

## God Moves in a Mysterious Way, William Cowper

1. God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform;  
He plants His footsteps in the sea and rides upon the storm.
2. Deep in unfathomable mines of never failing skill  
He treasures up His bright designs and works His sov'reign will.
3. Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;  
The clouds ye so much dread are big with mercy and shall break  
In blessings on your head.
4. Judge not the Lord by feeble sense, but trust Him for His grace;  
Behind a frowning providence He hides a smiling face.
5. His purposes will ripen fast, unfolding every hour;  
The bud may have a bitter taste, But sweet will be the flow'r.
6. Blind unbelief is sure to err and scan His work in vain;  
God is His own interpreter, And He will make it plain.

### COMPLETING THE SERMON

- Buchanan suggests reading the text in Acts 2 & 4 along side those in Hebrews (10:25; 13:5, 9, 17). What conclusions might you draw from this comparison?
- What do you think the author's key concerns for his audience are in writing this letter? How might some of those concerns relate to concerns we might have in our own lives?
- Of the 3 different descriptions of seeds among soils in the parable (Luke 8) that initially receive the message of the kingdom, what separates the one that bears fruit from the ones that don't?
- What is the controlling metaphor of the book of Hebrews regarding the life of faith? (Explain.) How does this relate to your own walk of faith? Our own walk of faith?
- Why is prayer an essential means of grace to conquer the problem of waning kingdom vision?
- Why should we consider fellowship with the church body an increasing means of grace to overcome waning kingdom vision?
- How does the truth that *the God who raises the dead is working in us* (13:20-21) give us hope even in times of waning vision?

## Advancing the Gospel of the Kingdom: *The Waxing and Waning of God's Kingdom Vision*

Jerry Cisar — January 30, 2022

Text: Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-35

### Introduction

"It's funny, but the older I get and the longer I'm in ministry, the more naive and idealistic I become, at least in some areas. For sure, in other areas I'm more cynical and pessimistic now than ever... I more and more believe that the church can look and sound and believe and act like the church did two thousand years ago, when the Spirit first fell like fire and came like a hurricane, and everyone liked everyone else, and shared as anyone had need, and bystanders rushed to become participants. I not only believe that this is possible; I believe it's normative. It's the way it's supposed to be." (Your Church is Too Safe, 144-5)

*This glorious vision for the church waxes and wanes in the hearts of God's people in the long marathon of faith.*

### I. A Parable about Waxing and Waning

- A. Three soils initially receive the message with joy!
  - B. Two who lose that vision are:
    - i. Those who are on the rock.
    - ii. Those among thorns.
  - C. This parable posits a vineyard in which, amid the various sprouts, the vision of the kingdom will wax and wane.

## II. A Case Study of Waning Vision

### A. Hebrews was not sent to a church freshly on fire for God!

- i. They needed one thing to bear fruit (Heb. 10:36).
- ii. The author's main concern for these believers was that they were in danger of bailing on their faith. (Heb. 3:6b)
- iii. The author's primary metaphor is of a *journey* through a desert wilderness, a land filled with trials and testing. The author is concerned that
  - a) they might be hardened by sin's deceitfulness and lose their original joyous confidence (3:13-14).
  - b) Warnings against falling away (6:4-8; 10:26-31)
  - c) Hebrews 10:24-25
    - Contrast that with Acts 2:46 and 3:32.
  - d) Chapter 11 is all about how others have journeyed by faith, the finish line not being crossed until a future day.
  - e) Chapter 12: The race marked out for us (Heb. 12:1-3)
- iv. The conclusion to the book of Hebrews hints at some of the symptoms which concerned the author.
  - a) "Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body." (13:3)
  - b) Sexual temptation (13:4)
  - c) Contrast 13:5 with Acts 2:42-47 & 4:32-35.
  - d) Is there waning devotion to the apostolic teaching? (13:7-9)

e) Bearing reproach and a continual sacrifice of praise (13:13-16; see also 12:12-15)

f) A final warning about the fruit of waning vision (Heb. 13:17)

## III. Grace to Overcome Waning Vision

- A. We have access through prayer to the mercy and grace we need to help us (Heb. 4:16!)
  - i. Prayer is the only way not to fall into the besetting sins that knock us off the course (Matt. 26:41).
  - ii. Luke 22:32
- B. The grace we need comes from Christ himself and follows us through the wilderness.
  - i. Fix your eyes on Jesus (12:1-2)
  - ii. A cure for faint-heartedness (12:3)
  - iii. God is actually treating us like sons and daughters. Forming us into the image of His Son (12:5-11).
- C. One another (10:24-25)
  - i. As we get closer to the coming of Christ, the need for encouragement to run the race increases.
  - ii. We are called to stir one another up to love and good works.
- D. The source of cure for waning vision is God Himself (13:20-21).