



# *The King's Ransom*

Matthew 20:28

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Text

Matthew 17:9-27

Topic

Jesus continues to prepare His disciples for the wait between His two comings

Title

*"How to Maintain a Love-Wait Relationship With Jesus"*

Introduction

How long would you wait in line for something?

The answer, I suppose, depends on the "something." One guy waited over two weeks in line outside an Apple store on Fifth Avenue in Manhattan to purchase a gold iPhone 5s.

In 2005, a guy camped outside a movie theater in Seattle for 139 days to be the first in line to see *Star Wars Episode 3*.

You probably wouldn't wait that long for an iPhone. Or a movie.

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Matthew 17:9-27

*"How to Maintain a Love-Wait Relationship With Jesus"*

What about for a job? Recently in Long Island applicants camped out in line for five days to apply for a job.

One thing these examples have in common is that you know, usually to the minute, exactly when your waiting will end.

What if you were asked to wait indefinitely, in adverse conditions, with no set time for the end of your waiting?

And what if you had no choice but you had to wait?

That is essentially the situation we find ourselves in as believers in Jesus Christ. We live between His two comings to the earth and are anticipating His return to resurrect and rapture His church.

While His return for us is presented in the Bible as imminent, we must wait for it indefinitely, with no set time.

It calls for a special kind of patience - a robust, active spiritual patience.

Our text suggests two aspects of that kind of patience while waiting for The Lord. I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 While Waiting For His Return, You Are To Proclaim The Patience Of Jesus, and #2 While Waiting For His Return, You Are To Practice The Patience Of Jesus.

## #1 While Waiting For His Return, You Are To Proclaim The Patience Of Jesus Christ

(v9-13)

Let me spend just a moment explaining the phrase, "the patience of Jesus Christ." I get it from Second Thessalonians 3:5.

2Th 3:5 Now may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ.

Older translations render "the patience of Christ" as "the patient waiting for Christ."

Which is it? It is both. We see the patience of Jesus, both in His earthly ministry and in His waiting to return for us; **and** we are called upon to imitate His patience as we wait.

In our text, as The Lord explains to His disciples what just happened in His transfiguration, we first see that His followers must wait, but that we have a message to proclaim while waiting.

Mat 17:9 Now as they came down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, "Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead."

The "vision," in verses one through eight, was of Jesus being transfigured. For a brief moment, the three disciples with Him on that mountain saw Him as He will appear in His Second Coming. And they saw Moses and Elijah discussing the End Times with Jesus.

They were instructed to tell no one until after the resurrection. One reason was that the Jews were expecting their Messiah to establish a kingdom on the earth. Hearing about Jesus being transfigured would give the Jews the impression He was about to establish the kingdom.

He was not, because the nation's leaders were going to officially reject Him as their King. The vision was for His disciples, to encourage them that even though Jesus was going to be crucified, He would come in glory, as promised in the Old Testament, and establish the kingdom.

Mat 17:10 And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?"

The "scribes," who were teachers, were interpreting Malachi 4:5, which says,

Mal 4:5 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.

Having seen Elijah appearing with Jesus, the disciples were confused about the timing of the kingdom.

Mat 17:11 Jesus answered and said to them, "Indeed, Elijah is coming first and will restore all things.

Mat 17:12 But I say to you that Elijah has come already, and they did not know him but did to him whatever they wished. Likewise the Son of Man is also about to suffer at their hands."

Mat 17:13 Then the disciples understood that He spoke to them of John the Baptist.

Jesus said that Elijah had already come, *and* that Elijah is still to come in the future.

Elijah had come in the spirit and power of John the Baptist. Had the nation of Israel received Jesus as their Messiah, John's ministry would have been the fulfillment of the prophecy in Malachi.

The Jews did not receive Jesus. As a result, they rejected John the Baptist, allowing Herod to behead him. Jesus, too, would "suffer," leading to His crucifixion.

In His resurrection, Jesus would return to Heaven to await His return a second time.

In the Book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ, two witnesses precede the Second Coming of The Lord. They may be Moses and Elijah, and, in fact, we say that one of them will be Elijah in a literal fulfillment of Jesus' words to His disciples.

This is our message. Jesus came, as the God-man, and died on the Cross, at Calvary, for the sins of the world. He rose again, the third day. He ascended into Heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father. He is coming a second time to establish His kingdom on the earth for a thousand years. Before His Second Coming, and before the Great Tribulation on the earth that precedes His Second Coming, He will return to resurrect and rapture His church.

Since there has been a two thousand year wait, it has given rise to scoffing at the promise of His coming.

To which the apostle Peter explains,

2Pe 3:8 But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

2Pe 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

In verse fifteen Peter added, "and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation."

The Lord is patiently waiting. We could go further back in talking about the patience of Jesus.

- He certainly was patient as He lived in relative obscurity for some thirty years before He stepped forward to be baptized.
- He was patient in the years of His ministry in that He set aside the prerogatives of His deity to wait upon His Father to tell Him what to do, where to go, and what to say.
- He was patient during what we call His passion - enduring cruelty from both men and demons as He was crucified and entombed.
- He was patient after His resurrection, waiting forty days to ascend into Heaven.
- He's patiently waiting in Heaven, for His Father to give Him the "Go!" to resurrect and rapture His church.
- He is certainly patient with His church - with you and I - as we walk with Him on a daily basis.

Bringing us back to His "longsuffering" not willing any should perish, but instead repent and believe and be saved.

O, the wonder of the patience of Jesus Christ, our Lord!

## #2 While Waiting For His Return, You Are To Practice The Patience Of Jesus Christ

(v14-27)

There are multiple exhortations to believers to practice a robust, active, spiritual patience.

For example we are told, in Hebrews 12:1, to run with patience the race set before us. The Christian life is compared to a race - a long distance race.

Normally we associate being patient with being passive; with not doing something. If we're in a race, however, patience must be something much more active than we normally think.

In the episodes that follow, the underlying theme is that Jesus' followers, His disciples, practice an active patience.

Mat 17:14 And when they had come to the multitude, a man came to Him, kneeling down to Him and saying,  
Mat 17:15 "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and suffers severely; for he often falls into the fire and often into the water.

While Jesus, Peter, James and John were gone, the other nine disciples had failed to exorcize a demon from this young boy.

Our modern versions say he was "epileptic," and that may indeed have been his medical diagnosis. The word so translated is *moonstruck*, because they believed lunar cycles affected behavior.

Even if it was epilepsy, the real issue behind the boy's physical condition was a demon.

People always wonder why we do not see more cases of demon possession. I don't know - *but I'm glad!*

I would throw this out for your consideration. People give themselves over to their own lusts, to their own selfishness, so readily that there's no need for demons to possess them. They're already doing a great job ruining their own lives.

Plus, it's not unusual for an enemy to change tactics during a long and protracted war. Satan has a lot of things available to him he didn't have in the first century.

Mat 17:16 So I brought him to Your disciples, but they could not cure him."

Mat 17:17 Then Jesus answered and said, "O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him here to Me."

Mat 17:18 And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him; and the child was cured from that very hour.

Was Jesus rebuking His disciples? Maybe; but certainly He had a lot more folks in mind. He was talking to the entire "generation" who had seen His miracles over the length of time He had been with them.

They were rejecting Him; thus they were "faithless," leaving them and their world "perverse," rather than its being perfected by the King.

I think what The Lord may have been getting at is that He had proven He could and would bind the devil and establish the kingdom.



But they would not receive Him, so they were choosing to remain under the authority of the god of this world, the ruler of the powers of darkness.

For our purposes this morning, we are most interested in the answer to the disciples question:

Mat 17:19 Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not cast it out?"

Mat 17:20 So Jesus said to them, "Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you.

Most of the time we focus on "faith" and the "mustard seed." That's fine; but I think Jesus was simply saying that even a tiny amount of faith is sufficient to accomplish whatever task God has set before you.

To me, the more important comment is, "because of your unbelief."

The disciples had been successful previously in casting out demons. This time they had failed due to "unbelief."

What, precisely, is unbelief? Listen to this rather long quote from J.C. Ryle:

The word translated [unbelief] will be found twelve times in the New Testament and always, so far as I can see, in one signification... It consists in not believing something which God has said - some warning that He gave - some promise that He held out - some advice that He offers - some judgment that He threatens - some message that He sends. In short, to refuse to admit the truth of God's revealed Word, and to live as if we did not think that Word was to be depended on - is the essence of unbelief.

Unbelief is the oldest of the many spiritual diseases by which fallen human nature is afflicted. It began in the day when Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, and brought sin into the world. They did not believe what God had told them, would be the consequence of disobedience; and they did believe the Tempter, saying, "You shall not surely die."

Unbelief ruined millions in the day of Noah's flood: they would not believe the great "preacher of righteousness," when he warned them for a hundred and twenty years to flee from the wrath to come.

Unbelief slew myriads in the day when Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by fire from heaven. When righteous Lot called on his sons-in-law to escape for their lives, "he seemed as one who mocked."

Unbelief kept Israel wandering forty years in the wilderness, until a whole generation was dead. We are expressly told, "They could not enter in because of unbelief."

Think of the situation in these verses as an illustration for us. Jesus was gone, for a time, being revealed in His glory on the mountain. A group of His disciples were on the ground below, still dealing with the fact that Satan was unbound, loose to create havoc.

In the Lord's absence, short as it was, unbelief had set in. Could it be that unbelief is especially a problem that creeps in unexpectedly when disciples are patiently waiting for The Lord to return?

Could it be that unbelief is something we must constantly guard against?

The answer to both questions would seem to be, "Yes." Even as, in some measure, we are growing in The Lord, the passage of time waiting for Him gives opportunity for unbelief to set in.

How do we guard against unbelief?

Mat 17:21 However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting."

I don't think Jesus meant that, if presented with an especially difficult demon, they were to send the possessed person away and spend time praying and fasting.

Jesus is calling for a lifestyle of prayer and fasting, not an emergency session.

The application we could make is this: you practice an active patience while waiting for Jesus by maintaining your spiritual life; by being ready; by stirring up the gift or gifts God has given you; by remaining awake and sober; by not neglecting to gather together with other believers.

In other words you stay focused on Jesus. Unbelief may still creep in; it is, after all, the earliest of sins. But when it does you can overcome it rather than be overcome by it.

These verses are preparing us for conditions that will exist on earth until The Lord returns. Satan is loose, going about as a roaring lion, seeking who he may devour.

Mat 17:22 Now while they were staying in Galilee, Jesus said to them, "The Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men,

Mat 17:23 and they will kill Him, and the third day He will be raised up." And they were exceedingly sorrowful.

Of course they were "exceedingly sorrowful." They loved Jesus, and they longed for the kingdom, and they had given all to follow Him.

Their problem was that they were too close to the situation to see the joy of the entire statement. Jesus would be raised from the dead - Glory! Hallelujah!!

We are surrounded by evil, and evil forces. Bad things happen to good people, and to God's people. But we face them with patience empowered by the resurrection of Jesus, which not only guarantees us of a future resurrection or rapture, but of power to live here and now.

The final episode of this chapter seems disjointed but it fits nicely into the theme of practicing patience.

Mat 17:24 When they had come to Capernaum, those who received the temple tax came to Peter and said, "Does your Teacher not pay the temple tax?"

Mat 17:25 He said, "Yes." And when he had come into the house, Jesus anticipated him, saying, "What do you think, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth take customs or taxes, from their sons or from strangers?"

Mat 17:26 Peter said to Him, "From strangers." Jesus said to him, "Then the sons are free.

Mat 17:27 Nevertheless, lest we offend them, go to the sea, cast in a hook, and take the fish that comes up first. And when you have opened its mouth, you will find a piece of money; take that and give it to them for Me and you."

Every male Jew over the age of nineteen had to pay a set temple tax. It was mandated in the Book of Exodus.

Apparently Jesus had not yet paid His annual temple tax and the tax collectors came to receive it, but also to catch Jesus in a controversy.

Jesus had a word of knowledge and anticipated Peter's question before he asked it.

Jesus pointed out to Peter that "kings of the earth" do not require taxes from their own family. It is one of the perks, I guess, of royalty.

Since Jesus was, and is, the King, then His subjects - the disciples in this case - should not be required to pay the temple tax. In fact no believer in Jesus should have had to pay it.

But in order to not offend anyone, Jesus would pay the tax for Himself and for Peter.

He did so with a notable miracle - having Peter cast a hook to catch the one fish in the entire sea that had the coin in its mouth.

There are any number of important lessons here, but let's concentrate on the one that helps us understand what it means to practice patience.

The disciples were free from paying the tax, but they ought to subject their freedom to a greater principle, and that is to not do anything that would cause another person to stumble and sin.

This is a great New Testament principle; it is a rule of life for waiting Christians.

We are a people under God's grace. Unless otherwise specified, all things are lawful for us to partake of and enjoy. We should guard our spiritual freedoms and not allow ourselves to be brought under legal requirements that are no longer in force.

So, for example, if I'm the apostle Paul, and I want to have Titus travel with me into Jewish territories, I refuse to have him circumcised because he is 100% Gentile and circumcision would be giving up grace for legalism.

But, if I'm the apostle Paul, and I want to have Timothy travel with me into Jewish territories, I absolutely have him circumcised because he is 50% Jewish and his uncircumcision would be a great offense to Jews. I would, in that case, be exercising my freedom at the expense of hindering folks from hearing and receiving the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

This is a huge issue as we wait patiently for The Lord. It is not always an easy one to resolve. I will say, and this is only my personal observation, that it seems as though Christians have ventured too far into the attitude of flaunting their freedoms at the expense of offending others.

You practice patience by caring more about offending others than demanding your freedom.

One commentator reminds us of something important when he says, "Never give up God's rights, but we may sometimes safely give up our own."

For example we should not be brought back under the rules and rituals of the Law of Moses. If anybody wants me to 'keep' the Sabbath, I'm going to oppose that tooth-and-nail.

We are talking about the gray areas of liberties we have to partake of foods and drinks and entertainments and such things.

Another commentator said,

Christian liberty... is to take all that Christ provides, be free from having to fulfill a legal code to please God, being free from the frustration that says I can't make it. Being free from an external set of legal rules that I have to keep.

Free to just function in the overflow of the work of the Spirit inside. Christian liberty. And it all comes by faith in Jesus Christ.

This liberty, however, comes with a responsibility. The apostle Paul said,

1Co 8:9 But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak.

I'm not going to give you a list of do's and don'ts. The point is: while living between the two comings of Jesus, we are to practice patience by always thinking of others first and, if necessary, yielding our freedoms.

Jesus is patiently waiting to return for us. We are to practice patience by guarding against unbelief, by appropriating the power of the resurrection, and by exercising our liberties with care for others.

Jas 5:7 Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain.

Jas 5:8 You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.