

## **Chapter 12**

### **Preparation Theology**

The phrase Preparation Theology might be coining a new phrase, but the concept is not new, though it has been lost to many Christians. Grasping this concept is huge when it comes to building a Kingdom Paradigm; its importance cannot be overstated. Preparing the way for the Kingdom of God to appear is becoming a central issue for those are seeking real purpose in life.

In the preparation view, the Church is the womb of the Kingdom of God. [1] Just like a baby inside the womb has a big influence on the external lives of its parents, so does the yet-to-appear Kingdom of God. Think about it. When learning of a new pregnancy, parents make all kinds of adjustments and preparations, emotionally and economically. The extended family is also affected with grandparents making plans for visits months in advance. Likewise, the unseen Kingdom of God is real and functioning. It is operating and developing within God's people and the reality of that kingdom causes us to impact the world around us as we prepare the way for its appearing.

#### **Elijah Saints**

The return of Jesus will initiate a day of vengeance in which the kingdom rule of Jesus Christ will be swiftly and powerfully enforced throughout the earth. Malachi spoke of one who would prepare the way for this day of the Lord's vengeance.

##### **Malachi 3:1 (KJV)**

1 Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts.

##### **Malachi 4:5-6 (KJV)**

5 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord:

4 And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

Isaiah also prophesied of a voice crying, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord" (Isa 40:3). Referring to this prophecy, Jesus told His disciples that Elijah had come in John the Baptist (see Matt 11:12-14; 17:12). The angel of the Lord also told John the Baptist's father, Zacharias, that his son would go forth in the spirit and the power of Elijah "... to make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (see Luke 1:17). However, after John's death Jesus also spoke of Elijah coming in the future to restore all things (see Matt 17:11). Therefore, we must conclude that the spirit of Elijah has been present since John the Baptist and will be present wherever there is a voice crying, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord!" [2]

Jesus said there was no one born of a woman who was greater than John the Baptist, but the least in the Kingdom is greater than he (see Matt 11:11) Jesus was not indicating that John

would be the lowest ranking individual in the Kingdom of God. He was simply illustrating the great power that born-again Spirit-filled Christians could have. We are Elijah Saints, citizens of the Kingdom of God preparing the way of the Lord.

### **What Kind of Shoes Are You Wearing?**

This call to preparation is further confirmed in Ephesians Chapter 6 in the classic spiritual warfare passage:

#### **Ephesians 6:15 (KJV)**

15 And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

This speaks of having our feet shod with the *preparation* of the gospel of peace. For years, I skimmed over this verse without realizing what it really says. What does "having your feet shod" mean? Most of us would say that it means sharing the gospel, or evangelism. Evangelism is certainly a crucial part of preparation, but the verse does not say we are to have our feet shod with the gospel, but rather with the preparation of the gospel of peace. [3]

The words *preparation* and *peace* are significant here. The word *peace* is a reference to the coming Kingdom which will bring peace on earth. [4] Therefore, the warfare against the satanic powers that we read about in context of this verse is about preparing the way for the Kingdom of God. Satan greatly fears an anointed army of disciples who understand the work of preparation and are actively preparing the way for the Kingdom of God to appear. The appearing of the Kingdom spells "the end" for him.

This says something about the content of our evangelistic message. We are not only called to win souls, but we are called to win souls with a message that includes the good news of the coming Kingdom. [5] Once again, we have preached the gospel, but we have not always preached the gospel of the kingdom (see Matt 24:14). We are called to be an army whose feet are shod with preparation. We need to take off our wings and put on our boots!

### **Sorting out the Synonyms**

Don't let the synonyms throw you. Jesus used many different analogies in parables to teach about the Kingdom. Putting these synonyms together is simply part of understanding the mystery of the gospel. The work of preparation is synonymous with building the Church. Building the Church is synonymous with making disciples. Making disciples is synonymous with imparting vision, purpose, and strategy from generation to generation. The Church is called the house of God or the temple of God. The Church is also synonymous with the bride of Christ, which is synonymous with New Jerusalem (see Rev 21:2). New Jerusalem is often referred to as Zion (see Heb 12:22).

Therefore, when we talk of preparation, we are talking about equipping (or building up) the saints for the work of service which, in summary, is about building the Church. [6] We are living stones being built together into a holy temple, a dwelling place for God (see Eph 2:21 22, 1 Pet 2:5). We are building God's house, making preparation for the return of Jesus Christ and the appearing of His Kingdom on earth. In light of the connections revealed by these synonyms, this

verse takes on significant meaning:

**Psalm 102:16 (KJV)**

16 When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory. [7]

This little insight has huge ramifications. It points to a whole different philosophy/theology for many. Though we can only build by the abilities He gives, the point remains that we have a dynamic part in the appearing of the Kingdom. We have a job to do, a work of preparation, and Jesus isn't coming back until it is done.

**Training For Reigning**

Many Christians seem to think that we can be oblivious to the biblical concepts of good government in this life, but after Jesus returns, we will instantly be experts at it. To some degree I suppose that might be true, but I suspect that the biblical skills we acquire and faithfully carry out in this life will play a much larger part in the coming Kingdom than we have imagined.

As mentioned earlier, Paul wrote to the Corinthians and rebuked them for going to the worldly courts to settle differences, saying, "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?" (see 1 Cor 6:2). [8] This implies that what we are learning now in the Church is intended to prepare us to rule with Jesus in His Kingdom when it appears. We should be practicing principles and learning now how to judge righteously then. Lets look again at the parable of stewardship from Luke Chapter 19.

**Luke 19:11-19 (KJV)**

11 And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear.

12 He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return.

13 And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come.

14 But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us.

15 And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading.

16 Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds.

17 And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities.

18 And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds.

19 And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities.

Jesus taught that being faithful in small things while He is away qualifies us for overseeing much greater things after He returns. [9] In this case, those who had been faithful stewards were given positions in His government—authority over cities. Paul also spoke of rewards to be revealed at the day of the Lord .

### **1 Corinthians 3:11-15 (KJV)**

11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

12 Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;

13 Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

14 If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.

15 If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire. [10]

The point has already been made that some Christians over emphasize the idea of getting to heaven and take too little responsibility for the condition of the world we live in. Those who live on that end of the spectrum are often found waiting instead of working. But those on the other end of the spectrum may take too much responsibility for the condition of the world and over-emphasize political action and legislation, forgetting that external law cannot produce real liberty. Only the internal law of God written on people's hearts can sustain freedom.

In Preparation Theology, the Christian is not expecting to escape this world and its troubles, nor is he expecting to take over the world in the name of Christ before He returns. The preparation Christian understands that total peace on earth and good will toward men will not come until the Prince of Peace appears to take His place as King of Kings. We do, however, carry a sense of responsibility to have a positive influence in the world as we do the work of preparation.

### **The Pursuit of Purity**

In closing this chapter, consider this passage of scripture which brings this task of preparation for Christ's appearing down to a practical and personal level.

### **1 John 3:2-3 (KJV)**

2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

3 And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure. [11]

According to this passage, we do not see clearly what it will be like when Jesus returns. But one thing we must do to prepare for His coming is pursue Christlikeness and His holiness, without which no one will see the Lord (see Heb 12:14). We must major on being and building a holy Church. As people from all walks of life are won to Christ and trained in godliness, we will have a powerful influence on the world around us. But more importantly, we will be building the Church and preparing the way for the Lord..

### **Paradigm Builder**

We have a job to do, a work of preparation, and Jesus isn't coming back until it is done. What we are learning now in the Church is intended to prepare us to rule with Jesus in His Kingdom when it appears.

Before reading this chapter, how would you describe your position regarding this concept?

1 Strongly Disagree - 2 Disagree - 3 Neutral/Unsure - 4 Agree - 5 Strongly Agree

How would you describe your position regarding this concept after reading this chapter?

1 Strongly Disagree - 2 Disagree - 3 Neutral/Unsure - 4 Agree - 5 Strongly Agree

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The Kingdom Paradigm, Common Sense Theology for Politically Minded Christians  
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