



## August 19, 2020: Thoughts on the Bible text

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“You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand” (James 5: 8). The author of the epistle of James exhorts his readers to be long-suffering and patient until the coming of the Lord while in the difficulties and demands of life.

By using the example of a farmer waiting for the rain, the author illustrates for us how to wait for the coming of the Lord. We must be patient and prepare our hearts to be accepted by the returning Lord.

### **You also be patient**

The early rain prepares the ground for the seed. The latter rain is important so that the harvest can mature. The farmer must be patient, as he has no control over nature or the development of the seed.

We are confronted with many situations in our lives in which our patience is put to the test. Patience is the ability to tolerate delays, problems, or suffering without despairing. We can sometimes be disappointed when control slips away from us, whether that be in situations at home, at work, in our daily interaction, as well as in our congregation.

The timing of the coming of the Lord is a mystery (Matthew 24: 36), which may frustrate some people. Let us remember what the risen Jesus told His disciples when they asked Him about His return: “It is not for you to know times or seasons

which the Father has put in His own authority” (Acts 1: 7). We must therefore be patient and let our hearts be strengthened by word and sacrament.

### **Establish your hearts**

Even if he became impatient, the farmer would not be able to speed up the ripening process of the grain. In the course of life, many people give up because a situation has got out of control. It should be clear to us that the coming of the Lord is not dependent on our wishes and needs.

We want to allow our hearts to be strengthened, because only then can we stand firm in trials and temptations. We do not know what kind of temptations we will face. The epistle of James provides consolation when it says that the testing of our faith produces patience (James 1: 2-4). We sometimes experience doubt which can make us uncertain whether the Lord will really return. It is in these moments that we want to remember what God has already done in the history of salvation and in our lives, and then renew our trust in Him.

### **The coming of the Lord also means judgement**

In verse 9 the thought of the return of Christ is repeated once more and it is pointed out that His coming also means judgement: “Behold, the Judge is standing at the door.”

Let us look again at the image of the farmer. On the day of harvest, the farmer makes a decision: he separates the ripe grain from the unripe grain. The same thing happens at the return of Christ: only those who have the necessary maturity to take part in the first resurrection are gathered together to Him (Revelation 20: 6).

We cannot influence when the Lord comes, but we can make an effort to prepare ourselves patiently for His return. The decision as to whether we are worthy to belong to the bridal congregation rests with Jesus Christ, who is a just judge.

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