

LAST DAYS AND THE LATTER RAIN

BIBLE TEXT : James 4:1-10; 5 :1-9.

LESSON 451 Senior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "Therefore be ye also ready: for In such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh" (Matthew 24:44).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

James 4:1-10

¹ From whence *come* wars and fightings among you? *come they* not hence, *even* of your lusts that war in your members?

² Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not.

³ Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume *it* upon your lusts.

⁴ Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

⁵ Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?

⁶ But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.

⁷ Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

⁸ Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse *your* hands, *ye* sinners; and purify *your* hearts, *ye* double minded.

⁹ Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and *your* joy to heaviness.

¹⁰ Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.

James 5:1-20

¹ Go to now, *ye* rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon *you*.

² Your riches are corrupted, and

Bible References:

I Signs of Last Days

1. Evil desires cause contentions, James 4:1-3;

James 1:14

¹⁴ But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.

James 1:15

¹⁵ Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.

2. Friendship of the world is enmity with God, James 4:4, 5;

1 **John** 2:15

¹⁵ Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

3. Treasures are being heaped together for the last days, James 5:1-3;

Ecclesiastes 5:10

¹⁰ He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this *is* also vanity.

1 **Timothy** 6:10

¹⁰ For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows..

4. Fraud is prevalent, James 5:4,

Jeremiah 22:13

¹³ Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong; *that* useth his neighbour's service without wages, and giveth him not for his work;

5. Pleasure seekers abound, James 5:5;

Luke 8:14

¹⁴ And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of *this* life, and bring no fruit to perfection.

2 **Timothy** 3:4

⁴ Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;

6. Righteous men are condemned and killed, James 5:6,

Matthew 24:9

⁹ Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake.

John 16:2

² They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.

II Overcoming the Evil

1. God gives grace to the humble, James 4:6,10;

Psalms 138:6

⁶ Though the LORD *be* high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly: but the proud he knoweth afar off.

Luke 14:11

¹¹ For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

2. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you," James 4:7;

your garments are moth-eaten.

³ Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days.

⁴ Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth.

⁵ Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter.

⁶ Ye have condemned *and* killed the just; *and* he doth not resist you.

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.

⁸ Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.

⁹ Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door.

¹⁰ Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience.

¹¹ Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.

¹² But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and *your nay,*

1 Peter 5:8

⁸ Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

1 Peter 5:9

⁹ Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.

3. "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you," James 4:8,

Proverbs 8:17

¹⁷ I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me.

4. Sinners must repent, James 4:8, 9;

Matthew 4:17

¹⁷ From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Acts 17:30

³⁰ And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:.

III The Overcomer's Hope

1. The husbandman waits for the "early and latter rain," James 5:7;

Acts 2:14-21

¹⁴ But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all *ye* that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words:

¹⁵ For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is *but* the third hour of the day.

¹⁶ But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel;

¹⁷ And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:

¹⁸ And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy:

¹⁹ And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke:

²⁰ The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come:

²¹ And it shall come to pass, *that* whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

2. The coming of the Lord draws nigh, James 5:8,9;

Luke 21:28

²⁸ And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.

Notes:

As the Spirit inspired others to write of the conditions of the last days, so James was inspired also to write, that the hearts of men might be more fully awakened. The Spirit would impress upon all the need of true godliness in this late, late hour.

"Wars and Rumours of Wars"

Jesus told His disciples that the condition of wars and rumours of wars would be one of the signs of the last days. The Word of God tells us that "wars and fightings" stem from "lusts that war in your members." No doubt this can be said of all contention, whether on a world-wide scale or whether it be between individuals. There would be no conflict if somebody did not hope to gain something -- whatever the end in view.

One of the definitions of lust is an inordinate or unrestrained

nay; lest ye fall into condemnation.

¹³ Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms.

¹⁴ Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:

¹⁵ And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.

¹⁶ Confess *your* faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

¹⁷ Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months.

¹⁸ And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.

¹⁹ Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him;

²⁰ Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.

desire. This unrestrained desire for power or place has sometimes entered the realm of religion, too, resulting in the separation of men from God, the separation of chief friends; and it has given the enemies of the Gospel an opportunity to point the finger of scorn.

This type of sin may start from a small beginning, but it grows fast. Perhaps another has filled the place or position that you had hoped would be yours. What has been your reaction? Have you prayed for him? Or have you looked for faults and talked about him to others? Christians must be constantly on guard against this subtle sin.

Unanswered Prayer

The Word of God here tells why some prayers are unanswered: they have a selfish motive. Our missionary to Japan has aptly said, "The Lord will supply our needs, but not our "greeds." God knows the heart of each individual, and He often withholds the unneeded.

"Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts." God answers every sincere prayer as He knows best -- sometimes with a "yes," or a "no," or "wait." The story is told of the man who prayed for a new automobile, and the Lord answered his prayer by giving him a new pair of shoes.

The last days are marked by prayers that are unanswered. The remark is sometimes heard, "Why is it so difficult to receive an answer to prayer?" The answer to this question is, men are too busy to really spend the time in prevailing prayer, and when they do pray, they pray for the fulfilment of their own desires. God honours those who prevail in prayer for the salvation of souls and the furtherance of His cause and Kingdom. His promise is, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James 5:16). If prayer is not being answered, let us not blame God, but realise there is something on our part yet to be done.

Pleasure Seekers

Even if the Scriptures had said nothing about it, we can easily see that pleasure seeking marks the days in which we live. The Bible says, "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be . . . lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God" (II Timothy 3:1-4). It has been established that billions of Naira is spent by Nigerians annually in pursuit of happiness in their leisure hours. Millions of tickets a week are sold by the movie theatres. Television costs are in millions. A further estimate is that their pleasure-bent Americans counterparts in 1960 spent \$800 million on golf, \$1 billion on hunting, \$2 billion on fishing and \$2.5 billion on boating.

Comic books, which were unknown until about the time of the Second World war, now sell billions of copies a year. Over 10 million Americans are taking dancing lessons. In 1960 the cigarette output in the United States totalled nearly 500 billion cigarettes, at a cost to the public of over \$6 billion, the Agricultural Department reported.

These pleasures are often pursued at the cost of neglecting the worship of God. What is so important about worldly pleasure that one surrenders his soul to get it? This all points to the fact that many Americans have reverted to idol worship. They are worship-pers of themselves, new homes, big cars, money, clothes, and worldly pleasure. The first commandment is: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3).

Overcomers

Amid all the evil foretold of the last days, the promise shines through that God's children can, and must, be overcomers. The way to overcome is outlined. Pride, one of the objects of God's

hatred, has to be abased, and humility must take its place. How will this be accomplished? By submitting one's self to God. The devil must be resisted, so that he will flee from the child of God. Can one successfully resist the devil? Jesus gave us the example that the devil can be successfully resisted through the Word of God, but one must know the Word in order to use it against the devil, therefore it is imperative that the Word be studied by the Christian.

"They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony" (Revelation 12:11). The child of God has the privilege of fleeing to the Blood of the Crucified One and of pleading for the efficacy of that Blood to cover his life. The devil hates the Blood of Christ, for it was shed for the remission of sins, and it witnesses to the devil's eternal doom. When the Christian flees to the Blood, the devil flees from the Christian.

Another wonderful promise is, "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you" (James 4:8). Lay aside the cares of life, forget the burdens of the day for a little while, shut yourself in your closet alone with God, centre your mind and heart upon Him in prayer, and see how quickly He will bless your soul. If we cannot get through in prayer to God, it is usually because our minds and hearts are cluttered with other things and thoughts. Little wonder that God's Word says, "Purify your hearts, ye double minded" (James 4:8).

Riches

The mention of riches and rich men enters into this description of the last days. The world has always known of rich men, but the truth is beyond disputation that there are more rich men and greater riches in the world today than ever before. It has been said that if Adam had lived to the present day, and that he had been able to save \$10,000 a year all the years from his time to ours, his fortune would be small compared with that of many individual fortunes of today. A weekly periodical in recent issues has referred to many Americans as billionaires. If these men were monarchs or Eastern potentates, one would not be quite so much surprised; but these men are private citizens who have acquired such great wealth. There is an ever-growing number of billionaires in the world, but money is valueless when it comes to obtaining eternal life. The time is coming when riches will cause suffering, rather than enjoyment. The Bible says, "Your gold and silver is cankered, and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire" (James 5:3).

Ray of Hope

One ray of hope shines through the gloomy description of the last days, just as the searchlight makes a bright path of light through the dark night sky. Jesus is coming! "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord" (James 5:7). The husbandman waits long and has much patience for the fruit of the earth. The early rain comes, then the latter rain in its season. All things that might cause failure are avoided, and the harvest is gathered in.

The Lord said that in like manner the true children of God would at last be gathered into Heaven. The "Early Rain" fell at Pentecost (**Joel 2:21-29** ²¹ Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice: for the LORD will do great things. ²² Be not afraid, ye beasts of the field: for the pastures of the wilderness do spring, for the tree beareth her fruit, the fig tree and the vine do yield their strength. ²³ 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*. ²⁴ And the floors shall be full of wheat, and the fats shall overflow with wine and oil. ²⁵ And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the

cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you. ²⁶ And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the LORD your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you: and my people shall never be ashamed. ²⁷ And ye shall know that I *am* in the midst of Israel, and *that I am* the LORD your God, and none else: and my people shall never be ashamed. ²⁸ And it shall come to pass 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: ²⁹ And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit. **Acts 2:14-21** ¹⁴ But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all *ye* that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: ¹⁵ For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is *but* the third hour of the day. ¹⁶ But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; ¹⁷ And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: ¹⁸ And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: ¹⁹ And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: ²⁰ The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come: ²¹ And it shall come to pass, *that* whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.) and today the "Latter Rain" is falling and people are receiving it. It is time for all to awaken, to obtain and keep the oil in their lamp and vessel, for the cry is going forth in all lands: "Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him" (Matthew 25:6). This is the last call before the vials of God's wrath are poured out in the Great Tribulation. These are the last days preceding His coming for His Bride. The responsibility is on every one who receives the Light, to walk in it, for the Light has come; and how shall we escape if we walk not in it, and do not seek and obtain all that the Lord has purchased and provided for us?

The last days are evil days, but they can be good days to the children of God, for they precede the second coming of Jesus. God's salvation is the only solution to the great problems that are facing this world. God's grace is the only refuge for this poor, lost, doomed world.

QUESTIONS

1. What causes wars and fightings?
2. Why do some prayers go unanswered?
3. If one be a friend of the world, what is he to God?
4. What does God do to the proud? To the humble?
5. Can the devil be made to flee? How?
6. How may one cause God to draw nigh?
7. What have rich men heaped together for the last days?
8. Name two things required to produce the natural fruit of the earth; the spiritual fruit.
9. What hope should be uppermost in the hearts of Christians in these last days?