

Spirit Baptism and the Latter Rain

First Things First

I. Preamble of Message

A. Early Rain and the Latter Rain

- I worship a God who loves to see things grow
- My God does not like to see things become stagnant
- For my God, your God is a moving and transforming presence
- From the beginning of time our God has been hovering, actively causing life in our world to become a growing, vibrant reality—through God, the Holy Spirit
- So, in today's page of our 40 Days Book, Day 7, page 27, the first sentence
- It begins by saying, (OS-On Screen)

“It is vital that we daily experience the early rain baptism of the Holy Spirit in order to spiritually grow to the point that we will benefit from the latter rain of the Spirit, which prepares the Christian for the final crisis and Christ’s return.”

B. A Nebraska cornfield (OS-On Screen)

- I grew up as a teenager on a Nebraska cornfield
- That's right, my boarding school, Platte Valley Academy, sat right in the middle of a bunch of cornfields
- Every spring, you could look out and see the skies growing dark in the west and north west
- But also, you could see large tractors finishing their work of the soil in the fields that surrounded us
- They pulled the planters into the barn, unhitched them and stored the tractors in their bays
- Shut the doors and ran for cover—for the early rain was coming
- Those of us in class those days timed our runs from the class building back to the dorms—you could smell the rain, you could hear the rain, before you saw the 'early rain' come
- But out in those fields, acre upon acre, were tiny little kernels of corn
- Freshly planted beneath the soil's surface and when the rain came and drenched those massive fields—something miraculous was about to take place
- For once the storm had passed, the sun would break through and the ground would heat up with the newly fallen rain and seed meeting each other

- And with only days left in the school year, in mid-May, those tiny kernels of corn had broken open, giving up their form and shape to become four and five foot stalks of corn
- During winter you could look for miles across the Platte River Valley—not in mid-Spring
- By early June those stalks would reach seven, even eight feet with large cobs of fresh corn attached to each stalk
- Some fields were harvested as fresh green chop for putting up in the silos or feeding to out dairy cattle
- Other fields were preparing to receive the latter rain to prepare that corn for next year’s seed or crushed kernel feed during winter
- Either way, the early and latter rain were vital for our farm’s success in growing
- So it is with the early and latter rain in growing as Christians
- Let me read our opening sentence again and see now if it makes even more sense with those Nebraska cornfields in mind

“It is vital that we daily experience the early rain baptism of the Holy Spirit in order to spiritually grow to the point that we will benefit from the latter rain of the Spirit, which prepares the Christian for the final crisis and Christ’s return.”

II. Prayer Song – Holy Spirit Rain Down (OS-On Screen)

Holy Spirit rain down, Rain down,
 O Comforter and Friend, how we need Your touch again.
 Holy Spirit rain down, Rain down,
 Let Your Power fall, Let Your voice be heard,
 Come and change our hearts, as we stand on Your Word

Holy Spirit rain down.

(REPEAT ABOVE)

No eye has seen, no ear has heard,
 No mind can know what God has in store
 So open up Heaven, open it wide
 Over Your church and over our lives

Holy Spirit rain down

Let Your Power fall, Let Your voice be heard
 Come and change our hearts, as we stand on Your Word

Holy Spirit rain down

III. Application

A. A Seers/Prophets View

- They called them seers, because they could see things no one else did
- We know them more as prophets
- But a seer or prophet is needed to help us be aware of our *blind side*
 - a. The blind side are those hard to get spots in each of our lives
 - b. Those rough edges that we need shaven off and removed
 - c. Those hidden sins that must go

B. Ellen White's words

- Ellen White was one of those called to be a messenger, a seer when the Seventh-day Adventist church was forming
- Let's consider her words regarding Spirit Baptism (early rain) and the latter rain— (OS)

“I saw that many were neglecting the preparation so needful, and were looking to 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 shelter! They had neglected the needful preparation, therefore they could not receive the refreshing that all must have to fit them to live in the sight of God.” Early Writings, 71

C. The Needful Preparation

- I used to think you could just rush out and take some little tomato plants (at Home Depot or Lowes) and just stuff them in the ground each Spring
- Walk away and come back in six weeks and pick some nice red juicy tomatoes to go in a salad or on a sandwich
- No, those tools called hoes, shovels, and garden rakes were made for a reason—to prepare the ground
- God knows we need needful preparation ourselves
- But soil or heart preparation means something very significant must happen
 - a. Soil must be turned—our hearts must be turned
 - b. Stones and weeds must be raked away—a stoney heart and it's own weeds need to be removed
- Let me provide you an exhibit of what I am talking about—I have here
 - a. Little weed
 - b. Big weed—look at the root on this guy, it's goes on and on
- What weeds have been growing around your heart? Your life?

- This is the needful preparation; Ellen White is referring to...
- This is why I wanted to provide a title to today message that emphasizes “first things first”
- And besides the needful preparation—there’s also a first thing we must do when we begin this journey with the Holy Spirit
- It comes in our scripture lesson today—Jesus was speaking,

D. Scripture Lesson – John 12:24 NLT (OS – On Screen)

“I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat is planted in the soil and dies, it remains alone. But its death will produce many new kernels—a plentiful harvest of many lives.

- Now, for certain, Jesus was speaking of his own death—and though he said, “Now my soul is deeply troubled.” He added, “But this is the very reason I came!” (12:17)
- Jesus’ death though conquered sin, and when we believe in Jesus and accept him as Lord and Savior, he calls us to take our cross too; signifying our own death.
- Watch in the next verse here in our scripture lesson as Jesus explains— **John 12:25 NLT**

“Those who love their life in this world will lose it. Those who care nothing for their life in this world will keep it for eternity.”

E. 40 Days of Devotion and Preparation for the Second Coming of Christ (OS)

- Most of you have heard about the 40 Days experience we started last Sunday, April 1st
- This is a 40 day revival series, a personal devotional series we are doing here at Valley
- It’s 40 days like Peter, James and John and the other disciples experienced after Jesus’ ascension
- Where they set aside their agenda for God’s and the Holy Spirit’s agenda
- They experienced this daily devotion to what Jesus had said, and daily prayer
- Their hearts became surrendered and all the dross in their lives melted away (Books & Blog)

F. Victory over every besetment

- Ellen White was given another word to share in what she saw—

“I saw that none could share the ‘refreshing’ [latter rain], unless they obtained victory over every besetment, over pride, selfishness, love of the world, and over every wrong word and action.” EW113

- Sound impossible to you?
- Sound frightening to you?
- Well, I have good news for you

- You are not the one to achieve the victory inside of you
- You are not able to achieve the victory—that’s a forgone conclusion
- Why? Because everyone of us have tried it
- Been there, done that—case closed
- Well, not quite...
- Jesus wants to take up your case and mine
- He is able to do abundantly more than we can think or ask—true or not?
- True
- So here’s the first things first

G. Permit Jesus on the inside of you

- Stop trying to be good
- And start giving yourself to the Jesus and Holy Spirit every day
- Let go of your life and let the Holy One have your life
- Listen to Peter as he spoke at Pentecost
- TEXT: Acts 3:19, 20a NLT (In our Bibles)

“Now repent of your sins and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped away. Then times of refreshment will come from the presence of the Lord... .”

H. Your Life is a Seed

- I want to tell you this amazing story
- There once was this tiny, tiny seed among many seeds in this vast field
- That tiny seed had your name on it
- Can you say your name right now to identify you, the tiny seed? (Larry)
- Thank you
- This amazing story is your story, my story
- The Sower came and gathered all the seed, and you and me, we were all taken into his sack
- He walked out into this vast field—our world and stepping onto beautifully prepared ground
- At every step, he took his index finger and made a three foot swath
- Then seed upon seed he put us in the ground
- And before we knew it, he covered us, buried us beneath an inch or two of dirt

- All was dark, all was silent for a period
- We lay there still, quiet—until suddenly we felt this warmth and moisture all at once
- Then an amazing thing happened, the outer shell of our lives broke apart
- What was once an organized “you”, “me” began to spill out and multiply in new life all around
- And the coolest thing of all? We didn’t mind it that there was less of us and more of them
- Why? Because if Jesus could do it, why couldn’t we?
- He didn’t disappear to nothing when he died, he rose, he lives
- So, if I die, I will be made alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN