

WEEK 5: “The doom is nearer now: it is at the door; it has lifted the latch.” (#3-*The Horse and His Boy*, HB, p. 307)

At this point in *The Chronicles ...*, we see the downfall of Prince Rabadash of Calormen, who had intended to marry Queen Susan of Narnia and conquer that land, as well as Archenland. After an inglorious defeat in battle, however, he is imprisoned in Archenland, yet refuses to accept anyone’s mercy, even that of Aslan Himself. In his rage, Rabadash denounces Aslan as follows:

“Demon! Demon! Demon!" shrieked the Prince. "I know you. You are the foul fiend of Narnia. You are the enemy of the gods. Learn who *I* am, horrible phantasm. I am descended from Tash, the inexorable, the irresistible. The curse of Tash is upon you. Lightning in the shape of scorpions shall be rained on you.”

Aslan’s response to this diatribe is the title of this talk. In the context of *The Horse and His Boy*, it refers to the transformation of “Rabadash the Ridiculous” into a donkey! As Lewis continues with the story of Rabadash, he explains to his readers that even though the prince was ultimately transformed back into a human, the account of witnesses to his original transformation precluded his ever forgetting what had happened.

The volume is perhaps the most theologically confusing one of the entire series. To find a biblical parallel is a bit tricky. Perhaps we can look at James 5:9: “Don’t grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!”

In context, we ask ourselves what does “the Judge is standing at the door” mean? It is probably that James is indicating that the Judge of the universe, Jesus the Messiah, could come back at any moment. This was the constant teaching of the early church and remains a teaching in today’s Christianity. Perhaps we can learn something from a song by the Christian group Petra, who sang,

We wait since the day He ascended  
He said He would come again  
Some think it will be such a long time  
Some think they know just when  
We live like there's no tomorrow  
We wait with our lamps of oil  
We watch for the midnight hour  
The day we cease our toil  
When the trumpet sounds  
And the bridegroom comes

The message of the parable alluded to here (the 10 wise virgins in Matthew 25) is one of readiness. As Jesus stated repeatedly in His Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24 and 25), “Watch, therefore, because you do not know when the Son of Man is coming.” Since God reckons time differently than man does, *soon* to Him and *soon* to His church are obviously two completely separate concepts.

While we’re waiting for Christ to return, and since we know that His return could be at any moment, how ought we to be living? Peter answered this exact question by explaining that since, “In keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells. ... make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.” (2 Peter 3:13-14) I think that pretty much sums up the way we should conduct ourselves while we’re in the Church Age (now). We should also share our faith with as many as we can, so that when the Bridegroom returns, He will have as many as possible to bring with Him to His Father’s house.

In the context of the immediacy of our Lord’s return “as a thief in the night” (again written by Peter), I think there is no better way to end this talk than with Paul’s words of 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18:

Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord’s word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage one another with these words.

Discussion question: How can the “at any moment” nature of Christ’s return impact your life?