

**HWMR: CRYSTALLIZATION-STUDY OUTLINES FIRST AND SECOND CHRONICLES, EZRA, NEHEMIAH, AND ESTHER, (Week 12)**

*Scripture Reading: Isa. 45:15; Eph. 3:16-17; Phil. 2:13; Luke 18:1-8*

**A GOD WHO HIDES HIMSELF—THE HIDDEN GOD**

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| Isaiah 45:15     | Surely You are a God who hides Himself, / O God of Israel, the Savior.  |
| Ephesians 3:16   | That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit into the inner man,           |
| Ephesians 3:17   | That Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith, that you, being rooted and grounded in love,                                      |
| Philippians 2:13 | For it is God who operates in you both the willing and the working for His good pleasure.   |
| Luke 18:1        | And He told them a parable to the end that they ought always to pray and not lose heart,  |
| Luke 18:2        | Saying, There was a certain judge in a certain city who did not fear God and did not regard man.  |
| Luke 18:3        | And there was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him, saying, Avenge me of my opponent.   |
| Luke 18:4        | And for a time he would not; but afterward he said within himself, Even though I do not fear God nor regard man,                              |
| Luke 18:5        | Yet because this widow causes me trouble, I will avenge her, lest by continually coming she wear me out.                                      |
| Luke 18:6        | And the Lord said, Hear what the unrighteous judge says.  |
| Luke 18:7        | And will not God by all means carry out the avenging of His chosen ones, who cry to Him day and night, though He is long-suffering over them? |
| Luke 18:8        | I tell you that He will carry out their avenging quickly. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?           |

**Day 1**

*Isaiah 45:15* - Surely You are a God who hides Himself, / O God of Israel, the Savior.

*John 1:18* - No one has ever seen God; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.

**I. “Surely You are a God who hides Himself, / O God of Israel, the Savior”—Isa. 45:15:**

- A. Hardly any of God’s children know that the Bible speaks of God as a **God who hides Himself**—v. 15:
  - 1. This proves that God’s children do not have an adequate knowledge of God as the **One who hides Himself**.
  - 2. We may know God as the mighty God, the righteous God, and the God who is full of grace and lovingkindness; however, we may not know God as the **God who hides Himself**—Luke 1:49; 1 Pet. 5:6; Rev. 15:3; Eph. 2:7; Psalms 17:7.
- B. Although our God is omnipresent, omnipotent, and full of forgiveness, He is also the **hiding God**, as the book of Esther indicates—4:14.

- C. God created the universe and then **hid Himself** within it, until we do not know where to find Him—Job 23:3.
- D. God did countless things in the midst of the children of Israel and countless things in their personal lives, yet He **concealed Himself**; He was ceaselessly working, yet He was always hidden—Isa. 45:15.

Even though our God is a living God, His disposition is to **hide Himself**. Throughout the Old Testament, from Genesis to Malachi, God was hidden from man. In the New Testament, God came down from the heavens to the earth in order to manifest Himself so that man would know Him, but He **concealed** Himself in human flesh. He was manifested yet concealed, such that man could not recognize Him. God is a living God, but we cannot see Him, because He is a **God who hides Himself**. He desires to express His glory, but unlike many who like to make a show of the things they have done, **He will not make a show**. Concerning the Lord, the prophet Isaiah says, “He will not cry out, nor lift up His voice, / Nor make His voice heard in the street. / A bruised reed He will not break; / And a dimly burning flax He will not extinguish” (42:2-3). This prophecy shows that He is a God who hides Himself.

Many people often ask why the living God does not discipline people who act recklessly and lawlessly and do works of unrighteousness. Even believers question why the living God does not seem to hear their prayers. The answer is simple: **He is a God who hides Himself**. When the Lord Jesus was crucified, God hid Himself. He did not judge the ones who crucified the Lord by striking them with lightning. God did not say a word; it was as if God did not exist. Hence, some of those present shook their heads and mocked the Lord. They said, “He trusts in God; let Him rescue Him now if He wants Him” (Matt. 27:43). The Lord Jesus trusted in God, but while He was hanging on the cross, it was as if there were no God in the universe. **God was hidden when the Lord passed through this great trial.**

It is a blessing to believe in the living God. He is our life and our all; hence, we have set our hope in Him. **He is a God who hides Himself, but He is also a God who makes all things manifest.** No wonder the psalmist says, “My soul thirsts for God, / For the living God... / The salvation of my countenance” (Psa. 42:2, 11). The living God is awesome to those who mock Him. There is nothing that He does not search. There are no hidden thoughts, secret intentions, or dark deeds that He will not make manifest. Let me repeat, God is not mocked. Our God is a consuming fire, and it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. May we live in Him and let Him live in us. May we also daily learn to **trust** in Him, **wait** on Him, **love** Him, **obey** His shining, **accept** His dealing, and **walk** before Him. (*The Living God and the God of Resurrection, chapter 1*)

## Day 2

*Matthew 6:1*

- But take care not to do your righteousness before men in order to be gazed at by them; otherwise, you have no reward with your Father who is in the heavens.

*Matthew 6:3-4*

- But you, when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, So that your alms may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will repay you.

*Matthew 6:6*

- But you, when you pray, enter into your private room, and shut your door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will repay you.

- E. We need to realize that the omnipotent God whom we are serving is **still hiding Himself**, especially when He is helping us—John 14:26; Rom. 8:28:
  1. We cannot see Him, and apparently, He is not doing anything.

2. Actually, **in a hidden way He is doing many things for us**, as He is strengthening us with power through His Spirit into the inner man so that Christ may make His home in our hearts—vv. 28, 34; Esth. 4:14; Phil. 2:13; Eph. 3:16-17a.
- F. The God who hides Himself is **operating within us silently yet mightily**—Phil. 2:13:
  1. Our responsibility is to **cooperate with Him** by responding to the inner sense deep within us—Rom. 8:6.
  2. Whenever we sense God living and acting within us, we should say Amen, for there, in the depths of our being, secretly and ceaselessly the **God who hides Himself is working**.
- G. If we study the Scriptures carefully, we will see that God has the kind of temperament that dislikes ostentation; **He likes to work secretly** rather than openly—Matt. 6:1-8.
- H. Our disposition is diametrically opposed to God's disposition, a disposition that hides itself—Isa. 45:15:
  1. God likes **concealment**; we like **display**—Matt. 6:1.
  2. God **does not** crave outward manifestations; we **cannot be content without** them—v. 2.
  3. This divine disposition constitutes a great trial and test to us.

### Day 3

*Ephesians 4:14* - That we may be no longer little children tossed by waves and carried about by every wind of teaching in the sleight of men, in craftiness with a view to a system of error,

*Esther 4:16* - Go; assemble all the Jews who are to be found in Susa, and fast for me; and do not eat or drink for three days, night or day; I also and my maids will fast in the same way. And so will I go in to the king, which is not according to the law; and if I perish, I perish.

## II. The book of Esther supplies a vivid record of how the hiding God of Israel **secretly took care** of His oppressed elect in their dispersion and **openly saved** His persecuted elect in their captivity—1:1-22; 2:1-23:

- A. The crucial point of this book is that the very God who chose Israel, the descendants of Abraham, as His elect, after He gave them into captivity to the Gentile nations, became a hidden God to them to **take care of them secretly and save them openly** while acting in secrecy—Isa. 45:15:
  1. This is the reason that the book of Esther does not mention the name of God even in places when the name of God should be mentioned—4:3, 16.
  2. On the one hand, God used the Gentile nations as tools to **discipline** His people; on the other hand, the hiding God was with the people of Israel, **caring** for them.
- B. The hiding God did many things for Israel in a secret way:
  1. The hiding God established a top king in the Gentile world in power over a great empire extending from India to Ethiopia—1:1-2.
  2. The hiding God caused the top king to depose his queen because of her disobedience to his word—vv. 3-22.
  3. In His secret care the hiding God raised up Esther, a Jewish orphan virgin, to be crowned by the top king as his queen—2:1-18.
- C. During the years of the captivity, God was hiding, and **He is still hiding**; even today in the church age, God is hiding Himself—Isa. 45:15.

#### Day 4

*Luke 18:1-3 - And He told them a parable to the end that they ought always to pray and not lose heart, Saying, There was a certain judge in a certain city who did not fear God and did not regard man. And there was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him, saying, Avenge me of my opponent.*

### III. The significance of the parable in Luke 18:1-8 is profound, and we need to know God as He is revealed, as the **hidden God**:

- A. The **widow** in verse 3 signifies the **believers**; in a sense, the believers in Christ are a widow in the present age because their Husband, Christ, is apparently absent from them—2 Cor. 11:2.
- B. Like the widow in the parable (Luke 18:3), we believers in Christ have an opponent, Satan the devil, concerning whom we need God's avenging:
  - 1. This parable indicates the **suffering** we have from our opponent during the Lord's apparent absence.
  - 2. During His apparent absence, we are a widow whose opponent is **troubling her all the time**.

#### Day 5

*Luke 18:7-8 - And will not God by all means carry out the avenging of His chosen ones, who cry to Him day and night, though He is long-suffering over them? I tell you that He will carry out their avenging quickly. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?*

- C. While our opponent is persecuting us, it seems that our God is not righteous, for He allows His children to be **unrighteously persecuted**—1 Pet. 2:20; 3:14, 17; 4:13-16, 19:
  - 1. Throughout the centuries, thousands upon thousands of honest and faithful followers of the Lord Jesus have suffered unrighteous persecution; **even today many are undergoing unrighteous treatment**—Rev. 2:8-10.
  - 2. Our God seems to be unjust, since He does not come in to judge and vindicate; because of this situation, the Lord Jesus used an unjust judge to signify God, who does not seem to do anything on behalf of His persecuted people—Luke 18:2-6.
- D. The widow in the parable kept coming to the unrighteous judge and asking him to avenge her of her opponent; we ought to **pray persistently** for this avenging and should not lose heart—vv. 1, 3:
  - 1. When our Husband is apparently absent and we are left on earth as a widow, temporarily our God seems to be an unrighteous judge—v. 6.
  - 2. Although He appears to be unrighteous, we still must appeal to Him, pray persistently, and bother Him again and again, for He will carry out quickly the avenging of His chosen ones, who “cry to Him day and night”—vv. 7-8a.

In the parable concerning persisting prayer in Luke 18:1-8 the unrighteous judge refers to the righteous God. The “widow” in verse 3 signifies the **believers**. In a sense, the believers in Christ are a widow in the present age because their husband Christ is absent from them. The believers in Christ also have an opponent, Satan the Devil, concerning whom we need God’s avenging. **We ought to pray persistently for this avenging and not lose heart.** Verse 8 indicates that God’s avenging of our enemy will be at the Savior’s coming back.

This parable indicates the suffering we have from our opponent during the Lord’s apparent absence. During His apparent absence, we are a widow and our opposer is troubling us all the time. While our opposer is persecuting us, it seems that our God is not righteous, for He allows His children to be unrighteously persecuted. For example, John the Baptist was beheaded, Peter was martyred, Paul was imprisoned, and John was exiled. Throughout the centuries thousands upon thousands of faithful followers of the Lord Jesus have suffered unrighteous persecution. Even today we are still undergoing unrighteous mistreatment. Our God seems to be unrighteous, since He does not come in to judge and vindicate. When our Husband is apparently absent and we are left on earth as a widow, temporarily our God seems to be an unrighteous judge. Although He appears to be unrighteous, **we still must appeal to Him, pray persistently, and bother Him again and again.**

On the one hand, this parable indicates that the Judge is sovereign. This means that whether or not He judges is up to Him. Seemingly without reason, He may either listen to the widow or not listen to her. This parable reveals that God is the sovereign Lord and that He judges whenever He chooses. On the other hand, this parable indicates that **we need to bother the Lord by praying persistently.** The significance of this parable is profound. We all need to know God as He is revealed here. (*The Conclusion of the New Testament: God, Christ, and the Spirit, Volume 1, Chapter 6*)

## Day 6

**Luke 18:8**

*- I tell you that He will carry out their avenging quickly. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?*

**Revelation 6:9-10**

*- And when He opened the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and because of the testimony which they had. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Master, holy and true, will You not judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?*

- E. Revelation 8:5 implies the answer to 6:9-11 and Luke 18:7-8:
  - 1. The **prayers** of the saints in Revelation 8:3-4 must be for the judgment of the earth, which opposes God’s economy.
  - 2. **God’s judgment** upon the earth—casting fire to the earth—is the answer to the prayers of the saints with Christ as the incense—vv. 3-5.
- F. “When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?”—Luke 18:8b:
  - 1. Literally, the Greek words rendered “faith” mean “the faith”; this denotes the **persistent faith for our persistent prayer**, like that of the widow.
  - 2. The faith through which we were saved is the **initial stage of faith**; the faith that brought us into a life union with Christ is the linking faith—the faith that comes into us through our contacting the Triune God continually so that we may live by the Son of God—Rom. 1:17; Gal. 2:20; John 14:19.
  - 3. The **linking faith** is the divine requirement for the overcomers to meet Christ in His triumphant return—Luke 18:8b:

- a. Linking faith is the Triune God moving in us to **link us to His unsearchable riches**—Eph. 3:8.
- b. Linking faith is the faith of the believers who have **no trust in themselves**; rather, their trust is in God—2 Cor. 1:9.
- c. When the Lord Jesus returns, He will find a number of overcomers who are **living by the linking faith** and will regard them as treasures for His kingdom in the thousand years of His reign—Luke 18:8b; Rev. 20:4, 6.

I live by faith, and this faith is not my faith. This faith is the **faith of the Son of God**. These three items—God, the Son of God, and faith—are one. When you heard the gospel, you heard the word, and faith came into you. That faith is God Himself. Now you live by that faith, and this faith is the faith of the Son of God. Initially, you received the faith, which was God coming into you. But now you still live by this faith, yet in the second stage. In the second stage it is the faith of the Son of God. So when you live this life by faith, you do not live by anything of yourself. You live this life by faith, which is the faith of the Son of God. Thus, you have life by the faith of God, and you live this life by the faith of the Son of God. Faith, God, and the Son of God are one. **Faith links God and the Son of God with us**. If you have faith, **faith links you to God**. If you have faith, faith links you to the Son of God.

The initial faith in the initial stage came to you through the hearing of the word of God. But faith in the second stage, the stage of living Christ, comes mostly not by hearing the word. Faith in this stage comes into you by your contacting God in Christ. So you have to contact the Triune God all the time. All the time you should contact the Son. Then you will also touch the Father and the Spirit. **Faith in the second stage comes to us through our contacting the Triune God**. It is not just hearing the word. In the second stage of faith, hearing the word does not work much.

In this stage, faith comes into you increasingly like the electrical current in a building. You can tell that a “current” in you is going on. The more you say, “O Lord Jesus,” the more the current is going on. The more you pray, the more the current is going on. This is why we are told to **pray unceasingly**. This current should not be stopped. This is the linking stage of faith. This faith within us is God Himself in Christ. (*Crystallization-study of the Epistle to the Romans, chapter 10*)