

# The Early and Latter Rains

***The Early Church Understood the Essence of what Worshippers today seem NOT to Understand. Can Generations of False Teachings Account for the Loss of a General Awareness of a Significant Prophetic Illustration?***

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The early New Testament Church was no less interested in Bible Prophecy than are people today. Living in an age of relentless persecutions and mortal danger, such subjects had a relevance with them much greater than anything we can relate to. Yet, their prophetic resources field was relatively limited, compared to what we have currently. But even so, in many ways, certain fundamental truths were as knowable among pre-Christian generations as they are today. In fact, without the distortions absorbed into Christian Theology from first century Gnosticism, some things were more easily understandable then than now.

One fundamental concept, referred to by James and others, escapes modern apologists, who align themselves with the idea that this day and age is the ONLY day of salvation. It's the rare evangelical ministry that isn't obsessed with the vital need to get all people converted NOW in this lifetime, under the conviction that this is the ONLY day salvation can be attained!

But then, we have the Scriptures which show that God is **not trying** to call all of humanity to conversion at this time. In fact, a major ethnic group, destined for ultimate salvation, is deliberately blinded by God, lest they come to conversion in their day and age! When Jesus was asked why it was that He spoke to the general public in parables, His response was startling, to put it mildly! *"He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of*

*Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them."* (Mat. 13:11-15) Mark 4:12 confirms the same with regard to those who we'd consider the prime candidates for conversion.

What we can discern from this startling explanation is that it is given to some to understand, but that the majority, even of the Jewish nation, are given over to blindness, at present, by God!

## **Blinded in This Age!**

What's particularly curious is the statement in John 12:35-40. *"Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light,... believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light...But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they (the Jews) believed not on him: That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, **He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.**"* The Apostle Paul understood the situation, and confirmed the same in Romans 11:7-8, *"What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeks for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded (According as it is written, **God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should***

not hear;) unto this day.”

But the essential point of this is that these people ultimately will have their sins forgiven! Blindness of a segment of even the religious community was deliberate, not for the purpose of exclusion, but that a greater number would ultimately be converted and saved! Further down in Romans 11, Paul explains the reason: “*For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that **blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved:** as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is **my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.** As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes.*” (vs. 25-28) A number of things are revealed here: 1). Blindness is temporary, 2). God has a covenant to save these people, and will save the majority, and 3). God will take away their sins.

Well and good, but there's the knotty little problem of the obvious fact that the majority these people are long dead!

We have to this point considered Old Testament prophecies. It's appropriate then that we consult the same source for an answer, because one exists.

### THE Day of Salvation

What underlies the common perception that this is the **only** day of salvation is the oft quoted passage in 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 6:2, which states, “*For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.*” “**The day of salvation**” is regarded as indicating that salvation is limited to just the living generation. This quote is actually from Isaiah 49:8, which states “A day of salvation”. “*Thus saith the LORD, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages;*” The actual wording allows the possibility of more than one, which in

effect, is essential if we are to answer the obvious question. When is the day of salvation of those who were blinded by God, who went to their graves still in that blindness? If God is going to fulfill His Covenant with them, and take away all Israel's sins, When?

### Answer in the Rains

The Epistle of James makes reference to a set of harvests little known in this generation, but rather well known among the early Church. The particular passage which begins to explain the (seeming) ‘problem’ is in chapter 5, verse 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.***” This quotes Old Testament prophecies going back to the time of the Exodus.<sup>1</sup> In Deuteronomy 11:14: “*That I will give you the rain of your land in his due<sup>2</sup> season, the **first rain and the latter rain**, that thou mayest gather in thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil.*” More specifically, he quotes Hosea 6:3, “*Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the LORD: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the **latter and former rain** unto the earth.*” James didn't need to explain himself in detail to his audience, as they were already familiar with this illustration as it related to the days of salvation.

The early Church generally understood the prophecies and the explanations offered by Paul, that the majority would be saved, but not in the present generation!

We should also give thought to the common general assumption that many seem to espouse,

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<sup>1</sup> Job 29:23 suggests that the concept of early and latter rains was understood in the most ancient times. This is not to say that the correlation between grain harvests and the days of salvation were fully developed. Job's day was before Moses!

<sup>2</sup> Some allege that the latter rain equates to the spring season and the early rain to the fall. (Keep in mind that the rains precede their respective harvests by some months.) Though there are two grain harvest seasons, only the fall harvest yields grapes and olives, which we see here referenced to the latter harvest. Early and latter harvests make greater sense in the contexts of the Holyday seasons when regarding the early part of the year as being the springtime, as God instructed Moses regarding an inversion of the calendar. (Ex. 12:2)

that the early rain and the early harvest are the same. They're not! Rain sets up the conditions necessary for a good harvest. Rain suggests a waiting period until the harvest. Joel 2:23 has this: "*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.*" The use of the term 'moderately' alludes to a greater outpouring in the time of the latter rain!

This verse is one that causes people to deduce that the latter rain is associated with the springtime. But we need to ask ourselves, is the rain and the harvest resulting from that rain **at** the same season? Secondly, which 'first month' is this referring to? Is it using the religious Mosaic calendar or the 'traditional' civil calendar, which regards the seventh month as the start of the year? Further, the 'first month' of Exodus 12:22 is the month of firstripe ears, the Abib, the start of the spring harvest. Significant rainfall during the first month would be detrimental to the harvest. Rain at the time of harvest is undesirable as it would make the fields muddy, and ripened grain that is too moist, bears a strong likelihood of rotting. As Proverbs 26:1 suggests, "*As snow in summer, and as rain in harvest, so honour is not seemly for a fool.*" You don't want rain **IN** the harvest, suggesting that the rain precedes the harvest by weeks or months.

(The word 'first' in Joel 2:23 is Strong's #7223, (*ree-shone*) which has a wider range of meaning than just 'first', as opposed to second or third. This word can refer to something that happens before. It could be translated 'in a previous month', which would please the farmers greatly, having an appropriate rainfall as the grains are approaching maturity.)

Understanding the **two** harvest seasons and their essential prior rains provided God's spiritual nation with the **most primitive outline** of the spiritual harvests of the world as revealed *later* in God's annual Holydays. What we clearly see in the revealed annual Holydays is a two-part series of harvests. The first harvest is represented in the spring Holydays, which culminates with the First Resurrection. Beginning with Christ's return at the Last Trump, which is co-incident with the First

Resurrection.<sup>3</sup> The age resulting from the Saints of God being raised immortal, and reigning with Christ for 1000 years, opens the 'spiritual outpouring' onto the 'field' for the second (greater) harvest. As we can see from Ezekiel 37, the ethnic nation of Israel (not just the Jews, but the greater segment, the 'lost House of Israel'), will become re-unified, and live out their physical lives in a new world. A world far more accommodating to the attainment of salvation than today's world! In this environment, God will fulfill His Covenant with ethnic Israel to remove their sins. "*For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.* (Romans 11:27 quoting Isaiah 27:9)

Reinforcing the understanding of why God 'blinded' His people with intent of 'saving' the greater number is Romans 11:32. "*Even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy. For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.*" Notice, it is thru the projected 'mercy' of God's Saints that all the rest will have greater access to God's unilateral mercy!

But the most profound illustration contained within the '**former and latter rains**' is the essential Truth of there being a second 'day of salvation'.

An understanding of the various Resurrections from the dead, one of those seven fundamental 'Doctrines of Christ', as Hebrews 6 enumerates, is also a pre-requisite to understanding these days.

### Out of Your Graves

There is a **day** when God's Covenant of Promise to the 'whole House of Israel' (Ezek. 37:11-27) will be fulfilled. "*Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: ...Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. And ye shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves, And shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the LORD have*

<sup>3</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 4:16 & 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:51-53

spoken it, and performed it, saith the LORD... And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land: And I will make them **one nation** in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be **no more two** nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all... I will save them out of all their dwellingplaces, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them: so shall they be my people, and I will be their God. And David my (resurrected) servant shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them. ...Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an **everlasting covenant** with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and **will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore**. My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people.”

This is the spiritual environment of the later era of the ‘latter rain’. This isn’t Heaven, it’s the final phase of the literal millennial Kingdom on Earth. <sup>4</sup>

First Israel will be re-gathered into a viable, unified, spiritual nation and then offered their long-promised opportunity, then with them the rest of humanity. This is the resurrection that occurs after the thousand years are finished. (Rev. 20:5)

### The Greater Harvest

Holding to the concept that our age, prior to the second coming, is the **only day** of salvation there ever will be disregards important Biblical Truths. Not the least of which is the resurrections (plural) and the real purpose of the millennial age. Those who physically survive the great tribulation and live on over into the post-advent era, and their offspring, will enjoy a day in which salvation will be openly offered to all. “*And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant,*

<sup>4</sup> These and their unconverted gentile counterparts live again **after** the millennium is past. See the articles: “*And So All Israel Shall Be Saved*” and “*Understanding the Three Resurrections*”.

and another eat: for **as the days of a tree are the days of my people**, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for **they are the seed of the blessed of the LORD, and their offspring with them**. And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the LORD.” (Isaiah 65) (These in the millennium aren’t resurrected people, those will be brought up later, after the 1000 years are finished.) But, **the latter rain begins here**, at Christ’s return!

Christ’s return and the Kingdom, set-up with His Bride, will open opportunity fully to all from that time onward. “...**blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved:**” Ironically, it’s the predominantly Gentile world that will first experience that ‘spiritually sanitized’ environment that resurrected ancient Israel will be raised-up into!

“*When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:*” **Ω**

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### Related Topics: (available from this author)

- “*The Resurrections from the Dead*”
  - “*The Rejected Resurrection*”
  - “*Understanding the THREE Resurrections*”
  - “*The Hope of the Last Great Day*”
  - “*And No Place was Found for Them*”
  - “*Defining the Second Death*”
  - “*All Israel Shall be Saved*”
  - “*The Incurably Wicked*”
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