

Session 4: Make Ready a People

I. Continuing to Explain the Forerunner Call

1. This session continues a detailed explanation of the end-time forerunner call.

- a. In previous sessions, we stated two foundational passages from which we draw our understanding of the forerunner call. The first is Malachi 3-4 and the second, Luke 1:16-17. We used Malachi as scriptural support that the forerunner call we are speaking of is for *end-time* forerunners. In the last session, we began to dissect Luke 1:16-17 to explain key concepts of the forerunner call. To refresh our memory, Luke 1:16-17 reads,

And he will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God. It is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, TO TURN THE HEARTS OF THE FATHERS BACK TO THE CHILDREN, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

- b. In the last session, we examined the phrase *turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God*, highlighting five aspects of turning people back to Christ. In this session and the next, we continue our discussion of the forerunner call by expanding upon key phrases in Luke 1:16-17. In the next session, we will analyze *the spirit and power of Elijah* that is available to end-time forerunners, and in this session, we explore the phrase *make ready a people prepared for the Lord*.

2. Let's begin our study by reviewing this phrase in the context of the first coming of Jesus.

- a. Malachi prophesied the forerunner ministry of John the Baptist in about 450 BC, approximately 500 years before Christ began His ministry on earth. After Malachi's prophecy closed the Old Testament period, the Lord sent a "famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord" (Amos 8:11). Because there had been no prophetic voice in the land for 500 years, the silence from heaven led to a wide variety of opinions about the Messiah, and much confusion as it related to the correct way to walk with God. During the intertestamental period, the people divided into groups with varied political, religious, and social agendas. This included different opinions and traditions about the Messiah. Even as these groups arose with differing views on the Messiah, many men and women still looked forward with anticipation of the Messiah's coming.ⁱ
- b. By the time John the Baptist came on the scene, there was much error and confusion about how the Messiah would come and how He would deliver Israel when He came. Some had greatly distorted the Old Testament law and others were apathetic about if he would ever come at all since it had been 500 years since the Lord had spoken through the prophets. Many were expecting a Messiah to come and deliver Israel from Roman oppression.
- c. In this spiritual atmosphere, John ministered for several years preceding Jesus' ministry. His role was to announce that the Messiah was soon coming, to confront religious leaders with impure and incorrect motives, to declare that it was time to get ready for Christ's soon coming ministry, and to clarify the great confusion within the religious community about the nature of who He would be when He came.

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- d. John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus' first coming so as to make people ready for the Lord and His earthly ministry. Today, conditions in the world and the religious community are similar and, in a very similar way, God is raising up end-time forerunners to make ready a people for Christ's second coming.
- e. With that introduction, let's look at what we mean by the phrase *make ready a people prepared for the Lord*.

II. The Call to Make People Ready

1. Jesus spoke very clearly to His followers the need to get ready for His second coming.

- a. In what is commonly called the Olivet Discourse, Jesus sat on the Mount of Olives—the place to which He will at some point return--and spoke to His disciples about His second coming. Speaking about several end-time issues, He emphasized the need to be ready for His coming. In comparing the second coming to the days of Noah, days during which almost none of the world was ready for what was coming, He said,

Therefore *be on the alert*, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming. But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, *he would have been on the alert* and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. For this reason *you also must be ready*; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will (Mt. 24:42-44).

- b. Also in the Olivet Discourse, He repeated the call to make oneself ready as He spoke about the coming marriage supper of the Lamb,

And while they were going away to make the purchase, the bridegroom came, and *those who were ready* went in with him to the wedding feast; and the door was shut. Later the other virgins also came, saying, "Lord, lord, open up for us." But he answered, "Truly I say to you, I do not know you." Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour (Mt. 25:10-13).

- c. Jesus makes it clear in the following passage that He is speaking not just to the lost, but also to His disciples,

Peter said, "Lord, are You addressing this parable *to us*, or to *everyone else as well*?" And the Lord said, "Who then is the faithful and sensible steward, whom his master will put in charge of his servants, to give them their rations at the proper time? Blessed is that slave whom his master *finds so doing* when he comes. Truly I say to you that he will put him in charge of all his possessions. But if that slave says in his heart, 'My master will be a long time in coming,' and begins to beat the slaves, both men and women, and to eat and drink and get drunk; the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know, and will cut him in pieces, and assign him a place with the unbelievers. *And that slave who knew his master's will and did not get ready* or act in accord with his will, will receive many lashes, but the one who did not know it, and committed deeds worthy of a flogging, will receive but few. From everyone who has

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been given much, much will be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more (Lk. 12:41-48).

- d. In the above passage, the Lord makes it clear He includes the disciples in this exhortation as He responds directly to Peter's question. In addition to speaking to Peter so as to include the disciples, He also spoke to His servants in general, stating to all followers *who knew the masters will* about the need to get ready.
- e. In addition, there are several other passages which express the theme of believers making themselves ready for the Lord's return. Revelation 2-3 speaks of the need to overcome in order to be positioned for eternal rewards. Revelation 19:7 and 21:2 speak of the bride being ready for Christ's coming. Furthermore, there are many verses that although don't use the actual word *ready* address similar themes far beyond just believing in Christ as personal Savior to get ready for Christ's second coming. Therefore, the scriptures are clear that believers must get ready for the Lord's second coming beyond being born again.
- f. When Jesus actually returns, it will be too late to get ready. As Malachi wrote, people will not be able to endure His coming and the events surrounding His coming unless they get ready before He comes. God's solution to the need to get ready for Christ's second coming is to send forerunners to help make people ready.
- g. One important point to make as we dig into making ready a people prepared for the Lord is that forerunners must make themselves ready just as much, or even more so, than those to whom they minister. In fact, there will be an even stricter judgment on forerunners than on those to whom they speak. Therefore, as you study this session and, in fact, the entire class, make sure you are aware that being a forerunner does not exempt you from making yourself ready in the same way you will help others be made ready.
- h. In the remainder of this session, we will examine three objectives which highlight why people need to be made ready for the Lord's second coming. The three objectives are: 1) making ready a corporate man for the Lord, 2) making people ready for the end times, and 3) making people ready for eternity. As you will recall from the last session, we listed five areas in which people need to turn back to Christ. Connecting the five areas from the last session with the three objectives from this session, we can state it this way: *The five areas in which people need to return to Christ are for the purpose of fulfilling the three objectives identified in this session.*
- i. We will begin with a look at making ready the corporate man for the Lord.

III. Making Ready the Corporate Man

- 1. One major objective of the forerunner call is to prepare a corporate mature man who will be made ready as God's partner for the eternal ages.
 - a. In writing about the role of fivefold leadership, Paul's epistle to the Ephesians records the mandate to prepare a mature corporate man,

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And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to *a mature man*, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ (Eph. 4:11-13).

- b. In this epistle, the theme of which is God's eternal purpose, Paul gives the mandate to fivefold leaders to equip the saints until they become *a mature man in the fullness of Christ*. Note that he says "a" mature man, not many mature individuals but a corporate mature man who represents Christ in fullness. This is the purpose of this age, not to get rich, or to walk in health, or to have our own kingdom ministry. It is not to take dominion over the seven mountains of culture or to restore Jewish practices. It is not to get us from one week to another through the counsel and wisdom of man—it is to prepare a mature corporate man who will be a bride for Christ and a mature corporate son for the Father so as to become eternal partners of the Godhead dwelling with them in intimacy and partnering with them as the kingdom forever expands.
- c. The corporate man will be a family of mature sons for the heavenly Father. The Father determined in the eternal council of the Godhead that He would have an inheritance in a people, a family of sons patterned after His beloved and only begotten Son, Christ. This new creation of sons would be a representation of His Son in fullness and would share the same intimacy and communion that the Father and the Son have enjoyed throughout eternity past.
- d. The corporate man will also be a prepared bride for the eternal Son. The Lord will also have a worthy bride who is blameless and without spot or wrinkle to present to Christ at His second coming (Eph. 5:27). At Christ's return, the Father will give the prepared bride to Christ as His eternal wife and equally joined partner to reign with Him forever. Betrothed to Christ at the point of salvation, believers are at that point the bride and are given their time on earth to make themselves ready to become the eternal wife of the Lamb. Following the Lord's return, the overcoming bride will dwell in great intimacy with the Godhead and be used in partnership with Christ throughout the ages to take the gospel in an ever expanding and never-ending way as God's eternal purpose is unfolded.
- e. *Please note that the family of mature sons and the prepared bride are the same people who have made themselves ready, both as a bride for Christ and as sons for the heavenly Father.*

2. When the corporate man is fully prepared, the Lord will return.

- a. Even though we do not know the timing of the end of the church age, when God accomplishes the objective of preparing the corporate man, the age will end. Christ's second coming will not be dependent on the coming of the antichrist and the darkness that will surround his reign in the earth; instead, it will depend upon God fulfilling His objective for the church age. When He has completed His "to do list" for this age, the transition will begin toward the next age with the casting down of the dragon to earth, the rise of the antichrist, and the beginning of the last 3 ½ years of the church age.
- b. Even though we will defer full support of the above statement to other classes, the basis for this is summarized as follows. When the disciples asked Jesus "what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age," Jesus included in His answer, "All these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs" (Matt. 24:8). It's only logical that birth pangs point to a birth. Revelation 12 foretells of the birth that will shift the church into the next age,

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And she [the woman] being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered...And she brought forth *a man child*, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne...And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him (Rev. 12: 2, 5, 7-9, KJV).

- c. The above passage records the birth of a man-child. Even though many believe the man-child refers to Jesus, it does not. The man-child refers to a mature corporate man. In the context of this passage, the coming forth of the man-child initiates the last 3 ½ years of the church age. A quote from DeVern Fromke in his book *Ultimate Intention*, summarizes the effect of what is described in the above scripture,

God is now doing a very special thing in those of His people who are pressing on with Him with marked purposefulness. There is a sweeping and terrible battle raging for the throne of this world...God's sons are being prepared and called to take the kingdom now, in a spiritual way, in order that they may share the throne in the age to come...Satan understands that he will be immediately deposed when the corporate Sonship comes into full manifestation, for then he will lose his position and hold. The issue which was settled at Calvary will be finally and forever enforced...As soon as the corporate Sonship is manifested in glory—as soon as he collectively stands on his feet and is united in every respect with the Head—the enemy will be cast down from the heavenlies and will wage war in awful fury in the earth.ⁱⁱ

- d. But that is not all. Whereas the birth of the man-child initiates the period of great tribulation, the event that concludes the last 3 ½ years of tribulation is the corporate bride fully making herself ready. At the end of the tribulation period, the bride will have made herself ready and Christ's coming will be activated. No matter how dark it gets in the earth and no matter how much evil arises, the Lord will not come back until the corporate man is prepared for the Lord.
- e. Preparing a mature corporate man who will become eternal sons for the Father and a bride for Christ is a major work of forerunners as they make ready a people prepared for the Lord. Now that we recognize the strategic importance of the coming forth of the mature corporate man, let's next look at making ready a people for the end times.

IV. Making Ready a People for the End Times

1. The church must be made ready for the end times.

- a. In this section, we survey the idea of making ready a people prepared for the end times. In the following paragraphs, we highlight three ways forerunners make people ready for the end times. We can state the three traits as follows: 1) to prepare a people to be alert, 2) to prepare them as unshakeable and strong, and 3) to prepare them to be a voice in the coming pressures of the end times.
- b. To make sure we are clear on what we mean by the end times, we remind you that when we use the phrase "end times" we are not referring only to the last 3 ½ or even the last 7 years of the church age, but also to the last generation and possibly even multiple generations which will climax with the second coming of Christ.

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- c. Let's begin by exploring the idea of being alert.
- 2. Forerunners are to awaken people to be alert to current plans, purposes, and events that will ultimately lead to the coming of the activities prophesied in the book of Revelation.
 - a. The scriptures state in several places that Christ's second coming will be much like the surprise coming of a thief (Mt. 24:42, Rev. 3:3, Rev. 16:15). Paul wrote these words about this, "For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. While they are saying, 'Peace and safety!' then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief" (1 Thess. 5:2-4).
 - b. To many, Christ's coming will be a sudden and surprising event for which they will be totally unprepared. Most of the world looks at current events and sees only the natural, obvious circumstances of the event. Many Christians are included in this group, seeing only the natural, immediate implications of the event. Many believers are totally blind and oblivious to the enemy's plans and long term implications of the issues at hand.
 - c. Even though in many ways the church is ignorant of the end-time implications of world events, Christ's coming is not to be an unexpected event to those who are awake and alert to the events that are happening now and will surround His coming.
 - d. In two passages previously listed passages, Jesus called on His followers not to be ignorant of the signs of the times but to be alert to the events surrounding His coming, notably,

Therefore be on the *alert*, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming. But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the *alert* and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will (Mt. 24:42-44).
 - e. And,

And while they were going away to make the purchase, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast; and the door was shut. Later the other virgins also came, saying, "Lord, lord, open up for us." But he answered, "Truly I say to you, I do not know you." Be on the *alert* then, for you do not know the day nor the hour (Mt. 25:10-13).
 - f. Jesus recorded these words about discerning the times, "And in the morning, there will be a storm today, for the sky is red and threatening. Do you know how to discern the appearance of the sky, but cannot discern the signs of the times?" (Mt 16:3). We are living in a time in which prophetic events that could easily lead to the coming of the false prophet, the time of tribulation, the antichrist, and the second coming of the Lord are rapidly falling into place.
 - g. Yet, it seems that many leaders in the global church are totally ignoring the signs of the times and are acting as though none of the events prophesied around the second coming of Christ will ever transpire. It is truly frightening because an entire generation is being left unprepared.

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- h. We are living in days in which believers and church leaders alike must begin to understand the signs of the times so as to be ready and prepare people to stand strong in these times. Therefore, a very important task of forerunners is to alert people to the signs of the times so as to wake them up to what is coming.
3. Forerunners are to prepare people to be unshakeable and strong so as not to fall away as end-time pressures increase.
- a. Jesus spoke these words about believers falling away amidst the pressures of the end times,

Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name. At that time *many will fall away* and will betray one another and hate one another. Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many. Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved (Mt. 24:9-13).
 - b. As the birth pangs of tribulation intensify, many in the church will be seduced to fall away from the faith. Others will become offended, growing bitter toward God and the church because they have been taught that they will be raptured before things get bad or have been taught a compromised gospel that has promoted a lukewarm, passive attitude in their hearts. The vast majority of the church is not ready for what is coming. Most have no belief structure to accept the truth that it may be God's will for them to live through the times of persecution, calamity, and the judgments of God coming to the earth. The idea that in the end times many believers will even be martyred for their faith is totally foreign to most western Christians. The result will be that many believers will do as Jesus prophesied. They will fall away from the faith. They will become bitter at God because He has allowed these things to happen. They will be deceived because the church taught a prosperity or hyper-grace gospel. Their love for God and for the church will grow cold, and many will fall away.
 - c. We live in a progressively immoral, self-seeking, and anti-Christian culture which is deteriorating and rapidly becoming more and more opposed to the standard of biblical truth. Governments are making laws which progressively oppress Christians from freely worshiping. Many Christians are compromising with the culture and obeying anti-Christian laws and regulations. In an attempt to be relevant to a post Christian world, much of the church has drifted far from the uncompromising word of God as a standard for life and godliness. Because of this attitude which permeates much of the global church, many are ripe for the falling away that the Lord spoke about. In the midst of a rapidly deteriorating society and anti-Christian governments, there is a tremendous and urgent need for the church to be prepared to be unshakeable and strong in their faith so as to not fall away.
 - d. Moreover, there is a tremendous need in the midst of end-time chaos for the church to uphold a standard of righteousness to the culture and the antichristian governmental, political systems. In Jesus' message to the church at Pergamum, He referred to Antipas as a faithful witness writing, "I know where you live-where Satan has his throne. Yet you remain true to my name. You did not renounce your faith in me, even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put to death in your city-where Satan lives" (Rev. 2:13, NIV).
 - e. God needs a people like Antipas who will obey God rather than succumb to the pressures and persecution of man. He needs a people who will resist anti-Christian governmental oppression and live separate from the Babylonian culture permeating the world in ever increasing ways.

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- f. It is absolutely crucial in our day that forerunners prepare people for what is upon us now and coming in greatly increasing ways so that they do not fall away from the faith. The church must be prepared to stand strong without compromise in the increasing difficulties and pressures of the end times. They must be prepared so that they will not compromise, not become offended at God or the church, and not fall away from the faith.

4. Forerunners are to prepare a people to be a voice in the end times.

- a. As we have stated many times in Lifeschool, the church in the end times will not be merely spectators as end-time events unfold, they will be participators. Not only in the last 3 ½ years of this age but as we approach the end of the age, God desires to use the church in unprecedented ways to transition the earth and God's people into the age to come.
- b. God's desire in the end times is not only for believers to be alert, unshakeable, and strong but also to be a voice. There is a tremendous need for a church who will uphold a standard of righteousness based on the uncompromised truth of God's word and be a faithful witness of truth. Once again referring to the scripture we quoted a moment ago, Jesus' message to the church at Pergamum, He referred to Antipas as *a faithful witness* (Rev. 2:13).
- c. The faithful witness is the one who stands firm on the word of God without compromise, and speaks boldly into the lives of others in the midst of a global church in compromise. Just like we see in the Book of Acts with the apostles faithfully speaking truth in the midst of persecution, in the end times, there will be an ever-increasing need to stand as faithful witnesses of truth regardless of the opposition.
- d. As such, forerunners must teach, equip, and prepare people to stand firm upon the uncompromising word of God no matter the consequences and be a voice of truth. Forerunners must be a voice in these end times and be a voice to prepare the church to be a voice into the church, the world, and the heavenlies. Forerunners must be a voice in preaching and teaching, ministry and evangelism, intercession, and worship. They must be a voice into the church to bring correction and restoration into incorrect theology and eschatology, and they must be a voice into governments and the culture to confront the issues that oppress the church and its freedom to operate based on biblical standards. In the end times, it will become more and more essential that forerunners prepare the church to become a voice of truth in the midst of great compromise.

V. Making Ready a People Prepared for Eternity

1. Eternity will be much different than many believers think.

- a. Heaven will not be a place where we sit on a cloud and play a harp for all eternity. The scriptures tell us that there will be ages upon ages. We know very little about coming ages at this point other than we do know of the church age, the Millennial Kingdom age and a brief glimpse of the new Jerusalem descending to the earth with a new heaven and earth. However, we do know from scripture that there will be an infinite number of ages to follow—forever!
- b. Isaiah prophesied these famous words about Christ, "There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will

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accomplish this” (Isa. 9:7). As Isaiah wrote, there will no end to the increase of His government...forevermore!

- c. In God’s ever-expanding work, His prepared bride is to be at His side in an intimate relationship with Him and to be His eternal helpmate in His work--forever. Throughout the next age, God’s eternal purpose is to use the prepared bride to subdue the earth under Christ’s Lordship. Other ages will have different purposes of which we do not yet have revelation. What we do know is that according to God’s eternal purpose, the prepared bride/son/body will be by the Lord’s side in partnership and intimacy. This will never end and will be ever expanding.

2. A believer’s role in God’s eternal plan will be determined at the judgment seat of Christ.

- a. Note these two scriptures,

For it is written, "AS I LIVE, SAYS THE LORD, EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW TO ME, AND EVERY TONGUE SHALL GIVE PRAISE TO GOD." So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God (Rom. 14:10-12).

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad (2 Cor. 5:10).

- b. As these passages as well as several others state, every believer must stand before Christ following their death and give an account of the way they lived their life. As you will observe from the above verses, rewards are distributed at the judgment seat of Christ. The judgment seat of Christ is not to determine whether we go to heaven or hell. That is determined by whether we truly accepted Christ as our Lord and Savior surrendering our life to Him and trusting Him in faith for our salvation. The judgment seat of Christ is to determine the eternal rewards that believers will receive. As their life is evaluated, they will be given eternal rewards for what they have done in life.
- c. Searching the scriptures, we note that eternal rewards can be categorized into three major areas: 1) eternal intimacy with the Godhead, 2) eternal authority in partnership with Christ, and 3) eternal glory upon our resurrected bodies. The eternal rewards promised to overcoming believers are the eternal attributes needed to enjoy Christ fully and to partner with Him in fullness throughout eternity.
- d. Forerunners are to prepare believers to stand before the judgment seat of Christ by awakening them to this much neglected idea and to give insight on the judgment seat of Christ and eternal rewards so that believers can make themselves ready during their life for eternity.
- e. Therefore, as we have seen in this session, forerunners are given the important and urgent assignment of making ready a people prepared for the Lord by preparing a corporate mature man, by making ready a people for the end times, and by preparing a people for eternity. In the next session, we continue our discussion of the forerunner call by analyzing *the spirit and power of Elijah* which is greatly needed to empower end-time forerunner

ⁱ <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/2014/12/the-lost-500-years-from-malachi-to-john-the-baptist?lang=eng>

ⁱⁱ DeVern Fromke, *Ultimate Intention* (Indianapolis: Sure Foundation Publishers, 1998), pp. 155-6.