

Lesson #19

Three Whendicators

Yes, the kingdom is invisible, but it can be seen by those who see in the spirit. As we learn to see the kingdom and put what we see into practice, we are indirectly revealing the kingdom to the world and doing the work of preparation. Nevertheless, as the concept of preparation implies, the kingdom will one day appear in the natural world for all to see and most people are curious about *when* that will be. In other words: Is there a way to measure our progress in the work of kingdom preparation?

People have been asking this questions from the very beginning, starting with Jesus's disciples. They asked, "**Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel**" (Acts 1:6)? Jesus replied, "**It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority**" (Acts 1:7). Jesus also told us that no one knows the day or the hour (Matt. 24:36).

It may appear that Jesus was simply saying, "Don't be concerned about when" and then changed the subject from *when* the kingdom would appear to that of simply being a witness. However, upon closer examination, that is not the case. Jesus did tell them when, but not according to clocks and calendars. He told them what they had to do first.

But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

— Acts 1:8 (NKJV).

Many have erred through history and have upset the faith of many by setting dates for Jesus' return. As a result people tend to steer clear of "the when question." But if we look at the question as it relates to a job being completed instead of years, days, and hours, then we begin to realize that the Bible has much to say about *when* Jesus will return. In fact, the Bible tells us that those who know God will *not* be surprised by the coming of the Lord. Yes, we are told that the day of the Lord will come by surprise, "like a thief in the night." But that is speaking of those who are asleep or in darkness. The passage continues saying, "But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief" (see 1 Thess. 5:2-4).

For those who can see the kingdom in the spirit, there is a time piece that indicates when the work of preparation is complete and the return of Christ is at hand. That time piece is the Church. There are at least three general signs, or *whendicators* that we will see in the church.

1. When We See a Mature Church Walking in the Unity of Faith

¹¹ And He Himself gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,

¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,

¹³ till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;

The work of the five types of ministries in verse 11 is a work of preparation. When the preparation is complete and the kingdom appears, the work of these five ministries will be complete they will no longer be needed. The key word in this passage is “till” in verse 13, which is a *whendicator*. As we see true unity and maturity developing in the church, which resembles the stature of Christ, we should be expectant of the Lord’s return.

Paul reproved the Corinthians for their immaturity specifically mentioning the lack of unity (divisions) among them.

² I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able *to receive it*, and even now you are still not able;
³ for you are still carnal. For where *there are* envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like *mere* men?

— 1 Corinthians 3:2-3 (NKJV)

Maturity is a description of walking in the unity of faith. Unity is the result of faith, because true faith comes by hearing the word of God (see Rom 10:17) and God’s word does not contradict or create division. When we are hearing and getting instruction from God, our lives are a concert of unity. This is a picture of a mature church that has moved from milk to meat, from dead works of religion to living works of obedience based on a relationship with Him.

Unity is a good thing, but a poor cause. When unity becomes the cause, people will usually compromise their values for the sake of unity. People do not unify around a call for unity. Unity happens when people have a worthy cause, and for us, the cause is the appearing King and His kingdom.

Therefore, our first *whendicator* as to the return of Jesus is *when the church is mature and unified in the faith*. This corresponds with the first principle of preparation, Repentance from dead works and faith toward God.

2. When the Church is Walking in Purity and Holiness

²⁵ ... Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, ²⁶ that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, ²⁷ that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.

— Ephesians 5:25-27 (NKJV)

This passage from Ephesians, Chapter 5, presents the classic marriage analogy of Christ and the church. Here we see the present work of purification of the church referred to as “the washing of water by the word” with the aim of producing a glorious, holy and pure bride who is ready for the King and the consummation of the relationship.

We saw in the previous lesson that Christ’s return corresponds with the wife (the church) having made herself ready. Though her bright and clean clothing in this passage (see Rev 19:7-8) refers to acts

of righteousness, the symbolism is the same as we see in Ephesians, Chapter 5. Holiness and purity are certainly a part of the picture.

There are other passages that connect purity and holiness to the Lord's return and the appearing of His kingdom. John tells us that all who hope for the revealing of Jesus, purify themselves, even as Christ is pure.

² Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. ³ And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

— 1 John 3:2-3 (NKJV)

Also, in Paul's letter to Titus, this *whendicator* is seen again. The reference to denying worldly lusts and godly, as we look for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of Jesus Christ, is a clear reference to the fact that pure and holy living is part of kingdom preparation.

¹² Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; ¹³ Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;

— Titus 2:12-13 (KJV)

Therefore, our second *whendicator* as to the return of Jesus is *when the Church is walking in purity and holiness*. This corresponds to the second principle of preparation, Doctrines of Baptisms (or washings).

3. When the Church has Taken the Kingdom Message to the Entire Earth

¹⁴ And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.

— Matthew 24:14 (NKJV)

It is important to reiterate that Jesus' statement in Matthew 24:14 is speaking of the gospel of the *kingdom*, not simply the gospel. Many Christians today preach the gospel (of salvation) but not the gospel of the kingdom.

As pointed out in the introduction of this lesson, Jesus answered the disciples' "when question" by essentially saying, "The kingdom will appear *when the good news of my Kingdom has spread to the ends of the earth*" (see Acts 1:6). This essentially the same thing He said in Matthew 24:14.

This answer put the ball in their court and gave them a keen sense of purpose and responsibility, provoking them to take action regarding kingdom preparation. This would explain why some of the writers of the New Testament seemed to think that the return of Jesus was a possibility in their life-times. Maybe that is the attitude that God wants all of us to have!

Preparation for the kingdom government of God is quite practical. Not everyone will believe and not every Christian will understand before Jesus returns. But there will be a contingent of people in every nation who are called and prepared to rule and reign with Christ at His return. Some of these rulers may

return with Jesus at the resurrection of the just (Luke 14:14) and other may be alive and transformed when He comes.

The work of preparation is continuing, though we often do not see it. "Another parable He spoke to them: 'The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened'" (Matt. 13:33). This parable addresses the issue of the gospel of the kingdom spreading in the world while being hidden (from those in darkness upon whom the day of the Lord will come like a thief). Jesus told the Pharisees, "The kingdom of God does not come with observation" (Luke 17:20). The Kingdom of heaven is in the world now, though hidden from many, and is growing, spreading, and infiltrating the planet.

Therefore, our third *whendicator* as to the return of Jesus is *when the Church has taken the Gospel of the Kingdom to the entire earth*. This corresponds to the third principle of preparation, The laying on of hands, which speaks of discipleship and teaching others to observe Jesus' commandments.

Principle to Action

It is one thing to learn foundational principles academically, but quite another to translate them into action. When these *whendicators* are put into action they become accelerators. Acceleration was addressed briefly in Lesson #13 of this Study: [The Advancing Church](#), and the three *whendicators* are presented as accelerators in [The Kingdom Paradigm, Lesson # 19: Hastening Toward the Goal](#). Taking actions in these areas is one of the ways we accelerate toward the day of the Lord.

Each of the principles of preparation point us toward a general course of action that must become a part of our lives if we are to be effective in the ministry of preparation.

Principle to Action #1: Cultivate Seeing Eyes and Listening Ears in Prayer

As we have seen, repentance from dead works requires faith and faith comes by hearing the Word of God. Hearing from God requires that we have a relationship with Jesus Christ—that we know Him. In that relationship is where we see what the Father is doing and hear specific instructions which results in works that are alive instead of dead. Living works come from a living relationship with Jesus. Prayer is a two way street, not a monologue presented to God. Without the listening ear in prayer, a living relationship can easily become dead religion.

Principle to Action #2: Pursue Holiness and Walk in Obedience

Baptism/washing speaks about cleansing, purity, and holiness. There is ample exhortation in the scriptures regarding holiness. We are told in Hebrews to pursue holiness, without which no one will see the Lord (Heb 12:14) and Peter exhorts saying, "...He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:15-16).

But being holy is not simply about repenting and saying "No" to sin. Pursuing holiness is directly linked to #1 above. Holiness is about obedience to the directions we hear from God in prayer and what we see the Father doing. In Romans 16:26, Paul mentions "...the obedience of faith." A living word produces a living faith that manifests in living works - action. Walking in obedience makes sin and uncleanness irrelevant because it sets us apart and puts us on a higher path, a highway of holiness where the unclean do not go (see Is 35:8).

Principle to Action #3: Multiply Yourself

We have seen that the laying on of hands can be summed up as impartation. We have also seen that one of the movements of the 20th century corresponding to the restoration of the laying on of hands was discipleship. Discipleship is essentially imparting truths and practices from one person to another to create a multiplication of disciples. Paul instructed his disciple, Timothy saying, “And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Tim 2:2).

There is a big difference between making converts and making disciples. Making converts is addition. Making disciples is multiplication. The table below will help show how the foundational principles of preparation relate to the three *whendicators* and the corresponding statements of action.

	Principle One	Principle Two	Principle Three
Principles of Preparation	Repentance From Dead Works and Faith Toward God	Doctrines of Baptisms/Cleansing	Laying on of Hands
Whendicator	When the church is mature and walking in unity of the faith (Eph 4:13).	When the Church is walking in purity and holiness (Eph 5:27)	When the Church has taken the gospel of the Kingdom to the ends of the earth (Matt 24:14)
Principle to Action (Accelerator)	Avoid dead religion and develop listening ears and seeing eyes	Receive pursue holiness and walk in obedience	Multiply Yourself

Measuring Our Progress

So how much progress is the church making toward the goals of unified maturity, holy conduct, and taking the kingdom message to the world? The answer to that question is spiritually discerned and may be unclear or a matter of opinion. But the action we should take in our own realms of responsibility to accelerate toward these goals is perfectly clear. Peter said "what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God" (2 Peter 3: 11,12 NAS). By seeing these answers to "the when question" and adopting the corresponding attitudes and actions, we can prepare the way and hasten toward the return of Jesus and the appearing of His kingdom.

In the next lesson we will look at the concept of Training for Reigning. By hastening toward the day of the God, we are not only preparing the way for the King, but we are preparing ourselves to reign with Him.