

Preparing for the Last Days

Sane and Sensible Perspectives on the Last Days

Jesus talked a lot about watching and being prepared for the events of the Last Days. Ok, so how do you do that? First of all, if we are going to be raptured out of here, then there is no need to either watch or be prepared for anything. It's only if we are going to have to go through the tremendous time of trial coming on the earth that we need to be concerned.

Those trials, and the temptations that accompany them, will touch every aspect of our lives. Our need for insight and understanding about what to do will go through the roof! With that in mind, it turns out that there are many facets to being watchful and prepared. Here is a “check list” of the basics.



Enlarge the place of your tent, and let the curtains of your habitations be stretched out; do not hold back; lengthen your cords and strengthen your stakes. Isaiah 54:2 ESV

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Prepare to Join the Rescue Concern for the Great Harvest at the end of the age might be low on a lot of lists. We can be sure, however, that it's high on the Lord's. Heartily joining this colossal, divine effort to save others is the way forward. Get ready for it now.

Prepare by Prayer and Fasting From a certain perspective, the Last Days are an impassioned prayer movement ("Come, Lord Jesus") fueled by the power of an imposed fast—as famines sweep the earth. Practice now for what will be perfected later.

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Prepare by Studying the Scriptures Much has already been gathered by others and we can learn from them, but as we know, nothing takes the place of hearing for yourself "what the Spirit says to the churches." Let the Lord open your eyes and ears with His Word.

Prepare for Judging Prophecies Fortunately for us, the Lord is already raising up prophets. Unfortunately, the enemy is doing the same! Never be discouraged that there are so many false prophets: just seek the true ones. Here are guidelines for better listening.

Prepare with Strong Fellowship To survive the troubled times ahead, we will need to be in close, committed fellowship with other believers. If we aren't doing that now, how can we expect to be a part of the "spotless" Bride for whom the Lord is returning?

Prepare by Learning Guidance In the days ahead, it won't be enough to know His Word. It's won't be enough to hear from His prophets. It's highly likely that we will all need to listen directly to Him in one situation of danger or hardship after another. Here's how.

Prepare by Taking on Humility None of us want to fall during the days ahead. We want to walk faithfully, lovingly and bravely through them. That won't happen if pride gets its way! Fortunately, there are ways we can grow it while there's still time.

Prepare by Casting off Fear The scriptures say that in the Last Days people's hearts will fail them for fear of the things coming on the earth. With all of the other troubles surrounding us, the one thing we won't need to add is fear. Here are some tips for casting it off.

Prepare for Calamities Unquestionably, there will be all manner of natural disasters, civil crises and other dangers that we should prepare to face. Not everything has a purely spiritual answer. Here are some practical things to take into consideration.

Prepare by Knowing the Timeline Did Jesus give us a timeline for the major events of the End Times? Yes, He did! This wonderful timeline functions like a skeleton, providing the structural element that supports living flesh and connects it the right way.

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For over a decade Steve Evans and [Healing Streams](#) have been helping people recover inner peace and freedom through the free eCourse for healing, [Matters of the Heart](#). Through Forerunners4Him he has been showing how we can be saved for heaven and teaching the way to live a Spirit-filled life on earth. Go now to receive a completely free primer, [Getting to Heaven](#) and/or an introduction to [Living in the Spirit](#) at our website.



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CHAPTER ONE

Is Prepping Biblical?

What kind of question is this? The greatest preppers of all time are in the Bible. Not only are they praised for prepping, but in certain outstanding cases it was the Lord God who ordered them to do it. Noah and Joseph should come immediately to mind and settle this question for one and all. If it is more “spiritual” to just trust the Lord, then why isn’t that what the Lord told those two to do? Are we more spiritual than those giants of the faith?

"Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. Matthew 25:1-4 ESV

Noah Prepared an Ark for Shelter

Noah is a perfect example for us. He was facing a world-wide flood of judgment coming his way. We are too. What he did under the Lord’s specific guidance and direction is the stuff of legends. His prepping for the impending disaster not only saved his life and his family’s life, it saved humanity! Not only that, but all life on earth was replenished through what he did by bringing the animals onto the ark. Even better, without the seed of the woman persevered through his lineage, there could have been no Messiah and no future salvation coming to anyone. Thank God Noah was a prepper!

Joseph Stocked up on Supplies

Joseph was too. His prepping also preserved the seed through which the Savior would come and Israel, the nation which would raise and recognize Him. Even so, much of Joseph’s prepping wasn’t with any of this in mind, as it would have been for Noah. Joseph was simply working in a sensible way in a foreign nation—and a thoroughly pagan nation at that. Yet, God gave Joseph a dream so that Joseph could be freed from prison and placed in charge of Egypt’s affairs, second only to Pharaoh. Why? Because Joseph’s ideas for how to prepare for the impending disaster—storing food—would save Egypt. Saving Israel was in no one’s mind at the time. Only the Lord’s. Thank God that Joseph didn’t think it beneath him to do a little righteous prepping!

Five Foolish Virgins Weren’t Prepared

Everyone knows the parable Jesus told about the wise and foolish virgins quoted above. This is set in the context of the End Times, the very times that we are talking about. The foolish virgins earned their nickname because they foolishly didn’t stay prepared for the expected arrival of the bridegroom. They didn’t have oil—the basic commodity they needed to keep their lamps burning. We can spiritualize this all we may want, but it is a clear tale of physical preparation.

The wise virgins weren't storing food as Joseph had, but they were keeping sufficient quantities of fuel on hand. Our expected Bridegroom, Jesus, praised them for doing so.

A Mother Prepared a Go Bag

One unsung prepping hero shows up in an unexpected way in the feeding of the five thousand. Recall that the disciples were completely unprepared and thrown into confusion, if not panic. They weren't being spiritual by being unprepared. They weren't even prepared to believe Jesus for a miracle. One boy, however, had been prepped by his mom. She alone looked ahead and thought it would be a good idea to send her son with plenty to eat—just in case. She didn't do a lot of prepping, but what she did was what Jesus needed someone to do. It was the seed from which He grew a miracle.

Is prepping Biblical? Indeed, it is!

A prudent person foresees danger and takes precautions. The simpleton goes blindly on and suffers the consequences. Proverbs 22:3 NLT



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CHAPTER TWO

Prepare to Go through It

If you have ever seen someone experience the sudden, unexpected death of a loved one, then you know that there is a lot to being mentally and emotionally prepared. You can brace yourself. That's why it is usually such a mercy to the ones left behind, if there was the sort of illness that prepared them for the inevitable letting go. Going through grief is hard, but if it catches you suddenly and unprepared it can sweep you off your feet. Surely, this is a major reason why the Lord has given us so much advance warning about the times to come.

Be ready and keep ready, you and all your hosts that are assembled about you, and be a guard for them. Ezekiel 38:7 ESV

End Times Challenge

Since Jesus says that a great tribulation" is coming, the single most important thing we can do is prepare ourselves with the right mental attitude.

Bridal Response

Step 1. Pray!

This must be repeated with every new challenge, because our usual reaction is to look to past experience and our abilities and say, "No way!" or try slugging it out bravely in our own strength. We all-too-easily forget that our strength is in Him, our hope is in Him—not in ourselves. So, if the Holy Spirit is making us aware (waking us up) to a fresh challenge, then the first thing the Lord wants us to do is cast that care on Jesus, because He cares for us enough to help us with it.¹ Pray, therefore, until fear and doubt fall away. Jesus is willing and able to help us with anything, that's why He guarantees in scripture that if we call on Him, He will rescue/save/help us every time.² How much do you have to call? Cry out in prayer until you receive confidence that He has heard you and the help is on the way.

Step 2. Face the Problem Squarely

We all know by now from the experience of daily life what a difference the right attitude makes. If we think we can put something off (and we can't), we'll be unready when it forces itself upon our attention—and thrown into confusion. If we resent doing something we have to do, we'll go through it badly. If we go at something half-heartedly or with a divided mind, we'll never find our way through. If, on the other hand, we have accepted that we have to do, we'll make up our minds to go all the way through it to the other side. This makes a crucial difference!



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In order to face this problem squarely, do the homework. Read, understand and pray over the biblical prophetic timeline and look around to see where we are on God's clock. Listen to the prophets. Abandon the false hope that you'll be "raptured out of here" and won't have to go through hard trials. If you cling to that illusion you will be doubly unprepared: you won't have done any of the other things (listed in this section) to prepare and you won't have the necessary attitude of a mind made up to persevere through thick and thin. Please heed the prophetic warnings of scripture and "prepare your mind for action" by making up your mind that God and His grace will help you get through anything you have to go through.

Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 1:13 ESV



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CHAPTER THREE

Prepare to Meet Him

This could be easily overlooked, especially if we don't stop to examine what may be hidden away in the depths of our heart. Do we really want His Kingdom to reign directly over us? Are we truly ready to meet Him face to face? There is quite a distance in the Bible between Adam and Eve who hid from God and those whom Paul says, "love His appearing." Part of being prepared, therefore, is making sure that there is nothing left in our hearts that would secretly want Jesus not to come!

Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, calling to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?"

Revelation 6:15-17 ESV

End Times Challenge

Jesus' arrival in Person will reveal a sharp division: Only those who are already fully surrendered to Him as Lord will love His appearing. All the rest will try to hide. Get ready for this by making sure your heart even now wants Him looking in on your every moment.

Bridal Response

Step 1. Pray!

This must be repeated with every new challenge, because our usual reaction is to look to past experience and our abilities and say, "No way!" or try slugging it out bravely in our own strength. We all-too-easily forget that our strength is in Him, our hope is in Him—not in ourselves. So, if the Holy Spirit is making us aware (waking us up) to a fresh challenge, then the first thing the Lord wants us to do is cast that care on Jesus, because He cares for us enough to help us with it. Pray, therefore, until fear and doubt fall away. Jesus is willing and able to help us with anything, that's why He guarantees in scripture that if we call on Him, He will rescue/save/help us every time. How much do you have to call? Cry out in prayer until you receive confidence that He has heard you and the help is on the way.

Step 2. Fully Surrender Now

That truth is that anything in us that is not fully surrendered to Jesus is in rebellion against Him. And there is something "implanted" in all of us that is fully on the side of the Great Rebellion. It is Satan's masterpiece: Self. Living with Self at the center is his way

of ruling on the earth through us. If we follow Self, rather than Jesus, we are following the evil one in disguise—wearing the mask of our own self-will. We usually do this from the fear that if we get too close to Jesus, we will have to do His will, rather than our own. That's the whole idea! Self-will and the love of Self that powers it, is at the heart of the pride-rebellion that Jesus will one Day arrive to abolish. If you don't want Him to do that for you now, how will you be ready for His arrival?

We have been commanded by Jesus—if we want to be His disciples—to deny self, take up our cross daily and follow Him.³ If we aren't denying Self, if we aren't taking up the cross of doing His will rather than our own, then we aren't following Him. How can we know? His peace is only given to us when we are doing His will His way.⁴ His will for us in all things is to trust Him with what He allows (in our lives and our loved ones) and to trust Him enough to listen and obey His leadings.⁵ Such a life requires full surrender to Him as our Lord. This is an on-going work. Jesus says that it is something we are to do daily. Eventually, we are increasingly purified by such a life of yielded love that we will become that holy Bride who loves His appearing.

Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing. 2 Timothy 4:8 ESV



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CHAPTER FOUR

Prepare to Join the Rescue

Possibly, everyone's first thought about the Last Days is how to either avoid or survive the Tribulation. Then, we may shift our focus to the lovely reality of Jesus being down here with us. Concern for the Great Harvest at the end of the age might be low on a lot of lists. We can be sure, however, that it's high on the Lord's. In fact, we're told that the Lord is delaying His Return into order to save as many as possible before things come to a screeching halt. No one will make it through the Tribulation by trying to save themselves alone. Heartily joining this colossal, divine effort to save others is the way forward. Get ready for that now.

The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. 2 Peter 3:9 ESV

End Times Challenge

A crisis brings out the best in people and the worst. Some adopt the (not good) idea that it's "every man for himself." Others become true heroes. How can we prepare to be heroic?

Bridal Response

Step 1. Pray!

This must be repeated with every new challenge, because our usual reaction is to look to past experience and our abilities and say, "No way!" or try slugging it out bravely in our own strength. We all-too-easily forget that our strength is in Him, our hope is in Him—not in ourselves. So, if the Holy Spirit is making us aware (waking us up) to a fresh challenge, then the first thing the Lord wants us to do is cast that care on Jesus, because He cares for us enough to help us with it. Pray, therefore, until fear and doubt fall away. Jesus is willing and able to help us with anything, that's why He guarantees in scripture that if we call on Him, He will rescue/save/help us every time. How much do you have to call? Cry out in prayer until you receive confidence that He has heard you and the help is on the way.

Step 2. Love the Lost

If all we truly care about is ourselves (and our small circle of loved ones), then that's all we'll care about. The terrible times that are coming will expose this as sin and refuse to reward it. According to Jesus, this kind of self-centered attempt to save our lives will guarantee our doom instead. Right after commanding us to deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow Him (even through tough times), He sternly warned us that "whoever would save his life will lose it."⁶ There simply is no safe way through these times except



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by becoming truly and fully Christian in our whole outlook. Even then, physical safety is not guaranteed, but if we seek first the King and His Kingdom, many of the other things we care about “will be added” to us.⁷

One of the best ways to “seek first the kingdom of God” is to seek its advance upon the earth. Extending His kingdom’s reach is what Jesus is after.⁸ He wants to save as many souls as He can before the Tribulation begins. Then, His plan is to work through those saved souls (that’s all of us) to save many more during the Tribulation. This is the Great Harvest at the End of the Age that He told us about through the parable in Matthew 13. His eyes have been on it for a long time! It’s time we resolutely got our eyes on it, too. There is nothing like having a purpose larger than oneself to make a person willing to sacrifice and fight for a good cause. If you don’t have a heart for the lost, repent for deadening the heart He gave you and pray that He will help you love the lost as He loves them. You need this as much as they need you to have it.

Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest." Matthew 9:37-38 ESV



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CHAPTER FIVE

Prepare by Fasting and Prayer

From the teaching of Jesus about casting out spirits, we know that prayer and fasting are at times essential elements of spiritual power. We see this same dynamic combination taking place in the Early Church when they needed clear direction from the Lord. We will need both supernatural power and divine guidance, perhaps like never before, as we seek to navigate the treacherous currents of the dark days ahead. Indeed, from a certain perspective the Last Days are an impassioned prayer movement (“Come, Lord Jesus”) fueled by the power of an imposed fast—as famines sweep the earth. Practice now for what will be perfected later.

Then I turned my face to the Lord God, seeking him by prayer and pleas for mercy with fasting and sackcloth and ashes. Daniel 9:3 ESV

End Times Challenge

It is always a good idea for Christians to pray, but the times that are coming will require prayer to be combined with fasting to get the “results” we’ll need. Why? How? When?

Bridal Response

Step 1. Pray!

This must be repeated with every new challenge, because our usual reaction is to look to past experience and our abilities and say, “No way!” or try slugging it out bravely in our own strength. We all-too-easily forget that our strength is in Him, our hope is in Him—not in ourselves. So, if the Holy Spirit is making us aware (waking us up) to a fresh challenge, then the first thing the Lord wants us to do is cast that care on Jesus, because He cares for us enough to help us with it. Pray, therefore, until fear and doubt fall away. Jesus is willing and able to help us with anything, that’s why He guarantees in scripture that if we call on Him, He will rescue/save/help us every time. How much do you have to call? Cry out in prayer until you receive confidence that He has heard you and the help is on the way.

Step 2. Begin Now

It is easy to see that everyone who was anyone in the Bible fasted at some point or another. All the major players fasted for God’s help with their mission. At certain times, everyone fasted. Why? Fasting from food (sometimes from water) is a dramatic declaration that we are so serious about seeking God that we are willing to deny our body its legitimate need: We want God and His will more than food. Sometimes people fasted in order to be drawn closer to the Lord by Him. At other times they fasted for guidance, healing or other specific gifts of the Spirit. Often the entire community fasted in



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repentance for sins and/or for rescue from impending calamities. We will likely feel compelled to fast for all these reasons.

Fasting can be done by individuals or in groups and is effective either way, if led by the Lord. If you don't know how to listen to the Lord for individual guidance for when to fast, or how to submit to your church's leadership when they call one, then fast and pray until you can! The important thing is to get started with it. The Holy Spirit can teach you far better if you are "up and running" than if you're merely pondering it as an academic question.

Here are some tips for how to do it. Start with partial short-term fasts, eliminating certain foods or food groups for a day or two, then work your way up. Come off the fast with small portions of a balanced diet, not a junk food extravaganza. Always have a prayer target, a purpose for the fast. That way any hunger pangs the devil tries to sidetrack you with, can be blunted by using them as reminders to pray harder for the target.⁹ That's the why and the how of fasting. The when is up to you, the Holy Spirit and events as they unfold. Our Bridegroom is away, but He is coming. Fast for His soon return!

"The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in those days." Luke 5:35 ESV



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CHAPTER SIX

Prepare by Discerning the Times

The gospels reveal that Jesus fully expected people to discern the times they were living in. He royally dressed down the Pharisees for not doing so. If this applied to the relatively peaceable events surrounding Jesus first coming, how much more must it apply to His second? From today, all the way through to His Return, we will need to have a “weather eye” for shifts and changes in the spiritual atmosphere surrounding us. How can you seek shelter from a storm, if you don’t know one is coming your way? How can we learn to discern the times we will be going through?

Hypocrites! You know to discern the face of the heaven and the earth, but how is it that you do not discern this time? Luke 12:56 ESV

End Times Challenge

Ignorance is not bliss where End Times events are concerned. Our lives may depend upon “discerning the times.” No doubt that’s why Jesus gave us so many signs in scripture. But that’s a problem: It gets confusing! What can we do so that we’ll know what to do?

Bridal Response

Step 1. Pray!

This must be repeated with every new challenge, because our usual reaction is to look to past experience and our abilities and say, “No way!” or try slugging it out bravely in our own strength. We all-too-easily forget that our strength is in Him, our hope is in Him—not in ourselves. So, if the Holy Spirit is making us aware (waking us up) to a fresh challenge, then the first thing the Lord wants us to do is cast that care on Jesus, because He cares for us enough to help us with it. Pray, therefore, until fear and doubt fall away. Jesus is willing and able to help us with anything, that’s why He guarantees in scripture that if we call on Him, He will rescue/save/help us every time. How much do you have to call? Cry out in prayer until you receive confidence that He has heard you and the help is on the way.

Step 2. Build from the Ground Up

We are told that the men of Issachar had a “good understanding of the times” they lived in and, therefore, they knew “what Israel ought to do.”¹⁰ If we are going to know what to do, we will also have to have a good understanding of the times. Like all efforts to gain understanding, a lot of information has to be gathered and absorbed. However, this can easily become overwhelming, since there is so much being written and said about the



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End Times, in addition to the mass of information in the scriptures. One can easily get lost in the details. One can also be side-tracked by non-essentials. What can we do?

The number one rule to remember is that wisdom is more important than information. Childlike trust in Jesus and trusting, humble dependence upon the Holy Spirit will bring better revelation to you than years of stressed-out study. If you want to understand the times, do all you can to understand your Lord by trusting and obeying Him now.¹¹ That said, information needs to be organized and it wants a structure in order to shape a good understanding.

For instance, you might organize your information gathering into these three groups: relevant scriptures, insightful prophecies and world events. Then, fasten that information onto the Bible basics, especially the timeline Jesus gave us in Matthew 24 (See Jesus' Own Timeline). This provides a wonderful framework for seeing the big picture. As always talk over what you are discerning with trusted friends, and talk things over with the Lord as you walk with Him.

Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. Ephesians 5:15-17 ESV



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CHAPTER SEVEN

Prepare by Studying Scripture

As always, the written Word is our anchor and our rock-solid source of revelation. Since over 100 chapters in the Bible carry messages about the Last Days, we would be wise to study them. Those passages are there for a reason. Apparently, Jesus believes that His Church will need to know with an absolute assurance many vital things about the days ahead. Much has already been gathered by others and we can learn from them, but as we know, nothing takes the place of hearing for yourself “what the Spirit says to the churches.” There is so much that is still “hidden in plain sight” that will need study, unfolding events and revelation by the Holy Spirit to make known.

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth. 2 Timothy 2:15 ESV

End Times Challenge

Jesus warned us repeatedly that the Last Days will be extremely deceptive times. This has already begun. Falsehood fills the airways and the web. But, only the truths of scripture will prepare us to recognize and resist the lies that are coming.

Bridal Response

Step 1. Pray!

This must be repeated with every new challenge, because our usual reaction is to look to past experience and our abilities and say, “No way!” or try slugging it out bravely in our own strength. We all-too-easily forget that our strength is in Him, our hope is in Him—not in ourselves. So, if the Holy Spirit is making us aware (waking us up) to a fresh challenge, then the first thing the Lord wants us to do is cast that care on Jesus, because He cares for us enough to help us with it. Pray, therefore, until fear and doubt fall away. Jesus is willing and able to help us with anything, that’s why He guarantees in scripture that if we call on Him, He will rescue/save/help us every time. How much do you have to call? Cry out in prayer until you receive confidence that He has heard you and the help is on the way.

Step 2. Study the Bible

There is no substitute for picking up the Bible and spending lots of time in it: reading it, marking it, taking notes on it, memorizing it for yourself, as well as by listening to good Bible teachers, going over it with friends and pouring through commentaries. You may say, “But that sounds like a lot of work!” Indeed, it is, but so is farming. Bread doesn’t show up on our tables by magic—it takes a lot of work to get seeds to the point of being



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sustenance. We are likewise going to have to bring the seed of God's Word to the point of real sustenance in our lives, becoming workers who "rightly handle the word of truth."

Fortunately, we don't have to do this alone, or even as drudgery. The Holy Spirit wrote the Book and loves every word in it. He genuinely loves opening passages to our understanding and—if we are open to Him—He shares His joy with us, as He "guides into all truth."¹² Not only that, but Jesus is the Truth that Holy Spirit seeks to reveal through every passage. Scripture is, therefore, a life-saving connector to Jesus which also works as a life-line for pulling us away from wrong thoughts and actions. Our lives may very well depend upon how well we know and believe the scriptures.

The truth is we will need to know the whole counsel of the Word of God and walk in it. It will never do to only focus on the Last Days' texts. That's because it is never enough just to seek information from the Bible. If transformation doesn't also occur, deception will fill the void. Remember the Pharisees? They knew the scriptures better than anyone, but entirely misunderstood what God was doing in their day and even opposed the true believers. Their sin was being hypocritically judgmental. They judged without remembering mercy.

Please take this simple test: Have you forgiven absolutely everyone in your past and your present—from the heart? If you have then, you have gained a mercy-based way of looking at sinful humanity and are obedient to the clear command of Jesus in scripture. In that case, He will continue to reveal Himself and His will to you.¹³ This will also prepare you for the times of lawlessness and offense that are coming, because you already know how to join Jesus on the Mercy Seat interceding for sinners. If not, you are already deceived by being a hearer of the word, not a doer. You are at risk of being swept away by the flood of judgmental and condemning attitudes that will turn the world against Christians and even Christians against Christians. The web is already flooded with this by those who think they "know" the scriptures. Be on guard!

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless. James 1:22 and 26 ESV



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CHAPTER EIGHT

Prepare for Judging Prophecies

Scripture is our unfailing guide, but it doesn't cover all the details of upcoming events. Fortunately for us, the Lord is already raising up prophets with visions, dreams and even direct encounters with Jesus and the righteous angels so that we can have prophetic guidance in the days ahead. Unfortunately, the enemy is doing the same! All manner of misinformation, demonically inspired visions, rumors, and lies are being spread abroad in the land—just as Jesus foretold. We must never be discouraged that there are so many false prophets but keep seeking out the true ones. Here are guidelines for better listening.

We also have a more sure Word of prophecy, to which you do well to take heed, as to a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the Daystar arises in your hearts, knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture came into being of its own private interpretation. 2 Peter 1:19-20 ESV

End Times Challenge

Last Days prophecy runs throughout scripture giving us the foundational understanding we need. To help us see upcoming events even more clearly, the Lord is already providing detailed information by His prophets. Just as scripture was carefully vetted to exclude “private interpretation,” we will need great discernment to vet current prophecies.

Bridal Response

Step 1. Pray!

This must be repeated with every new challenge, because our usual reaction is to look to past experience and our abilities and say, “No way!” or try slugging it out bravely in our own strength. We all-too-easily forget that our strength is in Him, our hope is in Him—not in ourselves. So, if the Holy Spirit is making us aware (waking us up) to a fresh challenge, then the first thing the Lord wants us to do is cast that care on Jesus, because He cares for us enough to help us with it. Pray, therefore, until fear and doubt fall away. Jesus is willing and able to help us with anything, that's why He guarantees in scripture that if we call on Him, He will rescue/save/help us every time. How much do you have to call? Cry out in prayer until you receive confidence that He has heard you and the help is on the way.

Step 2. Do Not Despise Prophecy

Listen to the prophets is a risky business. This has to be acknowledged up front. First, they often tell the church things that people don't want to hear. However, if you're not willing to be corrected, you're already at risk! Then, there are three risks associated with

the errors of the prophets themselves. One risk is being offended by the prophet's tone or message and tuning out God's voice of correction. Another risk, is that prophets in the flesh can become unwitting agents of condemnation, tearing down the Body of Christ, rather than building her up. There also is a risk of course that the prophet will have heard wrong and miss the mark, speaking words coming from their own heart and mind, rather than the Lord's.¹⁴ These concerns all apply to genuine prophets, though seasoned ones have the best track records. Finally, there is the risk of false prophets who don't just get some things wrong, they are wrong. Either by intention or deception, they serve the evil one's agenda, spreading mis-information and mis-direction.

That's a lot of risk. Nevertheless, there greatest risk of all comes by refusing to listen for the prophetic word. The specific, rhema word of prophecy is like 220 volts. It can hurt you if it's not handled right, but you're going to need to use it if you want to live and work in today's world. How to handle it right? The fundamental test of discernment is simple. Get to know the genuine thoroughly, in order to spot the counterfeit. Genuine prophecy will never, never, never diverge from the messages of scripture already given to us by Prophet Jesus. They will also never diverge from His Character. Test everything against what you already know of the Word of God: the living words of scripture and the Living Word Jesus.

If you sense in yourself that you are "running after" the next, fresh prophetic word and that your peace of mind depends upon what the prophets are saying, that would be deception. Your peace of mind can and should be thoroughly established upon the promises and Person of God as already revealed in scripture. Being "addicted" to prophecy is just as dangerous as despising it! The addicts always end up putting a current prophetic word above the clear teaching of scripture without realizing they are doing this. Consequently, fresh prophetic words rule over their feelings like a false god, binding them to the roller coaster of "what's about to happen."

What's about to happen? Always this: Jesus is right beside you and He will give you His peace and show you the next step, if you trust Him.¹⁵ That's all we are guaranteed. And it is enough. It's our meat and potatoes. Prophecy can be good nutrition, but it is secondary. Understand this, and you will be in a far better position to discern and judge prophetic words. Yes, we will need them, but they will help us only if we learn to handle them rightly. Therefore, keeping "testing" your own spirit to make sure you are truly abiding in Jesus and you'll be able to test that of the prophets.

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. 1 John 4:1 ESV

CHAPTER NINE

Prepare with Strong Fellowship

The picture Paul gives in Ephesians of Christian maturity is of believers who have united together, finding their place and purpose within the Body of Christ as a whole. Not a fractured Body, but a living, loving whole, undivided by bitterness, jealousy and suspicion. To survive the troubled times ahead, we will need to be in close, committed fellowship with other believers. This means we will need to trust each other and sacrificially serve one another at more than superficial levels. If we can't do that now, how can we expect to be a part of the "spotless" Bride for whom the Lord is returning?

And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. Hebrews 10:24-25 ESV

End Times Challenge

We know, we have been warned, that there will be a great falling away from the faith at the End of the Age.¹⁶ The enemy wants to "reap" that great falling away. How can we make sure that we won't end up in his net?

Bridal Response

Step 1. Pray!

This must be repeated with every new challenge, because our usual reaction is to look to past experience and our abilities and say, "No way!" or try slugging it out bravely in our own strength. We all-too-easily forget that our strength is in Him, our hope is in Him—not in ourselves. So, if the Holy Spirit is making us aware (waking us up) to a fresh challenge, then the first thing the Lord wants us to do is cast that care on Jesus, because He cares for us enough to help us with it. Pray, therefore, until fear and doubt fall away. Jesus is willing and able to help us with anything, that's why He guarantees in scripture that if we call on Him, He will rescue/save/help us every time. How much do you have to call? Cry out in prayer until you receive confidence that He has heard you and the help is on the way.

Step 2. Forgive and Embrace

The Lord's antidote for the world (with all its woes) is the church. Don't think buildings. Think people. But that's the problem, isn't it? We rarely get wounded by or offended with the architecture; it's with the people on the inside. Nevertheless, Jesus' plan evidently includes making sure we come into close personal fellowship with other believers. That sounds good and can be really great, but it also includes rubbing shoulders with people



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who are sinful like ourselves (though perhaps in different ways). If we have not learned how to say grace over this, we are already “falling away” from the condition of heart Jesus requires of us. He said we are to love one another in the same way that He loves us.¹⁷ His kind of unselfish, sacrificial, over-coming love can only be grown in close, committed relationship with people of His choosing. That’s the church.

When we are united with one another a supernatural “force multiplier” goes to work. We are dangerous to the enemy’s kingdom when we stand “as one” against him. Likewise, Jesus can do wonders at advancing His kingdom when we are all pulling at the oars with one heart and mind. Knowing this, the enemy has done his best to sow discord and offense within the Body. Already there are many who have dropped out, become discouraged, lost their passion and ceased “meeting together” with other believers. We are all going to have to work at overcoming this self-defeating tendency! Maybe we aren’t overcome by it (yet), but probably we know and love some who are. What can be done?

Offense is a combination of pride and unforgiveness. We hold Christians and Christian leaders to a higher standard, but we forget that we need mercy all the time, especially for the judging we do of fellow believers. Jesus commands us to love and forgive one another from the heart. Until now, He seems to give grace on this issue, weighing with compassion the wounds we carry and, therefore, not bringing our own sin of cold love under strict judgment. But the time is coming when “cold love” will cause many to become lost. So, let’s practice the warm love of a rekindled heart by forgiving everyone for everything and re-open our hearts wide to loving every fellow believer. Close fellowship is a luxury now. It will be life-support in the future.

Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up! Again, if two lie together, they keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone? And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken. Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 ESV



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CHAPTER TEN

Prepare by Learning Guidance

Jesus says that His sheep hear His voice.¹⁸ They not only know the scriptures, but they are able to listen for direction, encouragement and correction coming directly from Him. In the days ahead, it won't be enough to know His Word. It's won't be enough to hear from His prophets. It's highly likely that we will all need to listen directly to Him in one situation of danger or hardship after another. The truth is that we should all be doing this now! If we aren't, there is still time to learn, but guidance isn't a science that can be taught in a classroom. It's an art that is best learned by daily practice. Here's how.

Lean on, trust in, and be confident in the Lord with all your heart and mind and do not rely on your own insight or understanding. In all your ways know, recognize, and acknowledge Him, and He will direct and make straight and plain your paths.
Proverbs 3:5-6 AMP

End Times Challenge

Looking ahead looks murky. The times coming will be filled with confusion, deception and dangers on every side. We will need to know how to listen to the Lord for life-saving strategies and for daily steps of guidance to get us through. How will we do it then, if we can't do it now? Let's take every day as an opportunity to grow "ears to hear and eyes to see."

Bridal Response

Step 1. Pray!

This must be repeated with every new challenge, because our usual reaction is to look to past experience and our abilities and say, "No way!" or try slugging it out bravely in our own strength. We all-too-easily forget that our strength is in Him, our hope is in Him—not in ourselves. So, if the Holy Spirit is making us aware (waking us up) to a fresh challenge, then the first thing the Lord wants us to do is cast that care on Jesus, because He cares for us enough to help us with it. Pray, therefore, until fear and doubt fall away. Jesus is willing and able to help us with anything, that's why He guarantees in scripture that if we call on Him, He will rescue/save/help us every time. How much do you have to call? Cry out in prayer until you receive confidence that He has heard you and the help is on the way.

Step 2. Acknowledge, Trust, Obey

Step two—learning guidance—has three parts to it: acknowledge, trust and obedience. First, the Lord says that if we "acknowledge" Him, He will "make straight and plain" our paths. The truth is that Jesus and the Holy Spirit have already been guiding us without

our noticing it.¹⁹ Come on—if this weren't true you would be dead by now, or in jail, or worse. The best way, therefore, for gaining eyes to see and ears to hear guidance is by learning to recognize what He is already doing. Try this simple exercise. At the end of each day ask the Lord to show you where He helped you, or guided you, or gave you ideas that you were too busy or distracted to notice. Then, acknowledge Him! Thank Him for guiding you and for opening your eyes to see how He was doing it. This hindsight turns unconscious guidance into awake and aware guidance once you apply it to foresight. And by the way, slow down and you'll notice more; keep a quiet spirit and you'll hear more.

Trust is the golden key to guidance. Worry accomplishes nothing. Straining to “hear” something fails miserably. Entire surrender to Jesus brings us into that heavenly place on earth where we trust the Lord with all He is allowing, all He is sending, all He is withholding and all He is asking of us. Whenever surrender enters our heart at such a level, trust infuses our being with peace and the Holy Spirit lifts and leads us by a gentle “knowing” of the next right thing to do. This is the River of Peace and we will all need to learn how to swim in it, especially as the flood of unrighteousness fills the world around us.²⁰

Finally, there is the “O” word: obedience. The disciple’s “cross” of obedience will save us if we let it crucify our fallen nature.²¹ But woe to us if we don’t.²² The test comes when the Lord shows us something that He wants us to do that we don’t want to do, or warns us not to do something, that we are itching to try. Watch out! Guidance grinds to halt when we take the wheel. As the saying goes, “Jesus is Lord of All, or He isn’t lord at all.” Jesus never shows us His will to satisfy our intellectual interest. No, He shows us so that we will obey Him. Precisely, because we often don’t want to obey Him, the “surrender prayers” are necessary: “Lord, help me want to want what you want and hate what you hate. Make me willing to be made willing to surrender everything to you.” Keep praying and keep moving forward! Practice makes perfect.

Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. Ephesians 5:15-17 ESV



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CHAPTER ELEVEN

Prepare by Taking on Humility

It is well-known that pride goes before a fall. None of us want to fall during the days ahead. We want to walk faithfully, lovingly and bravely through them. That won't happen if pride gets its way! And pride can be very difficult to see in ourselves. It's the impulse to put our own needs ahead of others; to trust ourselves, rather than the Lord; and to draw confidence from our own knowledge and strength. This just won't work in the days ahead. Yielding to the Lord, extending ourselves for others, and a healthy recognition of how little we can do without Him—these are the “secret weapons” of humility. Fortunately, there are ways we can grow it while there's still time.

He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? Micah 6:8
ESV

End Times Challenge

The very opposite of Satan's “man of perdition” is God's “Man of humility”—Jesus. If we want our Lord to walk closely with us through this time, we will have to “walk humbly” with our God. Love desires it. Guidance requires it: Only humility recognizes the need for God's wisdom; only humility will obey it. Pride is not an option for the days ahead!

Bridal Response

Step 1. Pray!

This must be repeated with every new challenge, because our usual reaction is to look to past experience and our abilities and say, “No way!” or try slugging it out bravely in our own strength. We all-too-easily forget that our strength is in Him, our hope is in Him—not in ourselves. So, if the Holy Spirit is making us aware (waking us up) to a fresh challenge, then the first thing the Lord wants us to do is cast that care on Jesus, because He cares for us enough to help us with it. Pray, therefore, until fear and doubt fall away. Jesus is willing and able to help us with anything, that's why He guarantees in scripture that if we call on Him, He will rescue/save/help us every time. How much do you have to call? Cry out in prayer until you receive confidence that He has heard you and the help is on the way.

Step 2. Make Peace with Weakness

If we can hardly make it through daily life trusting in and relying upon our own strength, how will we hold up under the pressure of the days to come? The answer is stop trusting in and relying upon your self now! Self is no one's savior. Only Jesus is. He comes to all



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who ask Him. He strengthens all who rely upon Him. He refreshes all who turn to Him. He lifts the burden off all who cast their cares upon Him. He gives His wisdom freely to all who ask for it. The only thing in the universe that blocks this beautiful out-pouring of grace is pride. If we look to ourselves for the answers or the strengths we need, we'll miss the mark by a mile. Paul says, "Be strong in the Lord"—not our Self! Only in this way, will we be able to "stand in the evil day."²³

A major reason that we keep looking to ourselves is (ironically) our weaknesses. We hate them! We're always trying to hide them or over-master them. We get a big head (pride) when any of our strengths enable us to triumph over our weaknesses and suffer a thousand deaths when they don't. Reproaching ourselves for our weaknesses seems spiritual, but it is really pride in disguise. Jesus told us in advance that apart from Him we would be able to do no good thing.²⁴ The key is staying connected to Him. Working on keeping that life-giving connection in good working order is the work of enlightened humility. Why waste time faulting yourself for being so weak, so tired, so foolish, so empty-headed, or so inadequate, if these weaknesses are "friendly reminders" from the Holy Spirit to lean on Jesus instead? Just turn from them and grab hold of Him!

The truth is that we need our weakness to keep us humble. God only gives His grace to the humble and only the truly humble realize how much they need it. Since God and His grace are able to triumph over any obstacle we face, the weaknesses aren't the problem. He has already forgiven you for all your weakness, ignorance, inadequacy—you name it. He fully accepts you just as you are and has made His plans accordingly. He has fool proof plans and (if I can say it), we're the fools. So, let's turn around, shake hands with our weaknesses and call them our "tutors" who lead us back to Christ, by reminding us to lean on Him. Paul learned this lesson so well, he said he "boasted" in his weakness. That's the way to go!

But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong. 2 Corinthians 12:9-10 ESV



CHAPTER TWELVE

Prepare by Casting off Fear

The scriptures say that in the Last Days people's hearts will fail them for fear of the things coming on the earth. That doesn't have to be us! We have been forewarned both about the perilous times that are coming and of the danger that fear itself will hold for any who have not learned to vanquish this formidable temptation. With all of the other troubles surrounding us, the one thing we won't need to add is fear. That only makes every problem worse! Worse than that, it can even lead a frightened person to abandon the faith, rather than stay faithful in the face of persecution. Martyrs' of the past may not have always been entirely fearless, but they stood firm. We would do well to gain victories over fear now, so it won't gain victory over us later.

Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. Luke 21:26 KJV

End Times Challenge

We hardly need Jesus to warn us that people's hearts will tremble "for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth." Those times haven't even arrived, yet fear can grip us at the thought of them. Ok, let's take that as a friendly, diagnostic nudge from the Holy Spirit, alerting us of the need to overcome our fears even now. Get to them before they get to you.

Bridal Response

Step 1. Pray!

This must be repeated with every new challenge, because our usual reaction is to look to past experience and our abilities and say, "No way!" or try slugging it out bravely in our own strength. We all-too-easily forget that our strength is in Him, our hope is in Him—not in ourselves. So, if the Holy Spirit is making us aware (waking us up) to a fresh challenge, then the first thing the Lord wants us to do is cast that care on Jesus, because He cares for us enough to help us with it. Pray, therefore, until fear and doubt fall away. Jesus is willing and able to help us with anything, that's why He guarantees in scripture that if we call on Him, He will rescue/save/help us every time. How much do you have to call? Cry out in prayer until you receive confidence that He has heard you and the help is on the way.

Step 2. Learn to Fight Back

Everyone has fears, anxieties or worries that they have to learn to deal with. Some have learned so well that they are never crippled from going forward and rarely seem to limp. However, the times that are coming may even put their confidence to the test. Let's don't any of us imagine that we "can stand," lest we become the ones who fall."²⁵ The truth is



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that our confidence is often based on things such as our own abilities, family support, educational level or financial resources. What will happen when these things get overwhelmed by the earth-shaking events that are coming? The only ones who will emerge confident in these times will be those who have learned how to overcome fear God's way.

The first thing to know about fear is that it is not a personality issue. If you think that you are shy by nature, or fearful because that's just the way you are, then you will be defeated every time. We all have fears of some kind and these are due to past experiences and conditioning. Many of those fears seem imbedded in our personalities. Nevertheless, fear is a sinful condition of the heart. It is the sin of unbelief, of not trusting God with yourself, or your loved ones, or the situation you are facing (See "[The Power of Active Faith](#)"). Period. That's the bottom line. Unbelief is the sin that kept Israel out of their Promised Land, and it will keep any Christian out of what is promised to us—a life of confidence in God that overflows with peace and joy.²⁶ If you don't know who Jesus is, then you can't be expected to overcome your fears. But if you do know who He is, then you have Someone to trust with every problem you have, including your fears.

God declares that He is not the one who gave us our fears.²⁷ On the contrary, He is fully able to help us deal with them. That's what faith is for. Faith is God's antidote for fear. We apply it to fear, dread or worry anytime those rascals show up. The Lord calls them "spirits of fear"—not facets of personality. So, first we call on Jesus to help us (we "submit to God"). Then, we attack fear with faith by laying hold of the specific promises of God that answer our fears. The promises stir up our faith enough to "resist the devil." Then, we draw near to God, confessing that we are falling into fear and thanking Him for forgiving us for doubting Him (yet again!). This re-connects us to His boundless love. Faith in His perfect love "casts out fear."²⁸ Finally, we command fear to go (if it is still hanging around). That's the divine formula for spiritual warfare. Let's be warriors, not worriers! (For more on this see, "[Overcoming Fear](#).")

Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. James 4:7-8 ESV



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CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Prepare for Calamities

Unquestionably, there will be all manner of natural disasters, civil crises and other dangers that we should prepare to face. Not everything has a purely spiritual answer. During World War II, they sang, “Praise the Lord and pass the ammunition.” That got the balance right! If you can see a storm coming, don’t expect the Lord to close the windows for you. Making plans and being prepared is a part of being faithful. However, if practical preparation is impossible for you to do given your circumstances, then be assured that the Lord knows this and has made other plans. On the other hand, if the Lord has us placed in such a way that we can set things aside, then very likely His plans include us being prepared. Here are some things to take into consideration.

And there will be famines and pestilences and earthquakes in different places. All these are the beginning of sorrows. Matthew 24:7-8 ESV

End Times Challenge

We can already see an array of record-breaking disasters striking different regions. But we cannot see what specific disasters we may have to face. That’s the challenge. It’s one thing to prepare for a natural crisis typical to your region, but these will be uncharted waters for all of us.

Bridal Response

Step 1. Pray!

This must be repeated with every new challenge, because our usual reaction is to look to past experience and our abilities and say, “No way!” or try slugging it out bravely in our own strength. We all-too-easily forget that our strength is in Him, our hope is in Him—not in ourselves. So, if the Holy Spirit is making us aware (waking us up) to a fresh challenge, then the first thing the Lord wants us to do is cast that care on Jesus, because He cares for us enough to help us with it. Pray, therefore, until fear and doubt fall away. Jesus is willing and able to help us with anything, that’s why He guarantees in scripture that if we call on Him, He will rescue/save/help us every time. How much do you have to call? Cry out in prayer until you receive confidence that He has heard you and the help is on the way.

Step 2. Do What You Can

Begin where you can. In the absence of specific guidance by the Holy Spirit, we are meant to go by prayer and common sense. Reason would tell us that it is better to do some preparation than none. It also would tell us to prepare first for those calamities that are typical to our own region. These would be the natural disasters which historically strike close to home. Amplify them in intensity and make your plans accordingly. There

are usually many web-sites that will help you with this stage of planning because others before you in your region have been asking those same questions. At the very least, this includes plans for food and water, first aid, flashlights (and batteries), and a hand-cranked or powered generator (for keeping communications going). Don't feel you have to act on every thought that occurs to you, especially if it seems to be fear based. But any persistent thought along these lines may be a leading of the Spirit.

Next, comes thinking outside the box. Consider the geo-political situation that surrounds you. Is your part of the world a likely candidate for economic collapse or civil unrest? If there were to be a nuclear war, is your area a prime target? What kind of natural disasters could your area be subject to, if unusual events occur? On the south coast of the US, for instance, we typically expect and prepare for hurricanes, but there are also earthquake fault lines that have not yet gone active but might. On the other hand, forest fires and mudslides in our flat coastal plain are not worth considering as risks. As you pray and think over the uncustomary, but potential risks, the Holy Spirit will bring further preparation ideas to mind.

As in everything, it is possible to go over-board. The problem here is that we don't know how bad it is going to get. So, prepare for the worst and then some. Instead of planning for a typical disruption of a week or so, prepare for three months if you can. If you can't afford it or don't have space to store it, do what you can. In addition, consider what you might have to do to get out quick. Draw up a list of things to take. Have a safe destination in mind (and prepared if possible) and gather essentials into a "bug-out bag"—a backpack that's packed and ready to go with you at a moment's notice. You can't prepare for every eventuality, but you can do what you can as God gives you the good sense to get ready.

The prudent sees danger and hides himself [takes refuge], but the simple go on and suffer for it. Proverbs 22:3 ESV

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

The Matthew 24 Timeline

The Modern King James Version (MKJV)

Jesus gave us a timeline for the major events of the End Times. This wonderful outline includes the birth pangs, the Great Tribulation, the rise of the antichrist and all the stunning elements of His Return. It functions like a skeleton, providing the structural elements that support living flesh and connects them the right way.

The only thing left for us to do is to “put meat on these bones” by taking the passages from elsewhere in the Bible and attaching them at the right spot. Of course, if you take this structure apart and rearrange it (as some do), you don’t get a lovely prophetic creation from Jesus, you get a monstrosity. But why would anyone want to do that?

He [Jesus] answered them, "When it is evening, you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.' And in the morning, 'It will be stormy today, for the sky is red and threatening.' You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times. Matthew 16:2-3 ESV

Jesus Predicts the Temple’s Destruction

1 And Jesus went out and departed from the temple. And His disciples came to Him to show Him the buildings of the temple. 2 And Jesus said to them, Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, There shall not be left here one stone on another that shall not be thrown down.

This timeline—usually called the “Olivet Discourse”—came forth not as prepared remarks during class time, but simply in the course of ordinary conversation. Of course, nothing with Jesus is ordinary. The disciples found that out when they came to Jesus wanting to share the view with Him of the temple’s buildings as they were departing from its grounds. Coming from the sticks (Galilee), they would have been over-awed by the splendor and magnificence of Herod’s temple in Jerusalem. They expected Jesus to join with them in praising it. Instead, He shattered their mood by foretelling its utter destruction: there would not be even “one stone on another that shall not be thrown down.” The arrow went deep. The Temple stood for something far greater and more substantial than itself. It could only be thrown down, if God were to bring a terrible judgment against the Jewish nation.

The Disciples Ask Three Questions

3 And as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the world?



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Upon descending the temple mount, Jesus and His disciples would have crossed the lovely Kidron Valley with its tombs of the kings and the Garden of Gethsemane, then climbed to the crest of the Mount of Olives. All Jerusalem lay before their gaze, but the only thing that held their attention for that half hour walk was the sobering effect of Jesus' words. As soon as their Master was seated, they approached Him with the question filling their minds (and ours). It's actually not one, but three separate questions. When will the temple be destroyed? What will be the sign of Your Return? And, what will be the sign of the "end of the world"?

Jesus Warns against Deception

4 And Jesus answered and said to them, Take heed that no man deceive you. 5 For many will come in My name, saying, I am Christ, and will deceive many. 6 And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled, for all these things must occur; but the end is not yet.

Jesus began with a stern warning. We need to heed it, too. The thing of first importance our Lord evidently wants us to know is that these will be extremely deceptive times. There will be false messiahs and false messages. "Many" will be deceived by this. Let's remember that the word Christ or messiah in Jesus' day was not a man's name, but a title that meant a heaven-sent savior. Many will claim to be able to "save" humanity from the troubles coming on the earth. That's the thing to watch out for. There will also be wars and "rumors" of even more wars breaking out (think nightly news). We are not to be "troubled" by such reports, deceived into thinking that they are signs that the world is about to end. These things are unavoidable, but "the end is not yet." Other things have to happen first.

The Beginning of Sorrows (Birth Pangs)

7 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines and pestilences and earthquakes in different places. 8 All these are the beginning of sorrows.

Now, Jesus describes conditions which He calls "the beginning of sorrows," a phrase which carries the meaning of the pains or throes (travail) of childbirth.²⁹ Hence, these pre-Tribulation "sorrows" are often referred to as "birth pangs." The picture here is of a world going into the convulsions of labor as the new thing God is doing is birthed upon the earth. As with human birth pangs, we can expect an increase in magnitude (of the pain they will inflict) and in frequency, as these "contractions" come closer together. Specifically, we are to watch for famines, pestilences (plagues) and earthquakes world-wide. These calamities are already increasing. In addition, the fabric of human society will be torn as nation (ethnic group) rises against ethnic group and kingdoms (what we would call nations) rise against kingdoms. This sign, too, is falling into place. Although we do not have a world-wide war going on, the number of wars world-wide is rising sharply.



Tribulation and Persecution Begin

9 Then they will deliver you up to be afflicted and will kill you. And you will be hated of all nations for My name's sake. 10 And then many will be offended, and will betray one another, and will hate one another. 11 And many false prophets will rise and deceive many. 12 And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many will become cold.

Once the birth pangs reach a certain level, persecution will break out. Jesus does not say if the two events are causally related, though it may be that Christians and Jews will be blamed for the calamities striking the earth. Nor is He saying that there will be no persecution until this time. He is the One who stated plainly that in the world we would have tribulation.³⁰ The word He used includes the meaning of persecution and indeed, times of persecution have always plagued the church. However, during this time we “will be hated of all nations.” This is a world-wide persecution that begins during the birth pangs as unbelievers turn against the Church.

This will prove too much for some believers to bear. Verses 10 to 12 heartbreaking describe not unbelievers, but Christians turning against Christians. We can expect betrayals as “many” believers become “offended,” turning against the faith and those who keep it.³¹ Deception will increase, so much so, that lawlessness “will abound” even among believers. For many people of faith, the love of God and love of man will simply “grow cold” as their faith dies. Knowing this possibility exists, pray that it never happens to you or yours. Jesus is warning us so we can prepare.

Perseverance, Dedication and Blessing

13 But he who endures to the end, the same shall be kept safe. 14 And this gospel of the kingdom shall be proclaimed in all the world as a witness to all nations. And then the end shall come.

The conditions in the previous verses lead into a glorious promise that contains a warning. Jesus promises that help will come to those “who endure to the end.” Those who set their “hearts on pilgrimage” to pass faithfully through these perilous times are guaranteed that God will keep them safe.³² Does this mean no physical harm will come their way? Hardly. Jesus previously declared that many faithful believers will “be afflicted and killed.” Being kept safe in this context means being kept from apostasy—denying the faith. Such apostasy is exactly what comes upon the many believers who betray fellow believer, turn lawless and grow cold hearts. In this promise is the warning that if we don’t doggedly purpose to go through everything faithfully, we too may become “offended” by what God allows the devil to do.

Meanwhile, one sign of enduring faith is that “the gospel of the kingdom” will at last go out to all the world, reaching every nation. This is not the “gospel of salvation” as great as that is but the message that this world has a kingdom that is coming in fullness and a King who is already ruling the universe. This focus of the gospel message is not about getting to heaven but bringing heaven down to earth through faith and obedience to earth’s rightful King. As the Church aligns with its message and as that message is given a living witness, “the end will come.” Which end



does Jesus mean? Is this the end of the birth pangs or the end of the tribulation that comes before He Returns?

The Abomination of Desolation

15 Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place (whoever reads, let him understand). 16 Then let those in Judea flee into the mountains. 17 Let him on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house; 18 nor let him in the field turn back to take his clothes. 19 And woe to those who are with child, and to those who give suck in those days! 20 But pray that your flight is not in the winter, nor on the sabbath day;

This point on the timeline directly connects with Daniel's prophecy which describes the rule of the antichrist. According to Daniel 12:11, when this event happens there will be 3 ½ years left before "the end of days."³³ Notice that Jesus, speaking to His disciples (and through them to us) says "when you see" this abomination taking place, then run for cover. How He describes that flight to safely is couched in the images of His day, but the key thing to note is that Jesus fully expects believers to see these things and take evasive action. There is nothing here to suggest that believers will already have been taken to safety (a pre-trib rapture) or that Jesus will suddenly take them away now that this sign is revealed (a mid-trib rapture). No. We will be here, and He will not be coming to rescue us yet. We will, therefore, need to seek safety.

"Great" Tribulation Begins

21 for then shall be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world to this time; no, nor ever shall be. 22 And unless those days should be shortened, no flesh would be saved. But for the elect's sake, those days shall be shortened.

It only gets worse. "Great tribulation" begins. It won't last forever—only for a while (those 3 ½ years mentioned above). But while it lasts Jesus says that it will be the worst the world has ever seen. Therefore, without a doubt this is the Great Tribulation which we all know is coming and which we all hope to escape or survive as the case may be. Our usual time for it is seven years, not three and a half. Without opening up that debate, much less trying to resolve, let's just take notice that Jesus doesn't say, "The great tribulation begins now" at this juncture where the abomination of desolation is revealed. He is simply saying that once this abomination stands in the temple, there will be "great tribulation." That is something everyone can agree on! Perhaps, this marks the mid-point of a tribulation that grew up as the birth pangs gained intensity. In that case, we don't have a marker for the exact moment the seven-year Great Tribulation begins. At least not with this timeline. But we do have its mid-point.

Deceived People and Deceptive Signs

23 Then if any man shall say to you, Lo, here is Christ! Or, There! Do not believe it. 24 For false Christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and



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wonders; so much so that, if it were possible, they would deceive even the elect. **25 Behold, I have told you beforehand. 26 Therefore if they shall say to you, Behold, He is in the desert! Do not go out. Behold, He is in the secret rooms! Do not believe it. 27 For as the lightning comes out of the east and shines even to the west, so also will be the coming of the Son of Man. For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered.**

For the third time, Jesus warns against deception! Once more, false messages of hope will abound, along with false claims to be the savior everyone needs. Don't fall for it. No matter how badly believers will want Jesus to come, He's not coming early! So, He says, "Do not go out... Do not believe it." Nevertheless, even now—without any of these signs in place—without a temple and the antichrist in the temple, many believers are already running around expecting Jesus to come for His Bride at any minute. Once again, through the disciples, Jesus is telling us that we will be "on the ground" during this time of persecution and tribulation. But we are to hold out in faith. He will not be coming secretly. When He comes everyone on earth will see Him just as we see lightning when it flashes "out of the east and shines even to the west." But that moment hasn't yet arrived, though it is just around the corner.

The Tribulation Ends with Darkness

29 And immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun shall be darkened and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from the heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken.

This foreboding sign will also bring relief. It will certainly be a terrifying sign to unbelievers of their imminent doom. However, for those believers who have survived everything the antichrist and the devil threw at them, this darkening of the world will shout out that the Light of the World is about to appear. This will be like the drum roll which announces something big is about to happen. Just as the beginning of a play is announced by bringing the house lights down, this will claim everyone's attention and bring the whole chaotic world to silence. For those who have remained faithful, it will be a breathless silence filled with a heavenly anticipation. We will know that our "rapture" is about to occur. The theory has that backwards, too. Every last one of us will feel the thrill in our hearts as the lights dim. We'll look up knowing that He is coming for us. And then...

Jesus Returns for All to See

30 And then the sign of the Son of Man shall appear in the heavens. And then all the tribes of the earth shall mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of the heaven with power and great glory. 31 And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather His elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.

The "sign" of the Son of Man appears! This word sign could easily be translated "supernaturally wondrous or miraculous." Don't think that it means our English word for something written in code that requires interpretation. Not in this moment! All eyes will see Him. Jesus will be



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“coming in the clouds of the heaven with power and great glory.” That will be so stupendous a sign that no one could possibly miss it, even those who might wish they could. For, “all the tribes of the earth”—the unbelievers who refused to acknowledge Him—will mourn. Their dismay will be great for it will be too late to receive Him now. On the other hand, those who have received Him and have been proven faithful, will hear that “the sound of a trumpet” and we will rise. Whether we are in “the heavens” (having died) or are still living under earth’s “four winds,” the angels will “gather His elect” to be with Him forever.

When does all this happen? After we go through the birth pangs, after we go through the persecution and the perils, after the antichrist has his dark day, after the tribulation of those days, then “we will see” the Son of Man—Jesus!—coming for His faithful Bride at last!



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Scriptures and Footnotes

¹ Pride (in us) tries to find the answer to life's challenges in us; humility casts all cares on the One who wants to help us: Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. 1 Peter 5:6-7 ESV

² This promise is given numerous times in scripture. The Lord wants us to know His help is always available to anyone who calls on Him for anything—lavishly available ("bestowing His riches"). For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him: For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." Romans 10:12-13 ESV

³ And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.

⁴ The Lord tells us that there is no peace for the wicked. His kingdom's peace is only given to those who yield to Him as their King. Although we have yielded in general (and by lip service) to Jesus as Savior and Lord, our moment by moment rebellion is not allowed any true peace, because rebellion to His leadership over us is "wicked." "There is no peace," says the LORD, "for the wicked." Isaiah 48:22 ESV; However, there is plenty of peace for us if we yield and let Him "rule" over us: And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Colossians 3:15 ESV

⁵ Ia 26:3 You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you. Isaiah 26:3 ESV

⁶ And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself? Luke 9:23-25 ESV

⁷ But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. "Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. Matthew 6:33-34 ESV

⁸ The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. 2 Peter 3:9 ESV

⁹ I call this beating the enemy's sword of temptation into a plowshare that grows my purpose by reminding me to pray. It works every time: He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide disputes for many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Isaiah 2:4 ESV

¹⁰ Of Issachar, men who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do, 200 chiefs, and all their kinsmen under their command. 1 Chronicles 12:32 ESV

¹¹ Keeping the commands of God is always dependent upon trusting Him enough to do it. To such trusting and obeying servants, Jesus promises He will "reveal" Himself and His will: He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me. And he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will reveal Myself to him. John 14:21 ESV

¹² When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. John 16:13 ESV

¹³ Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him." John 14:21 ESV

¹⁴ Thus says the LORD of hosts: "Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you, filling you with vain hopes. They speak visions of their own minds, not from the mouth of the LORD. They say continually to those who despise the word of the LORD, 'It shall be well with you'; and to everyone who stubbornly follows his own heart, they say, 'No disaster shall come upon you.'" Jeremiah 23:16-17 ESV

¹⁵ Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. John 15:4-5 ESV

¹⁶ And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. Matthew 24:10 ESV

¹⁷ A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. John 13:34 ESV



¹⁸ To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. Luke 10:3-4 ESV

¹⁹ He told Israel that He “carried” them: The LORD your God who goes before you will himself fight for you, just as he did for you in Egypt before your eyes, and in the wilderness, where you have seen how the LORD your God carried you, as a man carries his son, all the way that you went until you came to this place.’ Deuteronomy 1:30-31 ESV

²⁰ For thus says the LORD: “Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the nations like an overflowing stream; and you shall nurse, you shall be carried upon her hip, and bounced upon her knees. Isaiah 66:12 ESV

²¹ And he said to all, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. Luke 9:23 ESV

²² For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. Luke 9:24 ESV

²³ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might... Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Ephesians 6:10 and 13 ESV

²⁴ Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. John 15:4-5 ESV

²⁵ Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. 1 Corinthians 10:12 eSV

²⁶ Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion... As I swore in my wrath, ‘They shall not enter my rest.’” Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. Hebrews 3:7-8, 11-12 ESV

²⁷ For God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. 2 Timothy 1:7 MKJV

²⁸ There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love. 1 John 4:18 ESV

²⁹ From Strong’s Complete Concordance: *ōdin* Akin to G3601; a pang or throe, especially of childbirth: - pain, sorrow, travail.

³⁰ I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.” John 16:33 ESV

³¹ Strong’s: The word for offended is *skandalizo* which means to “scandalize”; from G4625; to entrap, that is, trip up (figuratively stumble [transitively] or entice to sin, apostasy or displeasure): - (make to) offend.

³² Blessed are those whose strength is in you; who have set their hearts on a pilgrimage. Passing through the valley of Weeping, they make it a place of springs. Yes, the autumn rain covers it with blessings. They go from strength to strength. Everyone of them appears before God in Zion. Psalm 84:5-7 WEB

³³ And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the desolating abomination set up, a thousand two hundred and ninety days shall occur. Blessed is he who waits and comes to the thousand three hundred and thirty-five days. But you go on to the end, for you shall rest and stand in your lot at the end of the days. Daniel 12:11-13 MKJV

