

No Paycheck on Wednesday

Hang in There Part 2
James 5:7 8-30-2015

Summary: Patience is a re-calibration of the clock of my expectations to synchronize with divine providence. When suffering, be patient like a farmer, who is used to a long wait for his paycheck, and who trusts in the faithfulness of God, and who understands that the delay is what is accomplishing the reward. Put your hope in the Second Coming, which will be even better than heaven.

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James 5:7 Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord’s coming. See, the farmer waits for the valuable crop of the land, being patient until he receives the autumn and spring rains. 8 You too, be patient. Strengthen your hearts, because the Lord’s coming is near. 9 Don’t grumble against each other, brothers, so that you will not be judged. See, the Judge is standing at the door! 10 Brothers, as an example of suffering and patience take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. 11 Behold, we consider blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job’s perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about, that the Lord is compassionate and merciful. 12 Above all, my brothers, do not swear—not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. Let your “Yes” be yes, and your “No,” no, so that you will not fall under judgment.

Introduction

Patience. Those of you who know me well probably heard the Scripture reading and thought, *Darrell Ferguson is going to teach us about how to be patient? Is that supposed to be some kind of joke?* Patience has never really been my specialty. I would like to play a quick recording for you. It was a conversation I had that was recorded without my permission, and without my knowledge. It was recorded 45 years ago. My mom was making an audio letter to send to her mother, and while she was talking I came and made a polite request.

Did you notice the impact it had on me when mom made her suggestion about waiting a few minutes? Zero impact. It was an excellent suggestion, and yet it ricocheted off my little two-year-old skull like a bb off a steel bunker. The only impact it had was it made me instantly start hyperventilating.

In this section of the book, James is telling us to be patient until the Lord's return. Have you ever been anxious or hurried or impatient or upset about some delay, and someone said to you, "Be patient," and that helped?

"Oh thanks. That just fixes everything. I was feeling really anxious, but now that you told me to be patient, I feel great."

I think for most of us, being told to be patient results in us being even less patient than we were to begin with. So if that's the case, how is this passage actually going to be helpful to us? Actually it is extraordinarily helpful, because James doesn't just tell us to be patient; he teaches us how by giving us three inspiring examples.

Definition of Patience

But before we look at those, let's make sure we understand exactly what patience is. When we tell our kids to be patient, usually we just mean, "Calm down and stop asking if we're there yet." But there is much more to patience than that. How would you define patience? Is it just passive resignation?

"Oh well – *que sera sera* – whatever will be will be."

Is that what patience is?

Not Passive Resignation

No. God is patient with the wicked, but He is definitely not passively resigned to their behavior. He is not up in heaven saying, "Oh well, can't do anything about it so ... whatever."

Not Moving Slowly

Patience is not passive resignation. Nor is it simply moving slowly and never being in a hurry. Sometimes people miss opportunities in the name of patience. Or they justify sloth or inactivity or lack of faith in the name of patience. They are so overly cautious – they will never move ahead on anything until every duck is in a row, every possible contingency is covered, and every potential problem is planned for. They can't trust God for any of that, and so they never do anything. By the time they get all that squared away, the opportunity is long gone. Instead of moving out on faith or seizing an opportunity, they say, "I'm being patient. I don't want to get out ahead of God on this." And the reality is God is so far out ahead of them that they have lost sight of Him. They are worried about getting ahead of God, and God has been waiting for them to move for the last year.

Not Inactivity

And we know that patience is not inactivity or idleness, because the first example James gives us for patience is the farmer. Farmers are incredibly patient, but they are definitely not inactive or idle.

Adjustment to God's Deadlines

So if patience isn't passive resignation, and it's not erring on the side of always moving slowly or never being in a hurry, and it's not inactivity – what is it? The most basic meaning of the biblical term is to simply give more time for the resolution of a problem. The two men who were in arrears in paying their debts in Matthew 18 both had the same request: "Be patient and I'll pay you everything."¹

¹ Mt.18:26, 29.

“Give me more time.”²

In 2 Peter 3:9 it says the reason it is taking as long as it is for Jesus to come back is because God is being patient with the lost – giving them more time to repent and come to faith in Christ so they can be saved. So patience is basically willingness to extend the deadline for resolution to a problem.

Anytime suffering is involved, our most natural deadline for resolution to the problem is right now. You all laughed at me on the tape, but don't we all do that same thing? Someone is mistreating you, something is unfair, you are being hurt, or you're in pain because there is something you really, really want but you don't have it, and so you ask God. And God says, “How about in a little bit?” And we start to hyperventilate and say, “No, I want relief from the suffering noooooow.”

“I want this person to stop hurting me now.”

God says, “How about in 10 years when My timing is just right?”

“No - not 10 years. My deadline is *now!*”

When I was two, the non-negotiable deadline for dinner time was the split-second I got hungry. We all tend to be like that, which is why we have so much anxiety.

Anxiety Begins at the Deadline

You see, most of our anxiety comes because the problem is still ongoing even beyond our deadline. Whatever my mental deadline is, up until that deadline hits, I don't have a lot of anxiety. I don't have any anxiety at all right now about the fact that none of my Christmas shopping is done, because it's August. My deadline for that is December 24. I'm not tired enough to sleep right now, but that's fine because it's not bedtime yet. The anxiety doesn't start until after the deadline passes. If you get up tomorrow morning and go to work, and then you work again all day Tuesday, you don't wake up Wednesday morning all upset thinking, *I've worked 16 hours this week and haven't been paid a dime*. Why not? Why no anxiety on Wednesday morning? Because you know it's not payday yet. Your employer is keeping track of the hours – payday will come and you will get compensated for everything. So you are fine with that remaining unresolved for a while longer until payday comes. Now, if the day you thought was payday passes and still no paycheck, that's when the anxiety kicks in.

Deadline Re-Calibration

So what is patience? Patience is when I adjust my deadlines to match God's. It's when I adjust my expectations so I don't require things to be over before God says they are supposed to be over. So here is a definition: Patience is a re-calibration of the clock of my expectations to synchronize with divine providence. Impatience is when I get confused and expect it to be payday when it's only Wednesday morning. James is writing to people who were suffering tremendously, and they were getting upset and agitated and anxious, and they were starting to fight against each other and doubt God, and so James writes this passage to remind them – “Hey, calm down – it's only Wednesday morning. God will take care of your problems on payday, so be patient.”

Until the Second Coming

For how long? When is payday? When will God step in and fix this problem in my life? If you tell an impatient person to be patient, his first question will be, “Be patient for how long?”

James 5:7 Therefore be patient, brothers, until the Lord's coming.

“Won't some of my problems be resolved before that?”

Partially, but any resolution you have to any problem prior to the Second Coming is a temporary Band-Aid. It is a partial resolution at best. He might heal you of some disease, but you will still have

² In Lk.18:7 it is even used in a negative sense of delaying justice.

other physical problems. He might fix a problem in a relationship, but that relationship still won't be all that it should be. He might take away certain problems, but those will just be replaced with other problems.

We are thankful to God for the temporary, partial bits of relief that He gives us in this life, but that is not our primary hope. Our hope is the Second Coming. I mentioned before that being told to be patient doesn't make you patient. The comfort does not come from the command to be patient. It comes from the hope of the Second Coming. That's payday. That's resolution day. That is the hope that carries us through suffering.

Vacation "Suffering"

This was a great passage for me to be working on right before we left for our vacation last week. Tracy and I celebrated our 25th anniversary by going down to Cancun with all the kids. We got down there, and the whole place was extremely crowded with obnoxious, partying college students. We finally got our rooms, Tracy and I walk into ours and instead of a king bed there are two separate beds. And my first thought is, "We didn't make it to 25 years happier than ever by sleeping in separate beds." On top of that, the pillows were as hard as a rock, the AC didn't work, the TV didn't work, the shower didn't work, we had to go up five flights of stairs to Josiah's room to shower. One day we went golfing and hit a car and had to pay for repairs. And even though the food was great, we couldn't fully enjoy it because we all got sick for most of the week. It was the perfect vacation for learning all about this principle of adjusting the deadline for problem resolution to the clock of divine providence with the deadline of the Second Coming.

Now, don't get me wrong. We weren't like these people that the book of James was written to – being persecuted and unjustly convicted in court and denied our wages so that our lives were threatened. Nothing like that. We weren't being tortured in some horrible prison like pastor Saeed and so many other Christians around the world. We were on vacation in a Caribbean paradise at an all-inclusive resort – so I don't want to overstate the suffering. But it is amazing how sometimes the smaller the suffering, the harder it is to remember biblical principles about suffering. And vacation can be one of the hardest times to put your hope in the Second Coming because vacation is a time when your expectations for comfort and ease in the problem-free life right now are the highest. On vacation we try to create our own little Second Coming, and we put our hope in that. But I can tell you from personal experience, right after spending a whole week at an all-inclusive resort in a tropical paradise, even in a place like that there is far more joy to be had in looking forward to the Second Coming than in the best this world has to offer.

So, what does that look like in practice? What is the difference between one Christian who is being patient until the Second Coming, and another Christian who is also waiting for the Second Coming, but he's not being patient? James gives us three examples to help us understand not only what this looks like, but how it's done – farmers, prophets, and Job. We will only have time for the first one today – the farmer.

Be Patient Like a Farmer

James 5:7 ... See, the farmer waits for the valuable crop of the land, being patient until he receives the early and late rains. 8 You too, be patient.

James commands us to imitate the patience of the farmer, and then he gives us some clues about how the farmer does it.

A Farmer Understands Delayed Payday

The farmer is the perfect illustration of someone who understands about a delayed payday. There are some of you who, as soon as you saw where this sermon was going you were disappointed. You want to

know how to deal with your anxiety over your current situation, and when you realized that the answer is, “Be patient until the Second Coming,” that wasn’t exactly the answer you wanted to hear.

“Sure, I understand that payday will come when Jesus returns, but that just seems so far off. What if I think about the Second Coming, but it doesn’t help? I don’t feel any better? I still have just as much anxiety?”

How is it possible to gain comfort and hope now from something that is potentially so far off in the future? It’s possible, if we learn to think like a farmer. No one has to wait longer in between paychecks than the farmer. No farmer puts seed in the ground on Monday and expects his paycheck on Wednesday. He doesn’t even expect one that Friday. He doesn’t get one after two weeks, after a month, after six months. The farmer gets one paycheck a year.

And yet, he doesn’t lose his motivation. If a long delay for payday reduces motivation, you would think farmers would be known for being the laziest, most unmotivated people there are. But it is just the opposite. Farmers are known for rising early and being some of the hardest workers in our society. Why? What enables them to stay so motivated by a reward that is so far in the future?

The Preciousness of the Crop

7 ...See, the farmer waits for the valuable crop

The NIV says **valuable crop**, your Bible might say **precious crop** – that is the word that is normally used to describe precious stones or precious metals. The point is that the farmer’s patience is connected to the value or preciousness of the crop. The reason he is willing to wait a whole year, and work hard that whole year, is because of how valuable the crop is. Yes, it’s only one paycheck per year, but it’s a big check. Can you imagine how hard you would work if you only got one paycheck a year, and that one paycheck was totally based on performance? When you only get one paycheck all year, there’s a lot riding on that one check. It’s everything. Most of us can get one bad paycheck and still do just fine. We make up for it the following week. But if a farmer misses a paycheck, he can’t recover from that. Everything is riding on that harvest.

When we aren’t encouraged or motivated by the Second Coming, the reason is very simple – we just aren’t convinced of its value. Either that or we have our hope in lesser things. We are fixated on the much smaller, partial resolutions to our problems. We have our hopes set on our own little imitation Second Coming. Or we do what the people in verses 1-6 did and we try to counteract the discomfort by immersing ourselves in luxury and self-indulgence. We don’t want to adjust to God’s timetable, so we come up with substitutes for the Second Coming. But the farmer doesn’t have that option. That harvest is everything, and so all he does is focused on that because there is no other paycheck for him.

Faithfulness of God

Thirdly, the farmer trusts in the faithfulness of God.

7 ...See, the farmer waits for the **valuable crop of the land, being patient with it until it receives the early and late rains.**

The early rains came in late October and early November. Over the summer the ground would become very hard and dry, and those early rains were essential to soften up the ground so that they could plow and plant the crops. They didn’t have modern machinery to break through hard ground. If those early rains were delayed, the chances of getting a decent crop were very much diminished. And if they didn’t come at all, they wouldn’t be able to plant at all.

After they planted, rain would fall all winter, but the most important factor was the late rains that came at the end of April and into May. Those rains, accompanied by warmer temperatures than in the winter, were crucial for the maturing of the crops. The longer they continued the greater the yield.

So why does James specify early and late rains? The word “rain” isn’t even in the Greek; it’s just implied. The emphasis on early and late - why? After God rescued His people from bondage in Egypt, He

brought them to the land of milk and honey and just before they went in this is what He told them about the land:

Deuteronomy 11:10 The land you are entering to take over is not like the land of Egypt, from which you have come, where you ... irrigated it by foot as in a vegetable garden. 11 But the land you are crossing the Jordan to take possession of is a land of mountains and valleys that drinks rain from heaven. 12 It is a land the LORD your God cares for; the eyes of the LORD your God are continually on it from the beginning of the year to its end. 13 So if you faithfully obey the commands I am giving you today—to love the LORD your God and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul—14 then I will send rain on your land in its season, both early and late rains, so that you may gather in your grain, new wine and oil.

Down in Egypt they have to manually water the crops by getting water from the Nile. But not in the Promised Land. This is a place **the LORD your God cares for**. You won't have to worry about irrigation, because God will faithfully send the early and late rains. Every reference to the early and late rains in the Old Testament occurs in a context affirming the faithfulness of God.³ So mentioning the early and late rains is a reference to the faithfulness of God to follow through on His promises of provision. The patience of the farmer is the kind of patience that bases his entire livelihood and wellbeing and survival on the faithfulness of God to do what He promised.

One of the best things you can ever do with the creation is to use it to teach yourself about the faithfulness of God. When someone is unfaithful or unreliable, you can't count on them getting something done. If you have a disobedient child, and you tell him to clean his room, then you come up an hour later, and you opened his door thinking, *What are the odds this room is going to be clean?* There's not one chance in 100. Have you ever had an employee or someone you worked with who, if you gave him an assignment, there's about a 50-50 chance that he will get it done? But what about God? If you got up early tomorrow morning and looked out to the east, what are the odds that the sun will come up? What are the chances that the moon will malfunction and pull the tides in the wrong direction? When was the last time you experienced rolling blackouts with gravity - the power of gravity just wasn't there for a little while because of high demand? If a wire doesn't have electricity, the electrician will tell you, "Either there's no power source, or the other end isn't grounded, or the wire is broken." But they will never say, "Maybe the properties of electricity are just having an off day."

"Maybe the laws of physics are corrupted and need to be rebooted."

The creation is such a marvelous, constant illustration of the reliability and faithfulness of God. And the farmer understands that. He bases his entire livelihood on it. Every year he takes all his wealth, converts it to seed, and goes outside and throws it in the dirt. Then he trusts God to do His thing. Farmers are able to put their hope in a delayed paycheck because they trust in the faithfulness of God. So if you want to be patient like a farmer, the next time you are suffering or have some problem, do this: spend some time thinking about what God is like. Read about His character on the pages of Scripture, and spend a lot of time just thinking about what He is like. And then ask yourself, "What would a Father like that do in a situation where one of His beloved children is suffering?" And you will be so sure that He will make it right, and that His timing will be so ideal, that the anxiety will go away. Being patient like a farmer means to be so confident in the Second Coming and the rewards He has promised us that we stop expecting payday to be right now, we stop expecting everything to even out today, we don't expect our problems to be resolved today, we realize it's only Wednesday morning, and yet still we are the hardest workers in the world because we have our eyes on the most precious reward, and we are fully confident in the faithfulness of the one who made the promises. Now, if you can get something resolved before the Second Coming without violating any biblical principles, do it. If you receive some injustice or some poor treatment, and there is something that can be done about it within the bounds of God's Word, it's fine to do that. You are not guilty of impatience if you hurry up and get something resolved the best you can in a biblical way. But when the solution to a problem is outside of your control, or it would require

³ Dt.11:14, Jer.5:24, Hos.6:3, Joel 2:23, Zech.10:1.

you to violate some biblical principle, that's when you need to get into farmer mode and patiently wait for God to bring the early and late rains.

Not Just Delay; Progress

And let me make one more observation. The farmer was patient through the early and late rains, because he understood that it was those rains that brought about the very thing he was waiting for. You see, it's not just that there was a delay. It was the things taking place during the delay that brought about the desired result. The farmer doesn't just say, "Twelve months and I get my paycheck." He understands that it is the things that happened during those 12 months – those early and late rains that bring about the paycheck.

We are not just waiting for the Second Coming. We are waiting for God to do His work. You're all upset about problems going on in your life, and you may be failing to realize that when you pray for resolution or relief, and God's answer is, "Wait," it's not just delay for the sake of delay. It is not meaningless, purposeless delay. It is God accomplishing His work and accomplishing the very things that need to be in place for the best possible resolution of that problem. Resolution isn't delayed – it is in progress. The things that bother us and distress us so much are the very things God is using to bring an end to all our distress.

2 Corinthians 4:17 For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.

The sufferings are the very things that are achieving the glory.

Resolution at the Second Coming

What Will Happen

So let's close our time by just thinking a bit about the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. You would be hard pressed to find a theme that it emphasized more often in the New Testament than the Second Coming of Christ. It is the constant focus. According to John Walvoord, one out of every 25 verses in the New Testament is a reference to the Second Coming. And there are another 1845 in the Old Testament. So it's difficult to summarize, but let me just give you a quick outline sketch. There will be a time of terrible trouble and persecution on the earth, many will be deceived and fall away,⁴ but the gospel will be proclaimed to all the nations,⁵ and the Jews will embrace Christ as their Messiah⁶ and say, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord."⁷ Then the trumpets (rams' horns) will sound and Jesus will appear in the sky with power and great glory.⁸ The dead in Christ will rise first, followed by believers who are still alive. We will all be given glorified bodies and will be caught up in the air by angels to meet the Lord Jesus Christ.⁹ And at that moment when we see Him in His full glory, we will instantly be transformed to become like Him.¹⁰

And the entire human race – everyone who has ever lived, will see Him and will be stunned by His glory.¹¹ Every knee will bow, and every tongue confess that He is Lord.¹² And not only will we marvel at

⁴ Mt.24:5-13.

⁵ Mt.24:14.

⁶ Ro.11:25-27.

⁷ Mt.23:39.

⁸ Mt.24:30.

⁹ 1 Thes.4:16-17.

¹⁰ 1 Jn.3:2.

¹¹ Rev.1:7-8.

¹² Php.1:9-11.

Him, but Scripture says He will be glorified in us.¹³ God the Father will turn us into such a glorious entourage that it will increase the glorious appearing of the Lord Jesus. At that point Jesus will overthrow the Antichrist with the breath of His mouth.¹⁴

This will happen suddenly, on a day we do not expect.¹⁵ Alistair Begg: "People will be having their weddings that day. ... People will be planning a visit for a root canal that day. People will be dropping their children off at school on that day the way they did on the previous day and the way they expect to do on the following day, but there will be no following day." It will be the last day in this world. Jesus will completely destroy this current world with fire, and make a new heavens and a new earth.¹⁶ And the curse will be gone forever.¹⁷ Jesus referred to that day as **the renewal of all things**.¹⁸ Jesus will then sit down on His great throne and judge every human being who has ever lived. Those who were ready for His coming will be blessed with eternal rewards. Those who were not ready will be sent to eternal punishment.¹⁹ On that day, all wrongs and all injustices will be made right.²⁰ Everyone who received injustice will be given justice.

Better than Heaven

That is what we are all waiting for. And here is what you need to understand – that day will be better than Heaven. Sometimes Christians can fall into the mode of just looking for the day when they will die and go to heaven. They think, "When I die, all my suffering will be over. Every tear will be wiped away. No more disease, no more suffering, no trouble, no injustice, no pain, no death – and I will be in paradise in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ forever. So why wouldn't I look forward to that as my hope? Why not look to the day when I die and go to heaven as my hope?" It would be fine to look to that as your hope if you were the only person in the world, and your comfort were the only thing that mattered. But the reality is, when I die and go to heaven, and all my suffering is over – yours will still exist. People in this congregation who are weeping over terrible heartbreaks, will still be weeping. Women will still be being beaten by their husbands, and children being abused by their parents. ISIS will still be beheading people. And most of all, the Lord Jesus Christ will still be being dishonored by billions of people every day.

When you die, will your suffering be over? Yes, but that won't be enough. Will you be full of joy – more than you've ever known in this life? Yes, but that's not enough either. It will be a lot of joy, but not the greatest joy. The greatest joy will come when the Lord Jesus Christ is fully glorified. The kind of joy you were designed for will come when every creature in the universe is enthusiastically shouting His praises.

When you get to heaven, and you are in paradise with Christ, that will be the happiest you have ever been, but you are still going to want more. You are going to want history to come to fruition. You are going to want all wrongs to be made right. Even in heaven, where there is no sadness or sorrow or pain or suffering, still, we will be longing for something greater. In Revelation 6, when the fifth seal is opened, John shows us the souls of Christians who have died and gone to heaven.

Revelation 6:10 They called out in a loud voice, "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?" 11 ... and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed.

¹³ 2 Thes.1:10.

¹⁴ 2 Thes.2:8.

¹⁵ Mt.24:36-44.

¹⁶ 2 Pe.3:10-13.

¹⁷ Ro.8:21, Rev.22:3.

¹⁸ Mt.19:28.

¹⁹ Mt.24:45-25:46, Lk.12:35-48, Rev.16:15.

²⁰ Lk.18:8, 2 Thes.1:7-10.

God isn't going to be satisfied with you just being pain free in paradise with Christ. He wants to give you a much greater joy than just that. He wants you to have the joy of seeing His Son fully glorified and honored by all. He wants you to have the joy of knowing all wrongs have been punished, and all injustices have been made right. The joy of your suffering being over is one thing, but the joy of knowing everyone's unjust suffering is over – that will be a far greater joy. And greater still will be the joy of seeing the unveiling of the full glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. God the Father is going to put on a display beyond anything you could ever imagine. Take the best magic show you've ever seen, the most spectacular performance you've ever seen, the most breathtaking cinematography, laser show, the most mind-blowing concert, fireworks show, the most thrilling adrenaline rush you have ever had – put it all together and it won't begin to approach the amazement you will feel at the outer fringe of the display of what the Father is going to do to glorify the Son. Some people wonder if they will get bored in heaven. You probably would eventually, if all it were was just the elimination of suffering. Infinite, unending, ever-increasing joy requires something much more profound than just non-suffering and physical pleasure. More profound than painlessness, more profound than personal pleasures, deeper than any joy any of us have ever known – a joy so deep and so profound that even when you are in paradise with Christ you will be eagerly looking forward to it. Especially since not only will we see the Son of God fully glorified, but we ourselves will share in His glory!

Romans 8:17 ... we are heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. 18 ... our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. 19 The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. 20 For the creation was subjected to frustration ... in hope 21 that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. 22 We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. 23 Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

– and that will happen, not when we die and go to heaven, but at the Second Coming.

Rewards

That day will also be a day of rewards. And the stronger your faith, the more those rewards will excite and motivate you.

2 Timothy 4:8 Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

Description

We usually think about the Second Coming from the perspective of being on earth at the time. But think what it will be like if you die first. Imagine this: You are in paradise, you've been there maybe a couple hundred years, and one day you are in the room that Jesus spent so much time preparing for you, and you hear a commotion so you go outside to check it out. People are rushing around everywhere, there are more angels out than you have ever seen at one time before, and there are these gigantic, huge heavenly beings that you have never even seen before. They are so massive and so glorious that they take your breath away, which is really saying something given the fact that you've been in heaven for 200 years. Although it's no big surprise, because there is always something new up there – every day. But these things – they are just awesome. They have these massive ram's horns, and you can tell they were created to blow those things – they had these gigantic, heaving lungs. As soon as you see those shofars, you know what's going on. *This is the day!* The Father gave the word. He told the Son – it's time!

The King is in the palace getting all dressed. The preparations are a lot like a big wedding. But it is far more elaborate and spectacular than all the wedding celebrations that have ever happened all

combined. The preparations are so extensive that you find yourself just boiling with excited anticipation. You feel like singing, but you want to save your voice for the big event.

And then it happens. Those ram's horns sound their blast and it instantly sends chills all through your whole being. But ... you are hearing it from above you. You suddenly find yourself in your grave – but alive and well with a new, glorified, physical body. You have flesh and bone again – the same body you had 200 years ago, and yet so different. You can feel it – it is not corruptible. It is not ever going to wear out or become unhealthy in any way. You have amazing strength and energy. You feel so good, and now you're rocketing upward – along with millions of other believers who are also being resurrected. And you think, *This is it! This is the resurrection of the righteous!* You look down and below you are coming all the Christians who were still alive on earth. Now they also have glorified bodies. In a moment, everyone meets together in the air – all believers who have ever lived. But those millions seem like a small group when you see the ocean of angels and other heavenly beings going before Him. Incalculable billions, every one of them shouting at the top of their lungs. And that is just the first wave.

Thousands more of those waves come, and then ... you look ... and *there He is*. You gasp for breath, and immediately tears well up in your eyes. You thought you loved Him before. You thought you knew what it was like to be staggered by His glory before. But this – words can't express it – not even close. You think, "It feels like I've never experienced joy before. This is something that's so far beyond what I've ever known even in heaven."

And then, as the people begin to catch their breath, the shouts and praises begin. No one, anywhere, in all of creation, is dishonoring the Lord Jesus Christ.

Revelation 5:13 Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing: "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!"

You just can't believe how good it feels to see Him honored like this, and the excitement of all the shouting gives you a surge of adrenaline that's unlike anything you have ever experienced.

Next comes the judgment. All wrongs are made right. Then the rewards. The Father astonishes you with kindness and generosity to the point where you almost feel bad accepting the incredible gifts He is giving you, but you can see how happy He is in your happiness as you receive them. They aren't the kind of things you just look at and hang on your wall. They are just the perfect things for you. You are so excited to take them home and get started on them. It almost feels like eternity might not be long enough to really, fully enjoy them.

But you don't want to go do that now, because you can't stop watching the happiness of one saint after another receiving their rewards. You have never been around so much laughter and joy, and you think, *I hope this never ends*. And it never will.

If you are a believer, that is what you have in your future. So tell me again what this big problem is that you think has to be taken care of right now? What is this situation or person you can't be patient with? What is the crisis or loss that is so heartbreaking that you've lost your hope? It is not even worthy to be compared with what God has in store for you.²¹

Benediction: Revelation 22:1 Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb 2 down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. 3 No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. 4 They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. 5 There will be no more

²¹ Ro.8:18.

night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever...

12 “Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done. 13 I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. 14 “Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city. 15 Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood. 16 “I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star.” 17 The Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let him who hears say, “Come!” Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life...

20 He who testifies to these things says, “Yes, I am coming soon.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

Application Questions (James 1:25)

- 1) Of the various aspects of the Second Coming described in Scripture, which do you find most exciting, motivating, or encouraging?
- 2) In which kinds of situations do you find it most difficult to be patient?
- 3) Scripture speaks of the Second Coming and then commands us, “Therefore encourage each other with these words” (1 Thes.4:18). Name a few people in your life that you think the Lord would have you encourage with words about the Second Coming.