important truths about patience (endurance). *“Have patience, therefore, brethren, till the coming of the Lord. Behold, the labourer awaits the precious fruit of the earth, having patience for it until it receive **the early and the latter rain**. *Ye* also have patience: stablish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is drawn nigh.”* James 5:7-8 JND

Here the “early” or Former Rain refers to the souls saved (germinated) of the 12 tribes scattered amongst the nations who are experiencing trials from the rich who were not the Lord’s. It also applies to the believer and Church in the midst of professing Christendom and the world. The rich amassed wealth but it was corrupted and cankered (the seed had not germinated). Utter misery was waiting for them. As for the tried saints they were exhorted to wait with patience (endurance) for the coming of their Lord; when their glad harvest of blessing would be reaped. This patience is magnified to our hearts as we think of how long the Lord has waited for the harvest. Waiting for Him keeps the heart from the love of riches. We must wait in patience, and live in peace. They were to wait for the Lord Who will set all things right when He returns - The Latter Rain.

ISRAEL and the NATIONS

In the OT those that had faith in God were nourished by the Holy Spirit and in the near future those of faith are sustained during the tribulation as they wait for their Lord to come to deliver them from the enemy - *“Come and let us return unto Jehovah: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. After two days will he revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live before his face; and we shall know, --we shall follow on to know Jehovah: his going forth is assured as the morning dawn; and he will come unto us as the rain, as **the latter rain** which watereth the earth”* Hosea 6:1-3 JND.

This Latter Rain is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon all flesh on the earth that is promised for the last days and will be manifested by the restoration of apostolic and prophetic gifts.

This does NOT refer to the Church which is in heaven but rather as stated above to the Jewish remnant and later to all Israel and the nations.

*“then I will give **your rain** in the season thereof, and the land shall yield its produce, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit”* Leviticus 26:4 JND.

*“that I will give rain to your land in its season, the **early rain and the latter rain**; and thou shalt gather in thy corn, and thy new wine, and thine oil; and I will give grass in thy field for thy cattle; and thou shalt eat and be full”* Deuteronomy 11:14, 15 JND.

"And they waited for me as for the rain, and they opened their mouth wide as for the latter rain" Job 29:23 JND.

This concept also is expounded upon in the Psalms – *"He shall come down like rain on the mown grass, as showers that water the earth. In his days shall the righteous flourish, and abundance of peace till the moon be no more" Psalm 72:6, 7 JND.*

Again this rain will surely come again just after the 7-years tribulation, before the Harvest, and will bring forth fruit for God from Israel and the nations.

"Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap according to mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek Jehovah, till he come and rain righteousness upon you" Hosea 10:12 JND.

"And ye, children of Zion, be glad and rejoice in Jehovah your God; for he giveth you the early rain in due measure, and he causeth to come down for you the rain, the early rain, and the latter rain at the beginning of the season ... And it shall come to pass afterwards that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions. Yea, even upon the bondmen and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my Spirit" Joel 2:23, 28, 29 JND.

"Ask of Jehovah rain in the time of the latter rain; Jehovah will make lightnings, and he will give them showers of rain, to every one grass in the field" Zech. 10:1.

"Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap according to mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek Jehovah, till he come and rain righteousness upon you" Hos 10:12 JND.

HIS HARVEST

Yes, blessed Lord, the harvest shall be Thine,
The seed is scattered, sown indeed with tears:
Thy God for Thee works out Love's whole design,
One day with Him is as a thousand years.

We bless Thee for the patience and the pain
That school our hearts to fellowship with Thee:
The toilsome treading o'er earth's barren plain,
Before Thy harvest our glad eyes shall see.

How beautiful, O Saviour, are Thy feet
Upon the mountains, ere the break of day:
One Spirit are we now with Thee. 'T is meet
Thy Death should mark, for us in Life, Thy way.

Behold the Sower who went forth to sow;
Whose path began, and issued too, in prayer.
The Heaven of heavens - opened through His woe -
Pours forth His glory, tells it everywhere.

The Husbandman hath patience long, till He
Receive the early and the latter rain.

White, wondrous, golden, shall the harvest be,
When Christ appears, when God's own Son shall reign.

Now may the God of Hope, thus still we pray,
Fill us, believing, with all joy and peace;
Thine, Lord, by right, is universal sway,
No end shall be to Thy blest rule's increase.

For God, Thy God, builds by supreme design,
His wisdom's "day" is as earth's thousand years:
Well is it said "The harvest shall be mine,"
They reap, with joyful song, who sow in tears.

In yonder heavens, ever at Thy side,
With Thee, Lord, in Thy glory, on Thy throne,
Shall be Thy own companion meet, Thy bride,
Won when Thou wert on earth indeed "alone."

Thine is the patience, Thine the power, the peace
Whereby we taste of fellowship with Thee,
A little while, and labour here shall cease
And evermore Thy harvest we shall see.