

# Spiritual Lessons From the Four Seasons

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August 8, 2014

If we look around us, it's no secret that God is the author of variety. I think of this often when I ride my motorcycle in the mountains. Look at the plant kingdom we have, the flowers and shrubs and the trees. You can take all the varieties of each of those. It's just almost endless. Then we look at the animal kingdom. God has created everything from amoebas to elephants. There's a huge variety. Then there are colors. God could have created the world in black and white, but He chose not to do that. He chose to create all the varieties of colors. He is the God of variety.

God also has created the seasons and the resulting changes in climate due to the seasons of the year. In the spring we have warm days and cool nights. In summer we have hot days and hot nights, and then as we look forward to the Fall and the autumn, the days start to cool down and the nights get even cooler. Then in winter, of course, we have cold days and colder nights. So God has created the seasons for a reason. He created the changes in the climate for a reason, and He did so by tilting the earth's axis. If the earth's axis was parallel to the sun and the earth rotates around the sun, nothing would change. We would have the same climate 365 days of the year. What God did is tilt the earth's axis relative to the sun's axis. When the northern hemisphere is tilted toward the sun, this would be what we see in the summer because there are more days of light and less days of darkness. As the earth rotates around in this direction, then there are equal hours of light and darkness. Then as we go 180 degrees opposite from where we started, the northern hemisphere is tilted away from the sun so you have more hours of night and less hours of day. It's just the opposite, of course, for the southern hemisphere. So man has labeled the astronomical seasons. Let's talk about that for just a second.

I think we are familiar with the summer solstice. Solstice is a Latin word. It's a combination of the word "sol," meaning *sun* and "sistere" meaning *to come to a stop*. So in the summer solstice, it is the longest daylight of the year. It generally occurs June 20th to June 21st. That is the official beginning, according to man's calculations, of summer.

Next, we come to the autumn equinox. "Equinox" means *equal*. We have twelve hours of day and twelve hours of night. That's generally September 22nd or 23rd. It is the official beginning of autumn.

Then we come to the winter solstice, which is the shortest number of hours of daylight of the year. That's generally December 21st or 22nd, and that is the official beginning of winter.

Finally, we come to the vernal equinox. “Vernal” is Latin for *spring*. We have twelve hours of day and twelve hours of night. That’s generally March 20th or 21st, and that is the official beginning of spring.

Man has made much of the seasons. The composer, Vivaldi, has a beautiful piece of work called “The Four Seasons.” Some people try to escape the seasons in the sense that they travel to Hawaii or Arizona or Florida trying to keep it summer all the time. I personally love the four seasons because it marks the progression of each year. It marks the progression through each year. It would be really boring if we only had one season. God, obviously, is not boring.

God created the seasons for specific reasons. He created the growing season and the harvest season. The holy days that God created are in these seasons and they are related to the agricultural harvests. With that in mind, let’s turn to Ecclesiastes, chapter 3. You might want to place a marker here because we will come back a few times during the sermon. Notice what Solomon says.

***Ecclesiastes 3:1. To everything [not some things or most things] there is a season ... (KJV)***

Everything, and we’re going to see that there is a season for our lives too. They’re tied into the four seasons that God created.

***1b) ... and a time to every purpose under the heaven: (KJV)***

The Hebrew word for “season” is Strong’s 2165, and it means an *appointed occasion or an appointed time*. So God is telling us to everything there is an appointed time by God. As we’re going to see, it refers to physical things as well as spiritual things.

We have to ask the question: What did God have in mind in creating the seasons? What was His point? Why did He do that? What does He want us to learn from those four seasons? We’re going to look at that in today’s sermon. The title is:

### Spiritual Lessons From the Four Seasons

It pertains to us both physically and spiritually. We’re going to look at our four seasons and each time we look at a specific season, we’re going to look at it from a physical standpoint and also a spiritual standpoint.

## **Spring**

Let’s begin with spring because God begins the year with spring. Let’s first look at the physical aspects of spring. We all know that in spring there is a newness of life. There is energy from the sun, energy from the plants and animals bringing forth. In Ecclesiastes 3 in the beginning of verse 2, it tells us that there is a time to be born. It refers to the animal kingdom and refers to the plant kingdom as well. In spring we see young colts,

lambs and calves running and jumping and prancing around with all this energy of a newborn. Dorothy is really good at this. She can see the tiny beginnings of the crocuses as they poke through the soil. I just walk by and don't notice them, but she sees every one of those. It's new life forming in the spring. During the spring you see vibrant colors. I traveled a lot in the northwest when we owned our business and I can remember traveling through the Cascades and in spring there are lime colored leaves, the new leaves on the trees. As you get into summer, they darken, of course, but in spring it's a fresh lime green and it's so beautiful. We also know that in the spring, it's a time for planting. Ecclesiastes 3, the latter part of verse 2 it says:

***Ecclesiastes 3.2. ... a time to plant ... (KJV)***

In spring, the farmers begin something that will bear fruit later, much later down the road. They begin a planting season that will, as we will see, result in a harvest season.

The same thing is true for our physical minds and bodies from babies to young adults. We'll call our human spring from birth to the late teens. That's our human spring. You look at the changes from the birth of a baby to a late teenager. There are radical changes. In fact, babies can change almost weekly. We miss seeing our grandchildren for a few months and they're growing and their facial expressions are different and their voices are different. There are radical changes. Little kids are full of energy. You see that all over. They're skipping and jumping and hopping. The last thing they can do is stay still. Dorothy and I love to watch little boys and girls with their parents and they're hopping and jumping and moving. They're just so full of energy and full of life. Dorothy had the nickname of "jumpy-jumpy" when she was little because she couldn't keep still. As kids, everything is new and exciting. You see the wonderment in children's eyes. When they walk into a toy store, let's say, and their eyes are as big as saucers. Everything is new. Maybe they go into a place they've never been before and they are so excited because everything is new and fresh.

Even when you get to be a teenager, everything is new and exciting there. Remember learning to drive. Oh, that was something else. That is new and exciting.

Our physical spring is filled with energy and zeal and enthusiasm. However, during our physical spring, in the very early years, teenagers, young kids certainly are naïve about the reality of life. They don't think or consider health problems, financial problems, or growing old and dying someday. It just doesn't register. I remember my mom telling me when I was in grade school. I thought I had a problem. She said, "You don't know what problems are. This problem is nothing compared to the problems you're going to face as an adult. You don't have any frame of reference, so you don't believe it. You think whatever your problem is, it's the greatest problem in the world. Young kids are naïve regarding reality of life. But they're excited and full of energy and everything is new and fresh and they are just wide-eyed walking through life.

There are spiritual aspects of our spring. Our spiritual spring started with our calling, regardless of the age we were when we were called. We're not talking about physical

age. We're talking about our spiritual spring. Let's go to 2 Timothy 1:9 and see a note about our calling. We started our spiritual life whenever God threw the switch and the Bible started to make sense when it didn't before and we started asking questions that we had never asked before. Our spiritual spring started then.

***2 Timothy 1:9. Who has saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works ... (KJV)***

We didn't deserve it. We are the weak of the world. We don't deserve our calling.

***9b) ... but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began. (KJV)***

God called us according to His purpose in His time, according to His grace and our spiritual spring started at that moment.

When we first came into the truth we were like physical little kids. Everything was new and exciting. We just couldn't get enough of God, God's word and God's people. I can still remember my first Passover. There were 3,000 people in Roma Hall in Detroit all taking the Passover and the First Day of Unleavened Bread. Talk about exciting. Then our first Feast of Tabernacles. It was under a tent with over 10,000 people; in a tent, not a building. You come into the church and have these experiences of things you will never forget. You walk into that Passover service or walk into that big tent and it's just like little kids. It's exciting, jumping up and down and eyes as big of saucers. It's our spiritual spring. We were filled with zeal and enthusiasm. We studied and prayed incessantly. We never missed a Sabbath service or a Bible study or a Spokesmen's Club.

I was talking to Jack Elder the other day and he would drive a 300 mile round trip just to attend a weekly Bible study. In my first year in the church, I was on an air force base on the Canadian border. I had a 500 mile round trip to attend Sabbath services for the first year, and you never thought anything about it. You did it because you wanted to be there. We talked to people incessantly about this new truth. We tried to convert all our relatives and friends because we were so zealous and excited. It was disappointing when we got the blank stares looking back at us. That's just life. That was our spiritual spring. We had what the Bible calls "first love." In Revelation 2, in Christ's letter to the church at Ephesus, He chides them because they lost their first love. We've all experienced first love and we idealized the church at that time.

I remember attending church and getting to meet all the people. I thought everyone in the church as perfect. I thought everyone had one foot in the Kingdom of God. They were so far advanced from me that I just knew that everyone was absolutely a perfect Christian. I assumed that the church was perfect. The church had no problems. It was God's Church and, therefore, there were going to be no problems and the church would just carry us into the Kingdom of God.

As infants are with their physical parents, we as spiritual infants were extremely and intensely dependent upon our mother, the church. The church fed us. Back in Worldwide days they fed us with correspondence courses, booklets, television, radio and weekly Bible studies and Sabbath services. We were fed all the time.

Let's go to Acts 20 and see that Paul tells the elders that their job is to feed the church and the church, indeed, fed us. Paul was in Miletus and he sent to Ephesus and called for a meeting of the elders.

**Acts 20:17.** *And from Miletus he [Paul] sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church. (KJV)*

In verse 28, this is during the meeting and this is his admonition to the elders.

**28)** *Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers [bishops], to feed the church of God ... (KJV)*

That is their job, to feed the Church of God.

**28b)** *...which he [Christ] has purchased with his own blood. (KJV)*

The church indeed fed us and we were dependent in our spiritual spring on that feeding as a little baby is dependent on his or her mother.

God created the spring holy days to show us that nothing is possible without the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the Passover. He taught us through the spring holy days that we need to put sin out of our lives during the Days of Unleavened Bread. God taught us through Pentecost that we need the indwelling of God's holy spirit. We can't function or accomplish anything apart from God's holy spirit. So our spiritual spring relates very closely to the spring holy days.

Listen carefully. We grew fast in our early spring in the physical aspects of spiritual matters. In other words, we changed quickly to physically keep the Sabbath, not work on the Sabbath. We grew quickly in physically writing out tithe checks and sending money for our tithes. We grew quickly in avoiding unclean foods. So within a few weeks or months, that was nailed down pretty well.

However, the more important spiritual changes would come later as we matured spiritually. As young kids, as I described a minute ago, during our spiritual spring, we were naïve about the reality of certain things. We didn't realize at that time that the church wasn't perfect. It wasn't perfect because human beings are involved. We didn't realize that people in the church, baptized brethren, were not perfect. We didn't have the maturity to realize that. We naïvely believed that we would have an easy path into the Kingdom of God. We figured that we would just plant our little fannies on a slide that was greased and we would slide right into the Kingdom of God with no problems. We just made that assumption. It was encouraged to a degree because, after all, weren't we

God's people? Wouldn't God take care of us? Bad things don't happen to good people, so we naively assumed that. So such was our spiritual spring.

## Summer

Now let's go to summer. We will look at the physical aspects of summer. In summer, consistent heat brings forth steady growth in the crops and plants and trees and flowers. Fruit begins to show on those plants. It's not mature fruit yet, but the fruit begins to show. But also during summer, physical obstacles come along like storms, pests, disease and weeds. All of those must be dealt with on a physical level. Farmers are very familiar with that.

The same is true for our physical minds and bodies as adults as we physically age. In our human summer (our twenties, thirties and forties) we are more mature. We aren't kids anymore. We are more mature. We begin to experience life's realities, life's challenges and life's trials. We deal with education, whether it's college education or education for a job. We deal with careers. What career do we want? We deal with marriage and raising children. During the summer of our physical lives, we begin to think about what we want out of our life. Where do we want to go? What do I want to be? These are things you wouldn't think of as a little kid. We begin to face realities that we would not consider as a child. We begin to scratch the surface in noticing a little bit of fatigue. Sometimes we think it's a lot, but we don't have a clue. We scratch the surface in realizing, especially as you get on in your forties that we do indeed have physical limitations. When you're a teenager, you can do anything. You don't worry about anything. You can accomplish anything. It's the strength and stamina of youth.

As we get toward the end of our physical summer, we realize that yes, I'm maybe not as strong as I used to be and I do have some physical limitations.

Let's look at the spiritual aspects of our spiritual summer. Remember this is independent of physical age. We have steady growth in deeper spiritual matters during our spiritual summer.

Let's go to Matthew 23:23. We know in Matthew 23, Christ is railing on the religious leaders of His day, the scribes and the Pharisees. He has some interesting things to say.

***Matthew 23:23.*** *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you pay tithe of mint and anise and cumin ... (KJV)*

We were really good at that in our spiritual spring. We wrote out the tithe checks and got into the minutia of our income.

*23b) ... and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment [justice], mercy, and faith: [Christ says] these ought you to have done, and not to leave the other undone. (KJV)*

Be careful about your tithes, but you are missing the weightier matters of the law. In our spiritual summer we begin to understand the spiritual applications of God's law. There are physical applications, but there are spiritual applications also. As we keep the Sabbath and the holy days year after year, we begin to understand in our spiritual summer that there are spiritual lessons to be learned. There are spiritual lessons to be learned through tithing. We begin to see that in our spiritual summer. Let's go to Matthew 13. We will read part of the Parable of the Sower. It applies to our spiritual summer.

**Matthew 13:1.** *The same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea side.*

*2) And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore. (KJV)*

He could address them better and they could see and hear Him better.

*3) And he spoke many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow; (KJV)*

Let's go to verse 7, this particular seed we are talking about.

*7) And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: (KJV)*

In verse 18 Christ explains the parable.

*18) Hear you therefore the parable of the sower. (KJV)*

In verse 22, He explains the seeds that were sowed among thorns.

*22) He also that received seed among the thorns is he that hears the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. (KJV)*

Some people spiritually succumb to trials during their spiritual summer. Their trials get to them and they drop by the wayside. Others, however, because of these trials grow and mature. These are the very same kinds of trials, but instead of giving up, they grow in spiritual maturity. They began to face the reality of the church. The reality is that members are not perfect. We are human beings.

Some members don't exercise God's spirit. They have God's spirit, but they don't exercise it much and that can create problems. Others attending are simply tares. They are tares planted by Satan to disrupt the church. John 10, the parable of the sheepfold; they are there to steal, kill and destroy. In our spiritual summer, we begin to see this and recognize it and take note of it. Also, in our spiritual summer, we realize that ministers are not perfect. There are ministers who in the past, and even today, that don't exercise

God's spirit very much. Then there are others who don't have God's holy spirit. They are wolves in sheep's clothing. They are narcissists. They are in it for themselves. This is a game and they don't have God's holy spirit. So in our spiritual summer we begin to deal with this and realize that the church is not perfect.

Also during our spiritual summer, we see the beginnings of real lasting fruit for those who exercise God's holy spirit at this time of their spiritual lives. Let's go to Psalms 1, talking about real lasting fruit that is developed during our spiritual summer. David says:

***Psalm 1:1. Blessed is the man that walks not in the counsel of the ungodly ... (KJV)***

Blessed is he that keeps clear of the ungodly.

*1b) ... nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful.  
2) But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his [God's] law does he meditate day and night.  
3) And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, [notice] that brings forth his fruit in his season [in his appointed time]; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he does shall prosper. (KJV)*

So in this spiritual summer of our lives, there is a season to bring forth fruit. Part of that fruit comes during our spiritual summer.

We see that there is physical and spiritual fruit that begins to mature in the summer of our lives.

## **Autumn**

Now let's turn our attention to autumn. Autumn is my favorite time of the year. It's a little warm in the day if you're in the sun, but if you're in the shade it's nice and cool and the nights are crisp and cool. You see the leaves turning and the crops coming in. It's just a wonderful time of the year. The physical aspects of autumn obviously are that the crops do mature to the point that the harvest is there. They are ready for the harvest. We just read in the paper that the grape harvest for wine started this past week. It's the earliest it has ever been. It's about two weeks earlier than normal even for the earliest variety. So the harvest is coming. Ecclesiastes 3:2; we read this earlier.

***Ecclesiastes 3:2. A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; (KJV)***

With that I mind, let's go to Jeremiah 5:20. This tells us that God created the seasons in order to show us a harvest time, that He created the season that resulted in the harvest.

***Jeremiah 5:20. Declare this in the house of Jacob, and publish it in Judah, saying, (KJV)***



This goes to the whole house of Israel. Now turn to verse 23.

*23) But this people has a revolting and a rebellious heart [we know that]; they are revolted and gone.*

*24) Neither say they in their heart, Let us now fear the LORD our God, that gives rain, both the former and the latter, in his season [the seasons that God created] ... (KJV)*

Notice this last sentence.

*24b) ... he reserves unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest. (KJV)*

God gives the season that results in the harvest. God created the harvest season. One of my great joys is on the first night of the Feast of Tabernacles looking out and seeing that harvest moon. That is not a coincidence. God planned it. The one reason He has the Feast start at that time. It's in the autumn. It's a more golden moon. The harvest moon is more golden it seems to me, and I'm sure there are physical reasons for that. The harvest, you see, is the end result of everything that has gone on before. The farmer plowed, he planted and he weeded and he watered and he fertilized and did all of that work necessary and the harvest is the culmination of everything that went on before, all the work that went on before.

In our physical autumn, in our fifties and sixties, we develop real maturity of the mind. Real maturity of the mind is hard to come by in the twenties and thirties sometimes. Some people are more mature, but generally not. So we have physical maturity of our mind, but our physical body is in decline in our fifties and sixties. We begin to feel more fatigue and we begin to realize that we are becoming more physically limited despite the fact that through experience, our mind is more mature now. That is true for all of us in our fifties and sixties.

Now let's look at the spiritual aspect of our spiritual autumn. As the fruit of the field, we develop real mature fruit in our spiritual autumn. Let's go to Matthew 13. We will look at the Parable of the Sower again. We were there earlier with the seed that was planted among thorns and weeds and such.

***Matthew 13:8.*** *But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit ... (KJV)*

That fruit matured in the autumn.

*8b) ... some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold. (KJV)*

Now let's go to verse 23. Christ is explaining.

*23) But he that received seed into the good ground is he that hears the word, and understands it; which also bears fruit, and brings forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. (KJV)*

So in the autumn of our spiritual lives we begin to bring forth real lasting mature fruit, if we exercise God's holy spirit.

Let's go to John 15:8. These are Christ's last words, and He has an urgent mission to give this information to the disciples because He was going to be taken captive in just a short while. Notice what He says, what God is interested in.

***John 15:8.*** *Herein is my Father glorified, [what is that?] that you bear much fruit; so shall you be my disciples. (KJV)*

So during the summer of our spiritual lives, because of all that has gone on before and because of the experience; some of it was bad experiences. Some of it was sinning and learning from our sins. We see the beginnings, hopefully, of true Godly love and Godly wisdom in our fifties and sixties physically. However, in the spiritual aspect of our spiritual autumn, we've been in the church a while and had experiences and have come to know God and grew closer to God and hopefully developed spiritual wisdom and Godly love.

So with that in mind, God created the fall holy days to picture Christ's return which signifies our time of judgment. We are being judged and the crop is maturing. So the fall holy days picture Christ's return and our time of judgment and Trumpets.

Satan is restrained and we become one with God on Atonement.

Then the Feast of Tabernacles when we will have a glorious week of being together. Christ is returning to restore all things, ushering in the world tomorrow, ushering in His government on earth.

Finally the Last Great Day, the last fall holy day is the solution for all mankind. All mankind can be in God's Kingdom if they choose to be.

In the autumn of our spiritual lives, we begin to have a sense of urgency because we realize whether we are getting close to the return of Jesus Christ or getting close to the end of our physical lives, time is running out. Time is short. With that in mind, let's go to 1 Peter 4:17. In the autumn of our spiritual lives, we realize that we are here to bear fruit and at some point, that fruit is going to be judged. This is something that we begin to take more and more seriously in our fifties and sixties, and regardless of our age as we get close to the return of Jesus Christ.

***1 Peter 4:17.*** *For the time is come [It is. It's come] that judgment must begin at the house of God ... (KJV)*

This is all the brethren in the house of God and all the ministry in the house of God.

*17b) ... and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? (KJV)*

So it's imperative at this time. We realize that we must obey the gospel of God, not only physically obey, but spiritually obey.

With that in mind, let's go to Matthew 25. We will break into the chapter and look at the Parable of the Talents.

**Matthew 25:14.** *For the kingdom of heaven is as ... (KJV)*

Our ears should perk up and our antennas should go up because we want to know what the kingdom of heaven is like.

*14b) ... a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods.*

*15) And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey.*

*(KJV)*

He gave them money to do something with according to their abilities. He didn't ask somebody to do something beyond their capability.

*16) Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents.*

*17) And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. (KJV)*

Here we see an exception.

*18) But he that had received one went and dug in the earth, and hid his lord's money.*

*19) After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoned with them.*

*(KJV)*

There's emphasis on the words "long time" because it has been a long time and none of us thought we would be here right now. We thought Christ would return decades ago, but after a long time the lord of those servants came and reckoned with them. The Greek word for "reckoned," Strong's says figuratively *to compute an account*. We would say, "To add it all up. What's the bottom line?" What Christ wanted to find out was, What did they do with what they were given? That's the key. What did they do with what they were given?

*20) And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou delivered unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. (KJV)*

Notice Christ's reaction.

21) *His lord said unto him, Well done, you good and faithful servant: you have been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter you into the joy of thy lord.*

22) *He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, you delivered unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. (KJV)*

He gets the same reward. Granted, they each had different talents, but the fruits, (results) was a doubling of what they had.

23) *His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord [the Kingdom of God]. (KJV)*

Then we come to the fellow that hid his talent.

24) *Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew that you are an hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not strawed: (KJV)*

Yes, He employed other people to do that.

25) *And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the earth: lo, there you have that is yours. (KJV)*

In other words, this man did not exercise the holy spirit and because of that, there was no growth. He just passed back to God what he was given. We were given a little tiny grain as a mustard seed of God's spirit and at the end of all this time, what have you done with it? You just gave it right back. There's no growth.

Notice Christ's answer.

26) *His lord answered and said unto him, You wicked and slothful servant, you knew that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed:*

27) *You ought therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury [the New King James says, "interest"].*

28) *Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents.*

29) *For unto every one that has shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that has not shall be taken away even that which he has.*

30) *And cast you the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (KJV)*

Obviously He is referring of the lake of fire.

So at this stage, the autumn of our spiritual lives, we realize that time is running out, that Christ is going to return soon. At some point we're going to have to answer to Him. What have we done with what we have been given? All of us are going to have to answer that question. As with the physical harvest, you see, the spiritual harvest is the result of everything that has gone on before, all the prayer, all the study, all the meditation, all the right thoughts and right deeds and the right actions. All of that, the harvest is a result of everything that's gone on before. In the spiritual autumn of our lives, we should be building and should have built the very mind and character of God and Christ. We realize as we are here today that the great fall harvest is not far off.

## **Winter**

What about winter? Think about the physical aspects of winter for a minute. In the winter the land has a different kind of beauty. There are no leaves on the trees, and yet there is a beauty in that, especially after a snowfall where each twig and branch has a little coating of snow. The land is at peace. Nothing is growing and the land is at rest. In that cold world there is a certain slowness. Things move slowly in the cold and we move slowly in the cold.

Our human winter, I would define to be in our sixties to the time that we die. This would be in our seventies, eighties and nineties; however long God allows us. We are in our old age. In our seventies and eighties, we're getting to be old folks. We really are. Our physical bodily processes slow down. Everything slows down. Our metabolism slows down and we have a decline of physical energy. We have a decline of physical strength and guess what? Our hair turns to the color of snow. That is not a coincidence. That is by design, I believe, just as much as I am standing here. In our human winter, we begin to feel real fatigue. I didn't know what fatigue was until I got into my sixties. I thought I did. I tell young folks today, "You don't know what tired is really like. You think you're tired, but you don't have a clue. Wait until you get to your seventies and eighties. Then you will experience real fatigue." Also we begin to realize that we have physical limitations. Even though our mind says we can do something, our body says, "Nah, can't do that anymore." This time, of course, ends with death.

***Ecclesiastes 3:2. A time to be born, and a time to die ... (KJV)***

At this stage in our lives, we begin to accept the reality of death. I can remember Vivian York. She used to attend the old Worldwide Quincy church. Dorothy and I visited her and she had been having health problems and family problems. They were non-life-threatening health problems, but still they were "downers" in that regard. She was worried and unsettled and she didn't know what was going to happen going forward. She was in her sixties. We sat and talked about the spiritual winter and we talked about aging and getting older and that someday God will take us all and the next time we wake up, we're going to be in God's Kingdom and there is no more pain, no more crying, no more suffering. We talked at length about that in her little trailer. The more we talked she just got this peaceful and content look on her face and was totally at peace. We left and she died that night. It was amazing. She died totally at peace.

Harold Lee was prepared to die. We used to talk. He said, "You know I wake up every morning and before I even open my eyes, I give God thanks that I have one more day." We talked many times about the way he would like to check out. It would be on the Sabbath. He would have the Sabbath in his house with all his friends and all the brethren and then after services were over, they would have a family meal that evening with all the grandkids and his kids. Then he said, "I'd go to bed and just not wake up." That's exactly what happened.

On a personal level, I'm involved with so much death, and we've had a lot of deaths here in the last couple of years. You can't help but prepare for its reality. We see it in our sixties, seventies and beyond. We face the reality that our life is finite and our life is in God's hands and God can take us whenever He chooses.

So let's look at the spiritual aspect of our spiritual winter. There are no holy days in winter, yet we have winter. God is telling us through our spiritual winter that His plan for us is winding down. His plan for us is tapering off in that sense. Our time on this earth is winding down. More importantly, fruits continue to be developed in our spiritual winter. Let's go to Psalms 92:12. Just because we're getting older, it doesn't mean that we can just stay the way we are or God has to accept us at whatever level we are when we finish our spiritual autumn and that we can just coast into the Kingdom of God. Psalms 92:12 tells us this:

***Psalms 92:12. The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. (KJV)***

Yes, the righteous shall regardless of age.

***14) They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing; (KJV)***

God expects us to bring forth fruit. In old age, in some ways it's easier because we turn away in our late sixties, seventies and eighties from the carnal, the physical and the temporary stuff. Been there, done that. Things that attracted us as kids and young adults don't matter now. They're not important. In the winter of our lives we focus on first things. It's easier to focus on first things, love toward God, love toward our fellow man, focus on our physical family and even more importantly, our spiritual family. We focus on the world tomorrow. It's easier to do that as we see the end of our lives coming. We realize what is important and what is not. The two great commandments: love God with all our being and love our neighbor as ourselves; this becomes a primary focus. We can laser like focus on those as we get older. As we get close to the end, and I'm speaking relatively, not days or weeks, but as we get closer to the end of our lives, scriptures like 1 John 3:14 jump out at us. We talked about this before. Some scriptures hit you like a ton of bricks even though you've read them over and over.

***1 John 3:14. We know ... (KJV)***

We don't speculate or assume or think maybe.

*14b) ... that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren [this becomes paramount]. He that loves not his brother abides in death. (KJV)*

We realize, especially as we understand our physical limitations, that our body is deteriorating. We realize that we are nothing without God, Jesus Christ and the holy spirit. We are nothing without them.

Let's go to John 15 again and look at verse 5. Christ is trying to get across to the disciples this very important information. We understand this as we diminish in our physical capabilities.

**John 15:5.** *I am the vine, you are the branches: He that abides in me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit [regardless of our age]: for without me you can do nothing. (KJV)*

We realize that because we are getting older and our physical capabilities are diminishing. At that age, humility comes more easily frankly, because we see and realize that we're not as strong as we used to be. We're not as mentally sharp as we used to be. We don't have as much energy as we used to have. We don't have as much stamina as we used to have. Therefore, to make up the difference, we have to rely more and more on God and Jesus Christ and the holy spirit. That is a good thing about growing older. Because of our experience, it's easier to admit that there are things that I don't understand. I've got a lot of questions for God. "Why did You do this? Why did this happen? Why didn't you do that? Here's something I don't understand."

When we're young, we have an answer for everything. The young kids coming out of Ambassador College had an answer for everything. The problem was that they didn't know all the questions. They really didn't have an answer for everything and we realize that as we get older. It's easier to admit that we don't have all the answers. We're seeking the answers, but we don't necessarily have them all. As we get older in the spiritual winter of our lives, we reflect back on our lives. We look back on our sins and our mistakes. We look back on our errors in judgment. I personally grieve over those. I kick myself because how could I have said that? How could I have done that? What was I thinking? I know God has forgiven me. I understand that, but you look back and think, Oh man! What have I done?

The elderly have a lot of experience and it's easier to admit that we have been wrong and can be wrong. In our youth that is harder to do. We learn from our mistakes. In the process the elderly can be a source of wisdom for those who are younger. Andy Rooney said, "The best classroom in the world is at the feet of an elderly person." The elderly have been there and done that. They have made most of the mistakes, and if young people will listen, the elderly can teach them not to make this mistake and that mistake and don't think this way and don't do that and don't act this way because the elderly have done it and have suffered the consequences. That's why grandparents and

parents are such a resource to their children regardless of their children's age. Even when the children are adults, they can be a resource.

Also in the winter of our lives one thing we appreciate more and more is peace and quiet. We've had all the raucousness we want, and in the winter of our lives, we want to be peacemakers. The time for fighting is passed. That's frankly one reason why the Pacific Church of God got started, and it was named Pacific Church of God because "Pacific" means *peace*. We want peace. In Matthew 5:9, Christ said:

***Matthew 5:9. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. (KJV)***

In the winter of our spiritual lives, we do appreciate peace, brethren coming together, meeting together, likeminded brethren in peace. It's one of the joys of the Feast and holy days, likeminded people coming together in peace.

Also at this time of our lives, we appreciate ever more the fruits of God's spirit: love, goodness, gentleness, peace. We appreciate that more and more because we've seen enough of the fruits of the flesh, the works of the flesh. Those who "winter well," those who are elderly and who have wintered well, who are mature and wise and close to God, they are an example to all of us.

Out in the world you see elderly people. They don't have God's holy spirit and they don't winter well. Some of them become bitter and negative and crabby and crass in their old age. But those full of the holy spirit and have had a mature spiritual growth in their lives, they winter well and they have a peaceful and pleasant glow about them. They know their end is not far off and they are putting God first in their lives. They rely on God for everything and they are just waiting for their time to end. Let's go to Proverbs 16:31. I'll read it from the New King James. It's talking about the snow-colored hair on an elderly person.

***Proverbs 16:31. The silver-haired head is a crown of glory, if [Here's the big IF] it is found in the way of righteousness. (KJV)***

A righteous older person is something to behold and is someone to respect. Respect is earned, not given. That respect is earned by their fruits. A couple that comes to mind is Ivan and Edna Robinson. They're both dead now, but they were an older couple that when they came to church it was just a joy to have them. There was wisdom there and there was Godliness there. Ivan would come in and carry their big pack for the potluck, and I'd run to the door and take it from him because I wanted to give him that respect and that he didn't have to lift that big pack. I respected Ivan and Edna because they had righteous fruits. When you talked to them you could always learn something from them.

Notice Leviticus 19:32. This is an admonition for those who have had a long spiritually fruitful life. God knew that Israel could stray and would stray, but God gave this



admonition so that the younger folks could gain wisdom and maturity from the older folks.

***Leviticus 19:32.*** *You shall rise up before the hoary head [man or woman], and honor the face of the old man, and fear your God: I am the ETERNAL. (KJV)*

That honor is there because of their fruits and because of what we can learn from them. God, you see, is concerned as to how we end our lives. That is the key. How do we end our lives? We can make all kinds of mistakes. We can sin and have errors in judgment. We can offend and hurt other people. We've all done that. But if we grow out of that, God is concerned about the end. What is the score at the end? In other words, what have I done with what I have been given? Twice He said in Matthew 7, *By their fruits you will know them.* That means, God says, "By their (My children's) fruits I will know them. I will know whether I want them to marry my Son. I will know whether I want them to be in my Kingdom."

God is concerned about how we end our lives, and Christ set the perfect example of how to end His physical life. He gave Himself for all of us. We should follow in His footsteps. We should prepare to follow in His footsteps because we don't know what lies ahead.

Okay, let's summarize. God designed the seasons for a reason and He wants us to learn as we progress through the four seasons, year by year. There is a reason for the four seasons physically and there's a reason for the four seasons spiritually. They are there every year as a reminder, as a measure of the progression of our lives. If everything was the same, it would be harder to measure, but as we go through the four seasons year by year, it is a measure of our lives and it helps us understand the progression of our lives both physically and spiritually.

Let's go to Galatians 6:9, talking about a season. This applies to us as we get closer to the end of our spiritual lives, regardless of our physical age. Our physical lives could end tomorrow. Christ could come a month from now. We don't know. The very first part of this scripture is something we have to be careful about.

***Galatians 6:9.*** *And let us not be weary in well doing ... (KJV)*

Even as we get physically older, we get more fatigued. It is easier to lie down, it's easier to rest. Notice the rest of the verse.

*9b) ... for in due season we shall reap ... (KJV)*

There is a season, a harvest season.

*9 continued) ... if we faint not. (KJV)*

The key is not to faint. It's true. As we get older, we get more tired. Fatigue comes easily. Vince Lombardi, the famous Green Bay coach, said, "Fatigue makes cowards of us all." We have to avoid that. But we have a power that no other human beings on the face of the earth have. Let's close with one final scripture in Mark 10:27. Regardless of whether we are physically getting older or we're coming to the spiritual winter of our lives, the spiritual autumn of our lives, this is what we have to call on more and more and more.

**Mark 10:27.** *And Jesus looking upon them said, With men it is impossible ... (KJV)*

There are lots of things impossible for men.

*27b) ... but not with God: for with God all things are possible. (KJV)*

We have to rely on that power and rely on God and Jesus Christ and the power of the holy spirit. Therefore, we must not let up, thereby being there for the season for our ultimate reward. That season, when the harvest comes, celebrated as we look forward to the fall holy days; when that harvest comes, we want to be there. With God, all things are possible. We cannot forget that.

So let's learn the lessons from the seasons that God has designed.