

Why Does the Lord Tarry?

by Stephen Kaung

The Lord's delay is due to his desire to give people a chance to repent and prepare for his return, and to find a remnant or overcomers to prepare the way for his return.

Duration: 57:37

Scripture: Matthew 24:14

Topics: "Second Coming", "Spiritual Preparation"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of being prepared for the imminent return of the Lord, highlighting the need for real spiritual preparation and cooperation with God's ways. It explores the principles of the remnant and overcomers throughout history, showcasing how God uses a few dedicated individuals to bring about significant changes and fulfill His purposes. The sermon also delves into the revelation of God's ways and acts, illustrating the significance of aligning our prayers and lives with God's higher purposes.

Transcript

Will you please turn to the Gospel according to Luke. Luke chapter 21, verse 28. But when these things begin to come to pass, look up, lift up your hands, because your redemption joyous nigh.

Matthew chapter 24, verse 14. And these glad tidings of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole habitable earth for a witness to all the nations, and then shall come the end. And finally, Psalm 103, verse 7. Psalm 103, verse 7. He made known his ways unto Moses and his acts unto the children of Israel.

Let's have a short word of prayer. Dear Lord, how we praise and thank thee that in this perilous time thou hast gathered us together before thee to prepare us for thy imminent return. O dear Lord, we do pray that there will be real preparation in each and every one of us that we may not only prepare to meet our dear Lord, but we may be used by thee to prepare the way for thy return.

What a privilege, what an honor thou hast called us to. O Lord, we look to thee that only thy grace can enable us to answer thy call and be truly the link that thou art looking for in these last days. We commit this time into your hand and pray that thou wilt bless this time, deliver us from mere mental acceptance, but enable us by thy spirit to enter into the reality of thy calling.

And we give thee all the glory in thy precious name. Amen. Dear brothers and sisters, I believe every one of us here is looking forward to the coming of the Lord.

By all the indications that we can see around us, we know the end is near, maybe nearer than what we think. Even the world realizes that the dawn day is coming. So far as the world is concerned, it is true that it will be a dawn day.

But so far as we, who are the Lord's, this is the time that we can look up, lift up our heads, for our redemption has drawn nigh. My brothers and sisters, when God is doing a work, especially in changing time, changing ages, we discover that he has a principle. In other words, when we think of the first coming of the Lord, outwardly speaking, the whole nation of Israel was waiting for the Messiah.

In their temple, every day, a special prayer will ascend to God, send Messiah. The whole nation seemed to be waiting for the Messiah. But strangely, when the Messiah did come, the nation, the people, they were disturbed, troubled.

Why is it so? Because their waiting for the Messiah is for their personal, private reason. They thought that when the Messiah should come, he will come to deliver them from the Roman rule and make them the first of the nations. That's what they were looking for in the Messiah.

Not knowing that God has a higher purpose, they even rejected the Messiah as a nation. But thank God, as we find in Psalm 103, God made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel. So far as the children of Israel were concerned, they had to wait until God acted.

And when they saw the action God had taken, they began to realize it and began to thank the Lord. But Moses was different because the Bible said God has made known his ways unto Moses. In other words, when God is working, he has his way.

He has his principle. And if you know the way of God, you can foresee what God will do. And not only that, you will be even used of God to bring in the act.

So brothers and sisters, we are here this week looking to the Lord that by his grace, we may know his ways. And this is not just a mental understanding, something for us to boast of, but this is very, very practical because in his ways, you will find he is calling us to cooperate with him. Just like you have a locomotive, a powerful engine, but it needs railroad.

And what God is looking for in his people is to lay the railroad for that locomotive to run. It is a high honor, a high privilege, but thank God it is something that God is looking for. You know, when you look back into history, you find God was going to change the age from the age of law into the age of grace.

It was a tremendous change because when the people of Israel were under the law, they promised to keep it, but they could not. And as we all know for 400 years, God was silent. After Malachi, God did not speak to his people.

Even though the temple was restored, the temple service was carried on. Prayers were risen every day. Outwardly speaking, the nation was ready for God, but God looked upon the heart.

He knew exactly what the situation was. That's the reason why for 400 years God was silent. Brothers and sisters, as we read the Bible, we thank God that he was a God who speaks.

If God should be silent, nobody would know him because he's far, far beyond us. We know him today to a certain extent is because of what he has spoken. The speaking of God is revelation to us, but God cannot speak to his people because of the condition, their heart condition before him.

But thank God he is gracious. In spite of the situation of the nation of Israel, after 400 years of silence, God began not only to speak, but to bring in the Messiah. How did he come about? Unknown to the world, God has raised up some people whose hearts were totally committed to God.

It was through these few God was able to move according to his heart. You know, as you read the gospel according to Luke, you will find there was a couple, Zechariah and Elizabeth. They were righteous.

Zechariah was a priest. They served God faithfully, but unfortunately they didn't have a son. Now in the Old Testament time, one who was blessed by God will be surrounded by sons and daughters.

Only those who were cursed by God will be deprived of children. Now in spite of the piety of this couple, in spite of their constant prayer, asking God to remove that shame from them, their prayers were not listened. Not because God did not want to listen to them, but because God wanted to use them to do something far beyond their personal needs, for the need of the nation.

So I personally believe after this old couple have prayed year after year for a seed, and it seemed as if God was not listening, do you think they gave up that prayer? I think not. But I think the direction of their prayer was corrected. Instead of praying for a son for their own benefit, they began to pray for a son that would be useful to prepare the way of the Messiah.

So as you read the Bible you will find when Zechariah was in the temple, the Lord was cast and he had the privilege of burning incense in the holy place. Now there was a high privilege among the priests. Sometimes a priest may be serving the Lord for years and never had that privilege.

And if you had that privilege once, that's all you could get. And thank God, while he was serving in his cause, the Lord was cast and he was privileged to burn incense in the holy place, while he was alone in the holy place. The children of Israel were standing outside, waiting, praying with him.

And when you burn incense, of course, it typifies prayer. And what was the prayer? It was the prayer of the nation. Oh, the Messiah will come.

And I believe Zechariah was praying that prayer instead of praying his private prayer. But strangely, you find, when the angel appeared and said, Zechariah, your prayer has been answered. He was not praying for his own son.

He was praying for the Messiah. And yet the Lord said, your prayer has been answered. Why? Because his prayer was in tune with God's heart.

They desire an heir, not for their own enjoyment. They desire heir to be used of the Lord, to prepare the way of the Lord. So you see here an old couple, unknown to man as it were, but secretly, they were praying for the interest of God.

And God used them as a link for the change of the age. And at the same time, we find Mary and Joseph. Here was Mary and Joseph.

Even though they were descendants of David, but they were unknown as it were. In the village of Nazareth, hidden place, they were engaged, but they were not married. But the angel appeared to Mary and said, you are blessed of the Lord.

The Lord has chosen you to give birth to his own son. Of course Mary was surprised. She said, how can I give birth if I do not know a man? And the angel said, the spirit of God will come upon you.

So what was born was of God, the son of God. Now it was a real challenge to Mary. Mary was a devout person.

She loved God, but now she was asked to do something that was far beyond any human being could do. Because that means her destruction. Anyone who gave birth without being married to a man was considered as a deuteress.

And the Lord demanded her to be stoned. And even the first stone must be cut by the one whom she loved. It was such an unusual demand.

And yet Mary knew God. She was submissive to the very last. She was willing to sacrifice her life for God's purpose and thank God.

God used that woman to bring in the Messiah. We do not forget Joseph. He was a righteous man.

And if he was righteous, he had to follow the law. He did not want to shame Mary publicly. He was thinking of leaving her quietly.

And it was at that time that you find she was told this was the doing of the Lord. And he knew the Lord so well. He loved God so much.

He was willing to sacrifice himself to cover, as it were. And through these two, the Messiah was brought in. The change came.

Then we also think of Simeon and Anna. Even though the accounts are very small, but from the accounts in Luke, we find both Simeon and Anna, they loved God. They gave their whole life to God.

And because of that, Simeon received a revelation from above that before he died, he received the Messiah. In other words, he was living for the Messiah, not just praying for the Messiah. His whole life was for the Messiah.

And thank God he saw the Messiah. And when he saw the Messiah, he said, Lord, you can take my life. That's it.

He was satisfied. And so was Anna, devoted herself to prayer. And she was also given the revelation when the Messiah came.

So, brothers and sisters, we find different people here and there, hidden, unknown to the world, but known to God. And they were used to prepare the way of the change. And of course, we should not forget the shepherds, because these shepherds are special.

They are not ordinary shepherds. They were temple shepherds. They were shepherds that were shepherding those lambs that were to be sacrificed to the Lord.

In other words, they lived for God, not for their own interest. And it was to them that an angel appeared to announce to them the glad news of the coming of the Messiah. So, brothers and sisters, just by looking at these few unknown to the world, but known to God, and they offer their lives to be the link of bringing in the Messiah.

That's the way that the age of law turned into the age of grace. Now, of course, we cannot forget John the Baptist, but our brother was specialized on that. Now, if this is the case, whenever God was going to do something on earth, he would first touch a few on earth to agree with him, to prepare the way as it were for him.

And it is through these that the change came. Now, if this is the case, when the age of law was changed into the age of grace, so, brothers and sisters, in like manner, we can expect. It is the same way of God that he would change from this age of grace into the age of the kingdom.

Thank God for the age of grace. That begins with the first coming of our Lord Jesus. But thank God, even while he was on earth, he promised us that he would come back again.

In his first coming, he was laying the foundation, as it were. Now, brothers and sisters, we often feel that our Lord Jesus' first coming is to seek and to save the lost. That is very true.

He did that. But this is not all his purpose. To seek and to save the lost, so far as we are concerned, that seems to be the best.

And that seems to be even our desire, our wish. What a privilege to be found and to be brought back to the heavenly Father. We thank God for that.

But, dear brothers and sisters, salvation is not according to human need. Salvation is according to God's purpose. God had a purpose, and he did not reveal that purpose until towards the last, very last.

He was rejected by the nation of Israel. He retreated to the border of Caesarea Philippi. Caesarea Philippi was a gentile city.

That shows he was rejected by his own country. And it was at this almost last minute he revealed to his disciples why did he come into this world. He asked his disciples, who do men say that I am? Not that he was interested to know how the world thought about him.

No. He was just trying to draw out his disciples. And, of course, his disciples would not tell him every evil, wicked thing that people say of our Lord.

They would only narrate to him the good things. But he was not satisfied. So he asked them, you who have been with me, who do you think that I am? Thank God, Simon Peter, as he was moved by the Holy Spirit, he confessed that you are the Christ, the Son of the living God.

And our Lord Jesus said, Simon Bar-Jonah, this was the something shown you by man. Man can only see so far as you are one of the great prophets. But only the revelation of God will show you that he is the Christ, the sent one of God, for a special mission, and he is the Son of God.

Thank God God revealed it to Peter, and Peter was able to confess it. And on that confession, our Lord Jesus said, you are Peter. I will build my church upon this rock, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

Brothers and sisters, after the Father revealed the Son, the Son revealed the Father's heart. He was sent for his church. He came to build his church upon the rock.

Even though we know that in this world, people misunderstood it. They thought Peter was the rock, but Peter is just a tiny stone, a piece out of the rock. The rock is our Lord Jesus himself.

He is the rock of foundation, and on this rock that is on himself, he will build his church. The church is the outgrowth of the Lord himself. The church is to bear the testimony of Jesus.

The church is to complete, as it were, what Christ has done in proclaiming the victory of Christ. But of course, here you are told also of the tremendous conflict that is coming. The gates of Hades will all be opened, trying to prevent the church to be built, but the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

It shall be built. So, brothers and sisters, this is what we have seen in the Word of God. So now the question is, why is it, after so long a time, and the Lord still tarry, what is the reason behind it? So far as our Lord Jesus is concerned, there can be no question because even when he was on earth, before he died, he already told his disciples that he will come again to receive them to himself.

He went to prepare a place for them, mansions for them, and then he will come back and receive his people. Even when you read the book of Revelation, which foretells the coming of the Lord, at the very end of the Bible, Revelation 22, 20, he said, Behold, I come quickly. That expresses the heart of our Lord Jesus.

He was anxious to come back. That's the reason why even in the first century, those who really loved the Lord, they were waiting for the coming of the Lord. Were they wrong? No, they were right.

Because the Lord could come, even at the end of the first century. He was anxious to come back to receive his bride. Now if the problem does not lie with our Lord Jesus, then where does the problem lie? It has to be.

Do you remember in Matthew 24, 14, the Lord said, The message of the kingdom of the heavens shall be proclaimed throughout the world as a testimony to the nations, and then the end shall come. Now to whom did our Lord Jesus commit this preaching of the kingdom of the heavens to the world? Not just a matter of preaching. The preaching here means more than that.

It means they live out the kingdom of the heavens on earth to the nations, and their testimony will bring in. So brothers and sisters, we cannot help to see that. The reason why, even though we see all around us things are changing so rapidly, it seems as if any time something drastic can happen, but the Lord seems to be patient, longsuffer, and wait.

Now why is this? Whose responsibility it is? What is it that our Lord is really looking for? You know, as in the Old Testament time, so it will be in the New Testament time. You know, because the children of Israel, they failed to keep the law. So finally the nation was destroyed, exiled to Babylon.

But God, in his mercy, raised up a remnant out of the church, all those who were in Babylon. A remnant heard God's call. They were willing to be uprooted from their well-established business houses and willing to brave the danger of the road.

Into Jerusalem there was a ruin. They went back not for themselves. They went back for rebuilding the temple.

That the name of the Lord will still be. As you read the Bible, you will find during the Babylonian captivity, God was never called the God of the heavens and of the earth. He was only called the God of the heavens.

Why? Because on earth he had no testimony. So these people, a remnant, they went back. They rebuilt the temple, restored all the temple services so that God may be the God not only of the heavens but also of the earth.

That's the remnant principle in the Old Testament. But when you read the New Testament, you find it is the overcomer principle. Because as you read the book of Revelation, which is the last book of the Bible, you find that towards the end of the first century, John the Apostle, the last of the twelve apostles living, he was exiled to the island of Patmos.

Before that he was serving in Asia Minor among those churches there, but for the testimony of Jesus, he was exiled into the island of Patmos. And there on the Lord's Day, he was in the spirit. And here he saw a heavenly vision.

Brothers and sisters, we know that among the apostles, John was the closest to our Lord Jesus. He was the one who lay at the bosom. He knew Christ so intimately on earth, but he was yet ignorant of the ministry of our Lord Jesus in heaven.

Oftentimes we think that the ministry of our Lord Jesus on earth is all that he had done. And after he said it is finished, he ascended up on high, seated at the right hand of the Father. You don't sit down until your work is done.

And here we find our Lord Jesus. He sat down at the right hand of the Father, waiting for all what he has accomplished on earth to be done. No, he was as busy as he was.

Not because the work of redemption is still unfinished. It is finished. It is because there in heaven, he is ministering to his people, ministering to his church, so that his church will be matured and be fit to be the bride.

And there you find he was one like the Son of Man in the midst of the seven churches of Asia. Now, to every church he wrote a letter. To every letter he began with a revelation of himself to that particular church.

In other words, this was the testimony committed to the church. Everything in the church was to be judged according to the testimony of Jesus granted to them. Were they faithful? Or did they fail? And if they failed, he called them to repent.

And to every church at the end you find the call. He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He that overcomes, he will be rewarded with something in the kingdom.

So, brothers and sisters, we find the same principle, but different name. Instead of remnant principle, we find the overcomer principle. When the church as a whole failed, God did not give up.

He still tried to restore his testimony, but through a few, through the overcomers. And whatever the overcomers have accomplished, it is considered as for the whole church. This is the principle of the overcomers.

So, brothers and sisters, the overcomers are not someone outside of the church. The overcomers are in the church, but they are the ones who maintain the testimony of Jesus and trust it to the church. And what they have done will result in the whole church coming to.

That is the principle of the overcomers. So, brothers and sisters, if you read the book of Revelation, in the whole book, you will find how God in different ages, different centuries, how he had his overcomers. Because in Revelation chapter 2 and 3, we find the overcomers at the end of the first century.

And then when you turn to Revelation chapter 7, you will find from verse 9 through verse 17. And after these things, I saw a low, a great crowd, which no one could number, out of every nation and tribe and people and tongue, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, palm branches in their hands, and they cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God, who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb, and so forth. Now in this chapter 7, you find two parts.

The first part, from verse 1 through verse 8, that was concerned with the nation of Israel. Because before Jacob's trouble will come, God will seal those of the 12 tribes that were faithful to him. That is to say, to keep them through Jacob's trouble.

And then from verse 9 to the end, that refers to the church. And here you have a picture of the overcomers of the centuries. In chapter 2 and 3, overcomers at the end of the first century.

And in chapter 7, you find overcomers through the 20th century. A number cannot be numbered. Out of every nation, and tribe, and people, and tongue.

And they stand before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, palm branches in their hands, and they give glory to God. Brothers and sisters, in spite of the failure of the church, God is always successful. In every century, he has his overcomers, standing for the testimony of Jesus.

And these countless overcomers, they were there, standing before the Lamb. And then from there, you come to chapter 12. Now, just to mention this, because we'll go into that, God willing, tomorrow.

The man-child. The man-child there represents the overcomers at the verge of the turning of the age. Then you find, in chapter 14, it is a view of the overcomers as a whole.

In contrast, they are as the first fruit. In contrast with the hardest, and also the vintage. And in chapter 15, you find these are the overcomers through the Great Tribulation.

In chapter 19, you find the Bride of the Lamb. Now, it is very strange. As you read the book of Revelation, you find there were, as it were, two marriages of the Lamb.

One is in chapter 19, and the other is in chapter 21 and 22. Now, what is the difference? In chapter 19, it was before or the beginning of the age of the Kingdom of Heaven. In chapter 21, 22, it was eternity.

So I personally believe that the wife there will be represented by the overcomers of the church of the ages. But when you come to chapter 21, 22, you find the consummation of all the work of God in the Old Testament time and the New Testament time. Sum up, God's work is always complete.

Nothing will be lacking. And therefore, you'll find throughout time, all the work of God will be summed up in New Jerusalem. And that's what we find in the Bible.

So this morning is just, as it were, an introduction. And hopefully, we will really be open to the Lord and cry to the Lord that we may be those, not just pray as a routine, but really looking forward to the coming. Dear Lord, how we praise and thank Thee that we are living at the very end of the great change that is coming, even though it is the most difficult time, as it were, and yet it was the most privileged hour.

Oh, Lord, we do not want to just live for ourselves. We want to live for Thee, Lord. We want to be useful in Thy hand, that we may be those who will bring in the King.

Our cry to Thee is come, Lord Jesus, come quickly. We ask in Thy name.

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