

**I Believe... So Now What?**  
**(Week 10)**  
**James 5:7-11**  
**“Maranatha”**

**Introduction**

**“He Who testifies about these things says, ‘Yes, I AM coming soon.’  
 Amen! Come, LORD Jesus!”**

**Revelation 22:20**

For centuries the Jewish people have greeted each other in the Hebrew tongue with the word “*Shalom*” meaning peace. It was meant as a way of greeting one another with a blessing, and what better blessing could a person have than that of God’s perfect peace? However, when Christ ascended into heaven with the promise of His imminent return (**Acts 9:11**), many departed from their traditional Jewish faith and trusted in Jesus. As a result they found themselves being ostracized from their communities and even their own families. No longer were those who put their faith in Christ treated with “*shalom*” by their unbelieving neighbors. In fact, they were met with bitter hostility. Those early followers of Christ were despised by everyone, both Roman and Jews alike. The persecution of the early Church is well documented. It was a dark time, when believers desperately needed to be encouraged.

In an effort to strengthen one another in the face of harsh persecution and the continuous pressure from the Roman government to deny their faith, those believers changed their traditional greeting of *Shalom* to “*Maranatha*”, which simply means “*The LORD is coming*”. They used the word to say both “hello” and “goodbye”, in order to encourage one another to hold on to the faith, for Jesus would soon return and set things right. And so, *Maranatha* became the “battle cry” of the bitterly embattled first century church. The word is found only one time in *The New Testament* in which Paul reminds those who **reject** the faith that they will one day find themselves “ostracized” when The LORD returns:

**“If any man love not the LORD Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha.”**

**1 Corinthians 16:22 (KJV)**

You see, as Christians we do hold on to the faith that Jesus will one day return for His Bride, The Church. It is this steadfast hope that keeps us strong as we face difficult times. We, like the early Church, remind one another of this truth often. We speak of it at the gravesides of our loved ones, who have gone on before us. We speak of it, when we look around and see the moral decay that is so prevalent in our society. We speak of it, as we try to warn those who do not believe. We speak of it, because we have been assured by The Word of God that Jesus is coming soon!

Jesus came to this earth in His first appearing as the meek and gentle Lamb of God, but He will return as The Lion of Tribe of Judah. He will come in power and splendor, and those who have rejected His offer of salvation and have mistreated His people will be filled with fear and dread at the very sight of Him!

**“Then I saw heaven opened, and there was a white horse. Its rider is called Faithful and True, and He judges and makes war with justice. His eyes were like a fiery flame and many crowns were on His head. He had a name written that no one knows except Himself. He wore a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called the Word of God. The armies that were in heaven followed Him on white horses, wearing pure white linen. A sharp sword came from His mouth, so that He might strike the nations with it. He will rule them with an iron rod. He will also trample the winepress of the fierce anger of God, The Almighty. And He has a name written on His robe and on His thigh: KING OF KINGS and LORD OF LORDS.”**

**Revelation 19:11-16**

This passage, by The Apostle John, is describing the triumphant return of our LORD. It reassures us that *Maranatha* (The LORD is coming again). James also, as he nears the conclusion of his letter, reminds his readers to make themselves ready for the day of Christ’s return. He admonishes those of us who call ourselves “His Bride” to be: **Patient, Prepared, and Positive** as we await the glorious return of our LORD Jesus Christ.

**Be Patient (vs. 7-8a)**

**“Therefore, brothers and sisters, be patient until the LORD’S coming. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth and is patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains. You also must be patient...”** **James 5:7-8a**

Remember, James has just been talking about how the members of his church have been persecuted and taken advantage of by the rich. He warned, those who would take advantage of the less fortunate would soon face judgment. Now he is speaking directly to Christians. He uses the word “Brethren” (*adelphos* in the Greek) three separate times in **verses 7-11**. He encourages believers to patiently endure the trials that they are suffering and not to lose heart (or their tempers for that matter). As he has said previously, **“Man’s anger does not bring about God’s righteousness” (1:20)**. God saw all that they were going through, and He would surely set things right in His own good time. Those who are persecuted must patiently endure and hold fast to their faith with joy (**James 1:2**) for God is in control, and He will reward those who patiently wait for Him.

James describes the patient way in which we must wait upon The LORD. The word he uses that is translated “patient” is “*makrothumeo*” in the Greek, and it literally means to be “long-fused” (the opposite of quick-tempered). The Believer should never be quick to anger, but rather, we must be ever mindful that God is in control, and He will see to it that justice is done. We must learn to wait upon God to reward His own, just as the farmer waits for his harvest, knowing that the rains that fall are necessary for his crops to grow into maturity.

In Palestine, crops were planted in what we would call the “fall of the year”, while the Harvest came in late spring. The crops would be planted late, at the times of the “early rains”. These rainy days were necessary in order for the young seeds to germinate and grow. When the crops were nearing the harvest time of spring, yet another annual rainy season would arrive, known as “the latter rains”. These rains would arrive in perfect timing to ripen the crops for the harvest. Both of those rainy seasons were vital, and the farmer had to patiently endure them, or he would never see the reward of the harvest. James is telling us to patiently endure the trials that we must face for they too, like those rains, are bringing us to maturity for harvest time. When Christ returns to “harvest” His Church, we will be glad that we endured the hardships and kept the faith. Just like the patient farmer who awaits the proper time for the harvest, we shall be rewarded when Christ comes again... if we do not lose heart!

**Be Prepared (vs. 8)**

**“You also must be patient. Strengthen your hearts, because The LORD’S coming is near.”** **James 5:8**

In His parable of the “Ten Virgins” (**Matthew 25:1-13**), Jesus gives an illustration of those who are not prepared to meet Him when He returns. There were ten bridesmaids in the story waiting patiently for the groom to come and claim his chosen bride. Five of them had purchased enough olive oil for their lamps to be able to burn as long as it took. Jesus likens those who are not so well prepared for the grooms return to the five bridesmaids who forgot to get oil for their lamps on the eve of a wedding feast. The groom was late in arriving, and the hapless bridesmaids ran out of oil for their lamps. Therefore, they would have been unable to take part in the wedding processional. They had been given ample opportunity to buy oil, but because they had not counted upon the groom arriving so late in the day, they were caught off guard. When the groom’s arrival was finally announced, it was much too late for those foolish bridesmaids to purchase oil, for the merchant shops were all closed, so they were left behind. No one knows the hour that Jesus will return (**Matthew 24:36**), so we must be prepared for it all all times.

James tells us that we must “strengthen our hearts” for the coming of The LORD (**vs. 8**). The word “strengthen” is “*sterizo*”, and it is a word that a soldier might use as he “steadies himself” for battle. James is telling us to “brace ourselves” or “set fast” our hearts to the coming of The LORD. We must continue to remind ourselves that Jesus is coming soon and live as though we truly believe it. A Child of God should be in constant preparedness and expectation for Christ to return at any moment. Is this how you are living your life today? Do you constantly remind yourself that Jesus may be here at any time?

This is why the Believers in James' day always said hello and goodbye with the words, "*The LORD is coming!*" Maybe it is something that we need to start doing again. Fix your mind on the return of Christ Jesus, and you will never be caught unprepared. Jesus could come back at any day now. Are you prepared to meet Him?

### **Be Positive (5:9-11)**

**"Brothers and sisters, do not complain about one another, so that you will not be judged. Look, the judge stands at the door! Brothers and sisters, take the prophets who spoke in The LORD'S name as an example of suffering and patience. See, we count as blessed those who have endured. You have heard of Job's endurance and have seen the outcome that The LORD brought about—The LORD is compassionate and merciful."**  
**James 5:9-11**

James charges his readers not to "complain" about one another. A better translation of the text would be do not "*murmur*" against one another. This takes us back to James' earlier instructions about controlling the tongue. There is nothing more destructive than a complainer. It seems that these people are always around doesn't it? Remember the children of Israel in the wilderness? They were constantly murmuring against Moses, against God. When God finally decided that He'd heard enough, He banished them from the Promised Land and condemned them to die in the wilderness. God is not a fan of murmuring.

If we are to truly live as though Christ could come back at any moment, then we will control how we speak of others. This lost world could do with a lot more "positive" people, it already has enough negativity. Have you ever known a Believer in Christ that was always a great source of encouragement? I love being around those people! They keep me from giving up. It seems that they just have a knack for saying the right word of encouragement, just when I need it the most. Can I get a witness? Just last week, I was feeling a little down and discouraged about something, and when I got to the church, one of our own "encouragers" walked up to me and said just exactly what I needed to hear. They didn't even know it, but just their words put me in the right frame of mind to get up and preach!

On the other hand, there are plenty of those out there who have an uncanny ability to just obliterate every ounce of joy that you have in you. Again, can I get a witness? They are like professional grade "joy suckers", who always have just the right words to bring you down. James says that we don't really need any more of those in the Church, and I say **amen!** Let's face it. Life is hard enough without having to listen to the murmurers. If we truly believe that Christ will soon return, or as James says, our judge is "standing at the door", then let us stop trying to discourage people and **encourage** them instead. Let's be like the first century church, who encouraged each other with "Maranatha, it's gonna be alright! Jesus will be here soon!"

James tells us that when we are discouraged, we should remember the prophets of *The Old Testament*. I mean **nobody** really liked those guys, and very few people ever truly listened to them. They just kept faithfully proclaiming God's truth, no matter what. They knew without a shadow of a doubt that God would keep His Word, even when no one else around them believed it. Some of them were even killed or exiled for their preaching, but they faithfully kept on going, knowing that God was faithful. We should look to these men as our examples when the murmurers try to steal our joy!

The last example that James gives to emphasize his point is that of Job. Job is most likely the oldest book in *The Bible*. It is about a devout man of faith, who did his very best to please God. And God allowed him to be tested more severely than most if us could ever hope to endure. Job couldn't understand why God would allow such terrible things to happen to him. He questioned God, but he never lost his faith. In one day, Job lost his children and all that he possessed in this world, and do you know how he responded? *The Bible* says that when he heard the news about his tragic losses he...  
**worshipped!**

**"Then Job stood up, tore his robe, and shaved his head. He fell to the ground and worshipped, saying: 'Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will leave this life. The LORD gives, and The LORD takes away. Blessed be the Name of The LORD.'"**  
**Job 1:20-21**

Now THAT my friends, is enduring faith. Job wasn't happy about his circumstances, but he didn't give up on the goodness of God. And that is exactly how we are supposed to wait upon The LORD. We trust Him **in all things**, knowing that He will be faithful and just in the end. Do you believe that Jesus wants the best for you, even when it seems like the very worst is happening? That is what true faith looks like. Job endured his trials, and in the end... he was blessed for it; just as we shall be, if we patiently wait upon The LORD. Maranatha, The LORD is coming! Even so, come LORD Jesus! Would that when He returns, He would find us, His bride: **Patient, Prepared, and Positive!**

And ALL of God's people said... **TRUTH!!!**