

Better Days Coming  
(from Winter 2020 Newsletter)

You probably don't need to be reminded of all the rough days we faced in 2020. But I read some things in my morning quiet times the past couple of months that helped me with this, and I wanted to share them in hopes that they may benefit you as well.

The difficult days we've been having are one thing that got me to reading the Old Testament prophecies that talk about better days to come. They speak about a time of deliverance or salvation, peace, joy, righteousness, justice, and fear of the Lord. We realize we now live in the times of fulfillment of these promises, but still some aspects of these passages are difficult for us to understand. Yet one promise about these days that is exceedingly clear and important is that God said he was going to give his Spirit to all his people (Isaiah 32:14-15; Ezekiel 36:27; Joel 2:28; cf. Acts 2:33, 39).

In my reading over the last couple months, I realized the importance of the promise of the Spirit more clearly. The Spirit is not merely a "cool" blessing of the better days that have now come. Rather, he is able to bring about the very things that God said would characterize those better days, such as righteousness, peace, and joy (Romans 14:17). In fact, the portrait of what the Spirit produces, as Paul paints it in Galatians 5:22-23, displays a way of life that is very compatible with what the prophecies predicted God was going to bring about. All this is true even if the Messiah didn't deliver them from the Romans or doesn't deliver us from the externals that are plaguing us.

Just what it means to live by the Spirit is still not as clear to me as I'd like. But I pursued it again over the last couple months and was reminded that we are not to rebel against, grieve, quench, or resist the Spirit. Instead we are to keep in step with him (Galatians 5:25). That includes at least following the good desires he gives us (Galatians 5:16-18) and setting our minds on the things of the Spirit (Romans 8:5-8). Much more could be said about living by the Spirit, of course, but those passages give me at least two specific ways of doing so.

The zeal of the Lord of Hosts has fulfilled the prophecies through Christ and His Spirit. Better days are possible even if He does not remove all the "enemies" that plague us most. One way I'm trying to cooperate with God's work in hopes that the better days may be "more better" in fact, is to learn to live by the Spirit. I'm consciously acting on the good desires he gives me and trying to comply with his work of renewing my mind.