

When Will it Rain?

By Arch Chater

Many centuries ago, Isaiah addressed the rebellious Israelites for their contempt for God's word and he gave a message to them that was applicable for generations to come - a message that their only hope of salvation was to return to God and live and follow His ways for them, living the truth in their lives without compromise. Through Isaiah, God said to them, "This is the way, walk ye in it." Isa 30:21.

God's professed people at that time were saying to the prophets of God, "Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things. Prophecy deceits, get out of the way." Isa 30;10

It was a time of drought of Christian living and a time for the truth and the admonition of God to be given to His people. Today there is some of God's professing people, who desire smooth things and deceits preached to them, that leave them feeling comfortable as did God's people in the days of Isaiah; those who had strayed from living the truth of God's word and compromised His commandments. Any message that came from the prophets of God was always unwelcome. We are living in similar times of drought today – a drought of compromised Christian living, when it needs to rain in the lives of God's people. And I have entitled the message from God's Word for today, "When Will it Rain?"

When will it rain? Why the question? For it is this rain, "the Latter Rain" that Scripture speaks of that will empower God's people to give the Loud Cry of the 3rd angel and enable each one to go through the ordeals that each is to face and to stand through the greatest conflict the world has ever seen - the battle between Christ and Satan. That's why the question, for God's true followers long for the rain to fall in abundance.

I invite you to open your Bibles to the book of Hosea 6:3 for here we find mention of the events of the former and latter rain.

These names were borrowed from the agricultural experiences of Palestine. The former rain fell at the sowing time in early winter as the seed would not germinate without it, then that rain to be followed by the latter rain just before the harvest in Spring as this rain was necessary for the filling out of the grain preparing it for the harvest (P&P 537). The Lord has used these symbols of rain, water as indicators of the pouring of His Spirit on His people.

Let us turn to Isaiah 44:3 as evidence of this. "For I will pour water on him that is thirsty and floods upon the dry ground, I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed and my blessing upon your off-spring." Here we find that the water poured upon the thirsty is the Spirit of God poured upon those who truly sense their need for it and desire it. Zechariah also speaks of the latter rain chapter 10:1 where he says "Ask ye of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain as the Lord shall make bright clouds and give them showers of rain to everyone, grass in the field."

Friends, of this latter rain we are counselled to ask for it, to pray for it, the latter rain falling to ripen the crop to have a people ready for the harvest. The harvest, friends, is the end of the world. Jesus tells so in Matthew 13:38-39 where He says, "The field is the world. The good seed are the children of the kingdom. The harvest is the end of the world and the reapers are the angels."

The former rain having fallen on the day of Pentecost to cause the upspringing of the precious seed in the opening of the gospel now raises the question, when will the latter rain fall in abundance to ripen the crop? And with God's awesome power, the power of His Holy Spirit in the lives of God's professing people to prepare a people for the coming of our Lord for the harvest? On whom will it fall? I quote from T5 214, "Not one of us will ever receive the seal of God while our characters have one spot or stain upon them. It is left with us to remedy the defects in our characters, to cleanse the soul temple of every defilement then the latter rain will fall upon us as the early rain fell upon the disciples on the day of Pentecost."

Friends it is only those in the process of being sealed who will receive the latter rain and of course that raises another question. What constitutes the seal?

I draw your attention to the Spirit of Prophecy comments on Ezekiel 9:4 relative to the marking or sealing of God's people prior to the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar (Vol 4:1161). "Just as soon as the people of God are sealed in their foreheads - it is not any seal or mark that can be seen, but a settling into the truth both intellectually and spiritually, so that they cannot be moved - just as soon as the people of God are sealed and prepared for the shaking it will come."

Friends, the shaking is the separation of the chaff from the wheat in the church, a division is formed and the sealing is a settling into the truth both intellectually and spiritually meaning that we not only know the truth, but we love the truth and are practicing it. It is part of our very lives. When we reach that point we are sealed, not we will be sealed. Let us not think that the seal is some spontaneous abrupt act as something quickly imposed upon us from without, then suddenly we are sealed - just like that. Not so, we are in that process of being sealed, over a period of time.

Friends, it is progressive or it is not and the closing of probation must finally do that sealing work completely. There are different stages of the sealing in the believer's life. There is "sealing with the Spirit" at conversion when the believer accepts Jesus Christ, Ephesians 1:13. "After you believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise." Then there is the "seal of the law" or "the seal of the Sabbath." Isaiah 8:16 "Seal the law among my disciples" and again Ezekiel 20:20 "Hallow my Sabbaths and they shall be a sign (seal) between me and you." This raises another question, who will receive this seal; the seal of the Law, or the seal of the Sabbath?

The test of the coming Sunday law, will determine who will receive the seal of the law, who will accept the truth of the Sabbath in its totality and obey the

commandments of God without compromise under the duress of persecution, privation and the threat of imprisonment and even death. It is written, "All that live Godly in Christ Jesus suffer persecution." 2 Tim 3:12. I quote from G. C. 605, "The Sabbath will be the great test of loyalty, for it is the point of truth especially controverted.... when one class... receives the mark of the beast ...the other receives the seal of God." Friends when the united Protestant churches ally themselves with the state and issue religious laws, particularly Sunday law, "the image to the beast will be formed and this will be as a result of the Loud Cry of the 3rd angel's message, calling people out of Babylon and exalting the standard of truth. G. C. 607-609. Then follows final seal, the "seal of redemption" for God's people who prove faithful under this testing. I quote from 7B.C. 976 "The image of the beast will be formed before probation closes for it is to be the great test for the people of God by which their eternal destiny will be decided." This is the test that the people of God must have before they are sealed" and this seal is the final sealing of Gods people "it is the mark or seal of redemption.

I quote from 4 B.C. p 1161 regarding this final sealing. "It is a mark which angels but not human eyes can read for the destroying angel must see the mark or "seal of redemption" and also from 7 B.C. p 968 "Just before we entered the time of trouble we all received the seal of the living God. Then I saw the four angels cease to hold the four winds."

Friends, just before God's people entered the time of trouble, the final seal is established, "the seal of redemption" just before probation closes. So the question is raised once again. Why is there a seeming delay in the falling of the latter rain in abundance? I quote from T8 p 116, "If all who had laboured unitedly in the work of 1844 had received the 3rd angel's message and proclaimed it in the power of the Holy Spirit, the Lord would have wrought mightily with their efforts, a flow of light would have been shed upon the world years ago, the inhabitants would have been warned, the closing work would have been completed and Christ would have come for the redemption of His people."

Friends, there we have the answer. It should have happened, but it didn't. Christ should have returned and why didn't it happen?

A lack of commitment on the part of God's people resulted in the absence of the latter rain experience in abundance, the awesome outpouring of the Holy Spirit empowering them to give the Loud Cry of the 3rd angel to the world. The cause at that time still holds today, the reason is still the same. Let us turn to Hosea 10:12-13 for the root cause. "Sow for yourselves in righteousness (literally "for righteousness") reap in mercy, break up your fallow ground for it is time to seek the Lord till He comes and rains righteousness on you." Friends, again an agriculture term is used by Hosea, "the fallow ground" symbolising the hearts of God's professing people, unploughed and unproductive.

Each one of God's people needs to look at their lives - you and me - through God's eyes, His Holy Word, and break up the fallow ground, the hearts of God's people, our hearts and root out all the weeds of sin and Satanic plants,

all the pet sins, and sow seed from which righteousness is to spring forth. The ploughshare of truth will do its work and this work Jesus desires to accomplish for us.

The lives of many of God's professing people are in disarray with the compromising of God's commandments and with attachments to the world. All weeds of sin need to be rooted out of the lives of God's people and a cessation made of the compromising of the commandments of God, and it needs to happen now, for procrastination is to invite complacency and compromise.

A coming out from the world in totality is needed in that God's people may be made ready for the outpouring of the latter rain. God's people need to be seen as His peculiar people.

"God will have a people, separate and distinct from the world and as soon as any have a desire to imitatethe world that they do not immediately subdue, just so soon God ceases to acknowledge them as His children. They are the children of the world and of darkness. 1Testimonies for the Church, p 127-137.

Is not this the major factor contributing to the delay? When will the latter rain fall in abundance we ask? Is not this a reason why the Loud Cry of the 3rd angel of Rev 18:4 not heard? When will Christ return we ask? And the answer is given in COL p 69, "When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people then He will come to claim them as His Own." I quote 9T p 189-190, "If we would humble ourselves before God and be kind and courteous and pitiful there would be one hundred conversions to the truth where now there is only one. But though professing to be converted we carry around with us, a bundle of self...It is our privilege to lay this burden at the feet of Jesus and in its place take the character and similitude of Christ." The practical outworking of the character of Christ is required in each ones life and Jesus is well able to empower each one to meet the high standards presented. "Jesus made an offering so complete that through His grace everyone may reach the standard of perfection." Review and Herald 30 May, 1907 p 2.

Let none think that it is impossible for that purity of life to be achieved in fallen, human flesh. Just as Christ, in His humanity overcame through the indwelling Holy Spirit, the mind of His Father, so we too might overcome with that same divine power, the Divine Mind of Christ, dwelling in us. Col 1:27 "Christ in you, the hope of glory." "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." (Phil 2:5).

Paul tells us in Col 2:9 that the fullness of the Godhead bodily dwells in Jesus Christ. “For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell.” Col 1:19. Everything needful for each one of us dwells in Jesus Christ, having come from the Father. For He has said, He is more willing to give us the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, the personal presence of Christ to the soul, than are parents to give good gifts to their children. It is written that this is so.

Let us read of the promises in Ephesians 3:17-20

“That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith that ye being rooted and grounded in love may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us.”

All the divine power which Christ had dwelling in Him, as our example, we might have in us by His grace. He is able and he is anxious to give us strength and capacity as Scripture promises in verse 20 where it is written that He Jesus is able to do “exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think according to the power that worketh in us.” The life of Christ has shown what humanity can do by being partaker of the divine nature. All that Christ received from God, we might have too (paraphrase of 5 Bible Commentary, 1124 (1896) and the proviso is to surrender the life to Christ in totality. Surrender means to renounce sin in its entirety from the life for this promise to be at all possible.

Desire of Ages, p 313

“If one sin is cherished in the soul, or one wrong practice retained in the life, the whole being is contaminated. The man becomes an instrument of unrighteousness.”

The transformation that may be wrought in the life by God is wonderfully explained in Desire of Ages p 466 and I quote:

“The expulsion of sin is the act of the soul itself. True we have no power to free ourselves from Satan’s control, but when we desire to be set free from sin and in our great need cry out for a power, out of and above ourselves, the powers of the soul are imbued with the divine energy of the Holy Spirit and they obey the dictates of the will in fulfilling the will of God.” (Unquote).

That’s wonderful news Friends. God will have a people prepared for the coming of Jesus and Scripture speaks of them as “those that follow the Lamb where he goeth, redeemed from among men. In their mouths was found no guile (deceit) and they are without fault before the throne of God.”

Rev 14: 4,5.

This is the condition of the faithful after the time of the close of probation for mankind. These people will be developed in the last church and receive the seal of God. These people will be empowered to give the Loud Cry of the 3rd angel. These people constitute the true remnant. But again the question is raised, why the seeming delay in the outpouring of the latter rain in abundance? When will it rain? For we believe that the work of the gospel is not to close with any less manifestation of the power of God than which marked its opening GC p 611.

Joel prophesied in Chapter 2:28 of this particular time of the latter rain and the loud cry, when he wrote “and it shall come afterward 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.” Friends, the events of Pentecost were only a partial fulfilment of Joel’s prophecy. Its full accomplishment in the manifestation of divine grace with awesome power will be seen during the closing work of the gospel under the might outpouring of God’s Spirit in the form of the latter rain. These promises were transferred to spiritual Israel because of the failure of literal Israel to fulfil its commission, so why is the rain not falling in great abundance as related in Great Controversy, p 612?

And I quote from that page, “By thousands of voices all over the earth the warning will be given, miracles will be wrought, the sick will be healed and signs and wonders will follow the believers the inhabitants of the earth will be brought to take their stand.”

Are we as members of God’s remnant church in any way responsible that the latter rain seemingly is not falling in abundance in the lives of the majority of God’s professing people? Friends, God has His own timetable, His own plan, one, which involves a sequence of events that are to take place in His own time and in His own order and we are part of that plan. Not one event is out of sequence, nor is one omitted; they will all occur and fall in His time and order. But we all have a part to play. Turn to Acts 1:6, 7 “It is not for you to know the time or seasons (dates) the Father has set in His own authority. We do not know the day of the Lord’s return, but nevertheless, “It is within our power to hasten our Lord’s return. Peter declares in 2 Peter 3:11, 12, “What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness looking for and hastening (hurrying) unto the coming of the day of God.” We can hasten our Lord’s return, but how?

God’s professing church, His professing people, have for too long been bogged down in the Laodicean mire of complacency, compromise and sometimes disdain for the commandments of God. God’s chain of events is seemingly delayed in part waiting on God’s professing church, to extricate themselves from the Laodicean bog they lie in and have lain in corporately for over 100 years as stated in the prophetic admonitions of Sister White.

From this miserable state each one with God's help is to extricate himself/herself and raise the standard in their lives in that the latter rain might fall upon each one as individuals, then God will have a people ready for the mighty outpouring of His spirit in the form of the latter rain to empower His people to give the Loud Cry. "There is a perishing world out there and God has a lethargic remnant feeling no burden for those perishing for lack of truth." C.O.L 303 "The master delays His coming for so many would be found unready." 2T: 194. What wonderful concern God shows for His people but His delay will not be indefinite.

Friends, for all God's professing people to emerge corporately from this miserable state His church finds itself in, is not only unlikely, improbable, but distinctly impossible for we are told that there will be division, the chaff will be separated from the wheat. I quote for 5T: 136 "Soon God's people will be tested by fiery trials and the great proportion of those who now appear to be genuine and true will prove to be base metal. This is the time of the sifting when the majority are going out." And again I quote from 5T: 51 which tells us when the sifting is going to take place and what will cause it. "The time is not far distant when the test will come to every soul, the mark of the beast will be urged upon us." What is the mark of the beast? The National Sunday law. "Those who have step by step yielded to worldly demands conformed to worldly customs will not find it a hard matter to yield to the powers that be rather than subject themselves to derision, insult, threatened imprisonment and even death."

"The contest is between the commandments of God and the Commandment of men. In this time (the time of the mark of the beast) the gold will be separated from the dross in the church. True godliness will be clearly distinguished from the appearance and tinsel of it. Many a star that we have admired for its brilliance will then go out in darkness. Chaff like a cloud will be borne away on the wind even from places where we see only floors of rich wheat." (unquote)

Friends the expectancy and the reality of the falling of the latter rain is one of an individual matter between each one of us and our Maker. Each one is to be living the truth of God's word in their lives without compromise for the latter rain to fall on them. I quote from E.W. 71 "I saw that many were neglecting the preparation and were looking for the "time of refreshing" and the "latter rain" to fit them to stand in the day of the Lord and to live in His sight, Oh! How many I saw in the time of trouble without a shelter." (unquote)

Friends it appears there may be many who are waiting for the church to rise corporately, miraculously out of the miserable state she lies in, and then to rise with her. It will not happen. I quote from 1T: 187 "Individuals are tested and proved a length of time to see if they will sacrifice their idols and heed the counsel of the true witness (Jesus).

If any will not be purified through obeying the truth and overcome their selfishness, their pride, and evil passions, the angels of God have the charge, "they are joined to their idols, let them alone and they pass on to their work leaving those with their sinful traits, unsubdued to the control of evil angels. Those who come up to every point and stand every test and overcome be the price what it may, have heeded the counsel of the true witness (Jesus) and they will receive the latter rain and thus be fitted for translation." (unquote) Sobering words, friends.

We all need to ask ourselves the question and answer it honestly, "Do I have any idols in my life, secret or otherwise?" If an honest answer is "yes" each one needs to root them out of the life in the power of Jesus. Lame excuses and rationalisation for the retention of these idols shows a denial of our Lord to empower each one to overcome sin in the life, or it otherwise discloses one's desire to cling to their idols. Remember friends, "Be not deceived, God is not mocked; Whatever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." He says to the angels, "They are joined to their idols. Leave them alone to the control of the evil angels." 1 Testimonies for the Church, p 187

It is this commitment of each one of us to the counsel of the true witness that will eventually prepare each one as individuals, and a people ready for the falling of the latter rain in abundance. There is no other way and this must be our experience. It is the acceptance of this counsel and the work that the Holy Spirit may wrought in each ones' life that will cause them to be prepared and to be empowered to pour forth the straight truth and exalt the standard in their lives.

And what is this counsel of the true witness (Jesus) to the Laodecian church as given in Rev 3:18-19. We have heard it many times; we have read it many times.

Let us read it once again. "I counsel you to buy of me gold tried in the fire that you may be rich and white raiment that you may be clothed and the shame of your nakedness does not appear and anoint your eyes with eye-salve that you may see. As many as I love I rebuke and chasten, therefore, be zealous and repent."

The gold tried in the fire, the faith that works by love or the works that result from faith 1Timothy 6:18, that faith that has been tried in the fire and purified by the fires of affliction Job 23:10. "When he has tried me, I shall come forth as gold." And the white raiment being the righteousness of Christ imputed and imparted to us, the wedding garment which Christ alone can give. By His perfect obedience, Jesus has made it possible for every human being to obey God's commandments when we submit ourselves to Him. COL 283. We live His life. "Christ in you, the hope of glory." Col 1:27

This is what it means to be clothed with His righteousness. And the eye-salve understood to mean spiritual discernment. The eye-salve, the word of God, accompanied by His spirit, makes the conscience smart under its application for it convicts of sin and gives one the discernment to distinguish between good and evil and to choose the good in the power of Jesus.

R&H, 22 November, 1892

“Spiritual things are not discerned because they are viewed with world loving eyes.” 2T.265

RH.29 November, 1892 p 1

Without the enlightenment of the spirit of God, we shall not be able to discern truth from error and we will fall under the temptations and deceptions Satan will bring upon the world.”

Knowing this counsel will not give anyone the seal of God, nor the latter rain, nor to be part of the Loud Cry experience, nor be ready for the close of probation, nor be ready for the time of Jacob’s trouble, nor be ready for translation. The knowledge alone is not enough.

It is this counsel to the Laodicean church that needs to be heeded by God’s professing people lived out in their lives, in our lives you and me, if we are to be ready for the return of Jesus. We want Jesus to return soon, we want to be ready surely or we are lost.

Friends, let us look at the sequence of God’s events, the sequence that I spoke of earlier and found in the Testimonies for the Church, the sequence that is to happen before Jesus returns. Let us look at them from the time when Jesus returns to this earth, in reverse order.

Friends, before the return of Jesus, must come:

1. the glorification of God’s people;
2. before the glorification of God’s people must come the time of Jacob’s trouble;
3. before the time of Jacob’s trouble must come the close of probation;
4. before the close of probation must come the glorious Loud Cry of the 3rd angel;
5. before the Loud Cry can be given somebody must receive the Latter Rain that the power of the Loud Cry may be witnessed;
6. before the Latter Rain can fall upon the church in abundance, there must be a people that can get victory over sin.
7. In order that victory over sin may come and the church be prepared, the straight testimony must be given.
8. in order for the straight testimony to be given, there must be some people who have received and lived out in their lives the counsel of the True Witness (the Laodicean message.)

Right here, friends at this point, is where you and I are standing in God’s plan. His sequence of events will occur and it is plain to see where in the scheme of things we are now standing in God’s great plan. We need to heed the

Laodicean message. Friends, yes, it is true some have received it, but it is apparent and evident from the history of 1844, and since as given in 8T: 116, and from the admonitions and counsel from Sister White, we as a people have never fully received it because if we had, it would have started the chain reaction of events which would have culminated in the falling of the latter rain in abundance, in the Loud Cry and coming of Jesus.

Friends, the Counsel of the True Witness, Jesus Christ to the Laodiceans is addressed to the individual, you and me as it is to the church with the invitation, "Open your doors," says the great Merchant Man, "I am the possessor of all spiritual riches. Transact your business with me for it is I, your Redeemer, who counsels you to buy of me." Friends if we would heed His counsel, we would not have to ask, "When will it rain?" for the latter rain may then fall in abundance on God's people and usher in the return of Jesus. We need to heed the words of Paul from Romans 13:12, "The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness and let us put on the armour of light."

Then friends, we will stand among the redeemed at that day when Jesus returns and be among those who rejoice at His return with the words, "Lo, this is our God. We have waited for Him and He will save us. This is the Lord; we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation." Isaiah 25:9

Our Lord Jesus Christ, came and lived as man, giving His perfect righteous life for us. He paid the price. He died for your sins and mine, making the ultimate sacrifice that we may through acceptance of Him and His sacrifice, have the hope and assurance of life eternal. He has no desire that any should be lost. He has made every provision of the forgiveness of sins and for power to overcome temptation and in our lives. We say we are longing and waiting for His return. He says, "I am longing and waiting to you to prepare for My return." May each one heed His counsel and become candidates for the falling of the latter rain in their lives and the answer to the cry, "When Will it Rain." Then the message of truth and salvation will be declared under the loud cry and usher in the return of our Saviour, Jesus Christ. We surely long for that day and may this be each one's experience.