

## WAIT UPON THE LORD

**8** <sup>16</sup>Bind up the Testimony, and seal the Law among my disciples! <sup>17</sup>I will wait for Jehovah, who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob, I will look to him. <sup>18</sup>Look! I and the children whom Jehovah has given me are [given as] signs and wonders to Israel from Jehovah of hosts, the One who dwells on Mount Zion. <sup>19</sup>When men ask you to consult mediums and spiritists, who whisper and mutter; [ask them,] Should not a people consult their God? Why consult the dead on behalf of the living? <sup>20</sup>[Instruct them to ask you to look] to the Law and to the Testimony! If they do not make this request, there will be no light of dawn for them. <sup>21</sup>They will wander through the land distressed and hungry—and when they are famished, they will become enraged, and looking upward, they will curse their King and their God. <sup>22</sup>Then they will look toward the earth, but they shall see only distress and darkness and fearful gloom, and they will be driven into utter darkness.

**9** Nevertheless, [in the future] there will be no gloom for those who were in distress. In the past he treated the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali with contempt; but in the future he will bring glory to the way towards the sea, the region along the Jordan [River]—Galilee of the Gentiles. <sup>2</sup>The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; the light has dawned upon those living in the land of the shadow of death. <sup>3</sup>You will enlarge the nation and increase their joy. They will rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest, as men rejoice when they divide the plunder—<sup>4</sup>because, just as in the day of Midian's [defeat], you will shatter the yoke that burdened them, the wooden bar stretched across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor. <sup>5</sup>Every warrior's boot used in battle and every cloak rolled in blood will be consigned to the flames, they will be fuel for the fire—<sup>6</sup>because a child has been born for us, a son has been given to us, and the government will rest upon his shoulders. He will be called, Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. <sup>7</sup>There will be no end to the expansion of his rule and of peace. He will sit upon the throne of David and reign over his kingdom, establishing it and upholding it by means of justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of Jehovah of hosts will accomplish this. (Isa. 8:16-9:7)

### **Introduction**

Joy Carroll writes about her experience with waiting:

Living in a hurry-up world of fast-food restaurants, drive-through banking and same-day postal delivery, we go rushing through life. Waiting seems to be a word deleted from our vocabularies. Yet there are times when we are forced to endure periods of waiting. There seems to be no way of avoiding them.

As a youngster, I was often told to wait. "May I have a piece of cake now?" "In a minute." "Is it time for the parade?" "In a couple of days." "When will Christmas be here?" "In three more weeks." Those minutes, days, and weeks of waiting were endless times of frustration that tested my patience.

But they also set the stage for acts to follow in my adult life. For I have found that I am still frequently required to wait. It isn't always just minutes, two days, or three weeks. Sometimes it seems I'm asked to wait for aeons of time.

Joy goes on to recount some of those times of waiting in her adult life.

Over two decades ago I had major surgery that was life threatening. After many days I was released from the hospital to return home to my young family. I had my doctor's assurance that I was on my way to complete recovery. (But, as Joy goes on to relate, recuperation did not come as quickly as she had hoped. There needed to be a time of waiting.)

When one of three children became a young adult, she strayed from her Christian upbringing. Leaving our home, she went to live with a twice-divorced man of questionable morals. My heart seemed close to breaking as I learned of her living conditions and of the emotional turmoil she was struggling through. The days and nights of endless waiting, of wondering where she was living and if she was safe, were exhausting. (*POWER*, 3/17/91, pp.4-6)

Can you identify with Joy? Right now are you experiencing a time of waiting upon the LORD? Waiting for direction for your life? Waiting for a job? Waiting for a Christian marriage partner?

During one of the times of waiting in her life, Joy recalls a rather routine incident that conveyed to her a great deal of spiritual significance:

One day as I hung clothes on the line, my spirits as damp and drooping as the garments, I realized I was humming a song. Soon, I was singing words to the music—words about sunshine in the morning and of being touched by God's wonderful grace. As I continued singing the little chorus God had given me, I realized that joy was bubbling within the heart that I had believed too broken to contain such a precious treasure.

In the passage of Isaiah presently before us, the LORD speaks to us about waiting, and He also speaks about sunshine in the morning for those who wait upon Him. When we are called upon to endure "dark days" or hard times, we find it extremely difficult to wait upon the LORD and to hope in Him. Although it is extremely difficult, nevertheless, it is worth waiting for the LORD and hoping in Him—even in the darkest of times. This is the message conveyed to us in the present passage of Isaiah.

### **I. Wait Upon the LORD, ...Because He will Replace the Trial with Blessing (Isa. 8:22b-9:5)**

In Isaiah 8:20-22, the LORD, through Isaiah the prophet, speaks of the dark days of trouble that were coming upon the nation because of their rejection of His law:

*[Instruct them to ask you to look] to the Law and to the Testimony! If they do not make this request, there will be no light of dawn for them. <sup>21</sup>They will wander through the land distressed and hungry—and when they are famished, they will become enraged, and looking upward, they will curse their King and their God. <sup>22</sup>Then they will look toward the earth, but they shall see only distress and darkness and fearful gloom, and they will be driven into utter darkness. (Isa. 8:20-22)*

Even though Isaiah had personally remained faithful to the LORD, nevertheless—because he was living in the midst of this nation—he, too, would encounter those dark days. There are occasions when “the innocent” suffer along with the guilty—what is ordained as a punishment for the latter, may also be employed by God as a time of proving and purifying the former, note 1 Peter 1:6-7,

*... now for a little while, since it is necessary, you have been brought to grief by all kinds of trials. <sup>7</sup>[This has happened] so that the genuineness of your faith—being of greater value than gold which perishes—having been tested by fire, may be verified, resulting in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. (1 Pet. 1:6-7)*

If you should encounter “dark days,” but can honestly say with the apostle Paul, “*I know nothing against myself*” (1 Cor. 4:4,) consider the plight of Isaiah, and join with him in making the same testimony he makes (Isa. 8:17.) As Isaiah sees those “dark days” approaching, he gives this testimony: “*I will wait for Jehovah, who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob; I will look to him*” (Isa. 8:17.) The LORD gives this promise to those who wait for Him and continue to hope in Him, even in the midst of the darkest times: “*there will be no gloom for those who were in distress*” (Isa. 9:1.)

Isaiah is standing among the people who are dwelling in thick darkness when suddenly he is transported into the future and made to see the darkness dispelled by a great light: “*The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; the light has dawned upon those living in the land of the shadow of death*” (Isa. 9:2.) Isaiah now explains the significance of this, “*In the past he treated the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali with contempt.*” That is to say, at the time of the Assyrian invasion, these two northern tribes of Israel were the first to succumb to the attacks and be subjected to deportation by the enemy armies, note 2 Kings 15:29, “*In the time of Pekah king of Israel, Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria came and took ... Gilead and Galilee, including all the land of Naphtali, and deported the people to Assyria.*” But now Isaiah continues, “*in the future he will bring glory to the way towards the sea, the region along the Jordan [River]—Galilee of the Gentiles*” (Isa. 9:1b.) This prophecy finds its fulfillment in the fact that Jesus the Messiah made this region to be His home (being raised in the village of Nazareth) and the base for His early ministry, as well as the place where He first proclaimed the good news of the gospel, as is recorded in Matthew 4:12-17,

*When Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, he returned to Galilee. <sup>13</sup>Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum, which was by the sea in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali—<sup>14</sup>to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah, <sup>15</sup>The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, the way to the sea, along the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—<sup>16</sup>the people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned. <sup>17</sup>From that time on Jesus began to preach, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.” (Matt. 4:12-17)*

Having been granted the privilege of seeing the blessing that the LORD has in store for His people, Isaiah now lifts up praise to the LORD for what he has seen. *“You will enlarge the nation.”* The nation that was conquered and led away into captivity is miraculously revived and multiplied. The nation, not so much as a political and geographical entity, but as the people of God is what is primarily in view; this prophecy seems to especially find fulfillment in such passages as Colossians 1:5-6, *“the gospel <sup>6</sup>that has come to you. All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God’s grace in all its truth.”* Isaiah continues, *“[You will] increase their joy. They will rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest, as men rejoice when they divide the plunder.”* Their joy is compared to that experienced by men when they gather in the harvest or when they divide the spoil of battle. But this joy is far superior to all such earthly joys, it transcends all earthly joy, it is a joy in the LORD: *“they will rejoice before you [Jehovah].”* Isaiah now supplies the reason for the nation’s joy, namely, the fact that, *“just as in the day of Midian’s [defeat], you will shatter the yoke that burdened them, the wooden bar stretched across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor. <sup>5</sup>Every warrior’s boot used in battle and every cloak rolled in blood will be consigned to the flames, they will be fuel for the fire”* (vs. 4-5.) The future deliverance from the oppression of the enemy is compared to the great deliverance the LORD provided for His people in the day when He used Gideon to win a great victory over the Midianites who held Israel in terrible subjection in the days of the judges (Judges 7.) But this future deliverance will prove to be far greater, because it will be the Messiah’s victory over the devil and over His people’s enslavement to sin, note Colossians 2:13-15,

*When you were dead in your sins ... God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, <sup>14</sup>having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. <sup>15</sup>And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross. (Col. 2:13-15)*

Let us wait upon the LORD our God, because He will replace trial with blessing. May our prayer be that of Moses, *“Satisfy us in the morning with your lovingkindness, so that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days. <sup>15</sup>Make us glad for as many days as you have afflicted us, for as many years as we have seen trouble”* (Psl. 90:14-15.) As the hymn writer, Katarina von Schlegel expresses it,

Be still, my soul: the LORD is on your side;  
Bear patiently the cross of grief or pain.  
Leave it to your God to order and provide;  
In every change He faithful will remain.  
Be still, my soul: your best, your heavenly Friend  
Through thorny ways leads to a joyful end.

Be still, my soul: your God does undertake  
To guide the future as He has the past.  
Your hope, your confidence let nothing shake;  
All now mysterious shall be bright at last.

## II. Wait Upon the LORD, ...Because He will Provide the Savior (Isa. 9:6-7a)

Isaiah is made to see the coming of the divine Savior who shall rule as the benevolent King over God's people: *"a child has been born for us, a son has been given to us, and the government will rest upon his shoulders ... he will sit upon the throne of David"* (Isa. 9:6-7.) David ruled over an earthly kingdom, which was an experience of the kingdom of heaven and also a type (or living model) of that kingdom, note 1 Chronicles 28:5, where David describes himself as sitting *"on the throne of the kingdom of Jehovah over Israel."* The Lord Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah, rules over the kingdom of heaven itself, which kingdom shall finally be revealed in the fullness of divine glory: *"[God the Father] raised [Christ] from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, <sup>21</sup>far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come"* (Eph. 1:20-21.)

Isaiah 9:7 describes the character of the Savior's reign. *"There will be no end to the expansion of his rule and of peace."* Described here is the absolute rule of the Lord Jesus Christ, a rule that brings with it an unlimited measure of peace for His people. *"He will sit upon the throne of David ... establishing it and upholding it by means of justice and righteousness from that time on and forever."* The reign of the LORD over His kingdom and over His people shall be characterized by absolute justice and divine righteousness. We may compare this present word of prophecy with the description of the kingdom of God found in Romans 14:17, *"the kingdom of God consists of ... righteousness and peace and joy by the Holy Spirit."*

Indeed, it is at the Last Day that the Lord Jesus Christ shall be revealed in all of His divine glory and shall exercise His benevolent reign over His people, and on their behalf, in all of its glorious fullness. As Christians we are instructed to earnestly await that great and eternal day: *"our citizenship is in heaven; and we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ"* (Phil. 3:20.) However, at this present time our Lord Jesus Christ is faithful to administer His gracious reign. In the words of the *Westminster Shorter Catechism*, "Christ executes the

office of a king ... in ruling and defending us, and in restraining and conquering all his and our enemies" (Answer to Question #26.) Note, by way of example, the testimony of the apostle Paul: *"But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength ... And I was delivered from the lion's mouth. <sup>18</sup>The Lord will rescue me out of every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory forever and ever. Amen"* (2 Tim. 4:17-18.)

Let us wait upon the LORD our God, because He will provide the Savior to minister to us in our need, exercising His gracious reign over us and on our behalf.

### **III. Wait Upon the LORD, ...Because He will Zealously Keep His Word (Isa. 9:7b)**

This present passage concludes with the divine declaration, *"The zeal of Jehovah of hosts will accomplish this"* (vs. 7b.)

This closing declaration tells us that all of what has been promised and foretold will be fulfilled because of two things. First, the LORD has a burning zeal to take care of His people and complete the good work of grace He has begun in them, in New Testament terms, note Philippians 1:6, *"he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."* Second, the LORD, as the Almighty God—the LORD of hosts—has the power to take care of His people and fulfill all of His promises, note Jeremiah 32:17, *"Ah, Sovereign LORD, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too difficult for you."*

Let us wait upon the LORD our God; knowing that He will zealously keep His word. The LORD is zealous with a holy and divine zeal for His people to be preserved and finally brought into the fullness of His great redemption.

### **Conclusion**

When we are called upon to endure "dark days"—perhaps a debilitating illness, or the loss of a job, or problems in the home, or persecution for the sake of Christ—we find it extremely difficult to wait upon the LORD. But this is the message of Isaiah 8:16-9:7, although it may be difficult, nevertheless, it is well worth waiting upon the LORD and hoping in Him, even in the darkest of days. As the LORD Himself will testify later in this same Book of Isaiah, *"you will know that I am Jehovah; those who hope in me will not be disappointed"* (Isa. 49:23b.)