

A People Prepared for these Last Days – Fred London

What is God's eternal purpose? In Genesis 1:26, we see God's original intention for man; to bear the image of God and to have dominion over the earth. In a nutshell, it was to provide God with an earthly habitation in which to dwell. When man sinned, his representation of the image of God became tainted, and as a result, he was driven out from the Garden of Eden, his primary habitation. Ever since, God has been "working all things after the counsel of His will," to create and establish that suitable habitation for Himself – ultimately, "a temple made without hands" – Rev. 21:3.

Generations later, God, through the patriarchs, would raise up a corporate man, Israel, who would be called to bear the image of God as a nation and given a specific land as his home. And so, the eternal purpose is a two-fold purpose – that we would bear the image of God, and in doing so, would have dominion over the land.

Herein lies the first revelation of a spiritual law God established at the very beginning of creation, and it is eternal. God's representative and intended counterpart acquired his rightful ownership to the land as long as he faithfully bore the image of God. When he did not, he was disqualified from his inheritance and driven out.

These two elements are inseparable. They were never intended to exist one apart from the other. All Biblical doctrine must be understood upon this premise. A right Biblical view hinges upon this very notion, directly influencing our interpretation of our worldview, ranging from the purpose of the Church and Israel, to eschatology. Scripturally, it ties all theological understanding and teaching together. It is the glue which binds, and the foundation upon which the Word of God must be interpreted.

And, although this notion may have been novel to me, I do not believe that was the case with the Early Church. On the contrary, I firmly believe that it was an integral part of apostolic teaching. Therefore, it was something to be rediscovered, not invented. Men have engaged in much doctrinal error by "trying to reinvent the wheel" out of their own imagination. But, as it is written in Ecclesiastes, "There is nothing new under the sun."

Some may disagree, but I would submit that the most pressing issue of this age is that of the Church. Why? Because, if we fail to become the Church as she was intended to be in our present days, we will be ill-prepared to be the Church required in the last days, to be God's faithful witness on earth to the Jews, the nations, and to the "rulers and authorities in heavenly places." Moreover, I

would also submit that a proper understanding of the Mystery of the Church and the Mystery of Israel are inseparable and incomplete apart from one another.

As Israel and many of her well-intentioned supporters claim her rightful inheritance to the Land prior to and apart from Godly repentance, so too many in the Church look towards a premature taking up of the Bride unto Christ. He longs for His Bride who has made herself ready, that He might present to Himself the Church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless (Eph. 5:27). II Peter 3:11-12 exhorts us to holy conduct and godliness by which we can actually hasten the coming of the Lord.

It should be clear from Scripture that for Israel it will require a proud and self-sufficient people brought to her knees and without hope as depicted in Ezekiel 37:11b, "Our bones are dried up, and our hope has perished. We are completely cut off." Also, Deut. 32:36, Dan. 12:7.

She will be brought to a place of true Godly repentance, leading to salvation. It may also mean that out of a true love for Israel, we will have to resist the natural response of, "God forbid it! This shall never happen to you." and allow God's dealings to be carried through, "having its perfect result," lest we run the risk of provoking a similar reply to that which Peter received from the Lord, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's."

The lesson here is that we must not allow our soul-led good intentions to be a hindrance to God's purposes. Rather, as it is written in Heb. 4:12, we must allow the Word of God to be the "two-edged sword," which is able to divide the soul from the spirit. To complete this thought, a few paragraphs later, the writer of Hebrews states the following in Heb. 5:14, "For solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil."

It is critical to our overall understanding to note that due to the rebellion of the Children of Israel, God allowed an entire generation of Hebrews to die in the wilderness, prior to their entering "The Promised Land." It was their offspring, a relatively untainted generation, whom God would bring into the Land.

We must bear in mind that God never intended a corrupt, unredeemed people to take possession of, or even to enter the land, prior to their redemption. It is simply inconsistent with the laws and ways of God. Salvation always precedes

inheritance and not before. Neither do we enter into Heaven prior to our salvation, but rather as a result and reward of our salvation.

Along these lines, for many years I have been quite concerned over the wholesale recruitment of Jewish believers for emigration to Israel. This recruitment is based upon the false premise that regardless of cataclysmic world events directed at the Jews, Israel will be a safe haven during such times to the end of the age. Such reckless counsel is an example of ministerial malpractice at its worst.

Now, those who have been genuinely called to live and minister in Israel, knowing the potential cost of such a commitment is one thing. But, I am convinced from Scripture that, in reality, particularly during the "Great Tribulation," those who have been sold on the belief that present-day Israel represents the Final Return, and therefore is under God's Divine protection to the end of the age, will suddenly discover that they have unwittingly "jumped from the frying pan into the fire."

As a consequence, there is the possibility of much spiritual shipwreck and human destruction, not the least of which being the blood of many upon the hands of misguided spokesmen, who sold these well-intentioned people on a false notion. Ironically, those who should have the most spiritual insight in "understanding the times" will instead, to their shock and bewilderment, find themselves in the very cauldron of the "Time of Jacob's Trouble."

And so, the original romanticism of making "aliyah" (emigrating to Israel) will be quickly and tragically extinguished, and who will be answerable for the unintended physical and spiritual carnage? "Speaking that which the Lord has not spoken" comes at a very high price!"

Luke 5:36-39 – Both the wine and the wineskin are equally critical for us in order to provide the delivery system, which will be required at the end of the age. Therefore, I would submit that the Church of the 21st Century is in desperate need of a restoration to become the instrument, which was, is, and will be required by God to accomplish His purposes in the "last days."

Until then, the Church will not be able to fulfill her purpose in being what she has been called to be in character, function and calling to the world, the nation of Israel, or to the Jews currently and predestined to be scattered throughout the Diaspora. And, all the end-time teaching in the world will not be able to compensate for the lack of a proper, corporate delivery system required of a prophetic people of God, with the ability to implement that which has been

taught, theoretically. This is the true preparation, without which the Church will be severely limited.

For me, the critical phrase is not, "Divine Appointment in the Wilderness." That is an inevitable given as far as I am concerned. Rather, the phrase, "A People Prepared for These Last Days" is by far the more critical, simply because it is representative of what will be imperative for the latter to have its perfect result upon the former.

Apart from "A People Prepared for the Last Days" there will be no "Divine Appointment in the Wilderness." As I see it, the notion of what we mean, or what God intends, as preparation "for such a time is this" has become a chief burden as well as a primary concern for me. It is my sense based upon what I commonly hear and see which has exponentially drawn my attention and commensurately raised my concern.

A vision is written down in order to be read, and a vision is written down and read, "so that those who read it may run." The theoretical must translate into the practical in order to serve its intended purpose. There is what one might call, "The Nehemiah Effect," who put action to the vision through practical means. The "What?" and the "Why?" is of little value, without the "How?" As an example, Ezra may have had the vision for the restoration of the Temple in Jerusalem, but it was Nehemiah who converted that vision into the tangible fulfillment.

With regards to the more technical aspects of theology, I'd like to offer a comment for what it may be worth. We are all quite familiar with Habakkuk 2:2 which instructs the prophet to "Record the vision and inscribe it on tablets, that the one who reads it may run." This phrase literally translates as "one may read it fluently."

I don't believe I am taking excessive liberties by adding a slight paraphrase to its meaning, the little word, "so," Biblical instruction typically begins with a command to action leading to the desired objective. For me, the link or bridge between the two parts of the instruction is "so that."

In other words, the most critical aspect of instruction is the ability to communicate with your particular audience at the level where the vast majority are likely to comprehend what is being taught. Now, not everybody is wired like me, and I believe that is out of Divine mercy to the Body of Christ. What I endeavor to do, both as a giver and receiver of Biblical information is to break down the messages into their simplest forms.

Your message needs to be delivered in a way appropriate to the listeners. If you are teaching an audience of theology students, then it goes without saying that your level of communication can be in a more technically sophisticated form. However, though I believe the approach can be simplified for the appropriate audience, that does not of necessity mean that the message itself has to be watered down or made simplistic.

We read Paul's letters, such as the one to the Colossians, which is a theology as deep as any in the New Testament, especially in the opening chapter. Keep in mind that the vast majority of saints there were illiterate. Also, keep in mind that Paul was never interested in impressing people with his "great knowledge" but in communicating spiritual truth, beginning and ending with who Christ was in them, and who they were in Christ.

Between those two end points, subsequent spiritual knowledge was filled in. I look at the depth of this letter with this background in mind and it is clear that these poor, unsophisticated, illiterate Christians had a far deeper spiritual understanding than the vast majority of Christians in our day, despite our technical sophistication.

Frankly, as a whole, we are by comparison, Barbarians. We must remember that the operative term is communicate, "so that one may read it fluently." That is always the objective. How you do it is between you and the Holy Spirit.

Yes! It is incumbent upon the Church to gain the necessary insight from the prophetic word in order to fulfill her calling as the "Day of the Lord draws near," but it is only a part of the "whole counsel of God." At some point, the time comes when we are brought to the place where we say, "OK! I get it! Now, brethren, what must we do?"

In my study of the meaning and outworking of "preparation" from recorded examples of Biblical and Church History, I see a common thread running through it all. In a nutshell, prophetic preparation was first and foremost spiritual, dealing with the inner condition of the individual, along with the corporate expression of the people of God. Eschatological knowledge was a supplement to that individual and corporate foundation, and not the reverse.

Subsequent to the widespread and concentrated persecution of the Early Church which broke out in Jerusalem, it is understandable why many of these believers, including the apostles themselves, interpreted this as sure signs that they had entered the "end of the age." And, although their eschatological timing was significantly off, their spiritual foundation was such that she was able to withstand the tidal waves which battered her, but could not overcome her.

Moreover, their spiritual lives were not only sustained, but flourished and spread throughout much of the known world at that time. Why? Because their faith was not established by their understanding of raw data focused upon signs of the end-times, but rather an indwelling Lord, because truths such as the “centrality of Christ” and the “pre-eminence of Christ” was more than a doctrine, but an everyday reality in their lives.

No matter the outward circumstances, “Christ in them, the hope of glory” could not be taken from them. They were “steadfast and immovable,” because they were properly prepared by having “a sure foundation” laid into their lives. I have seen far more evidence than is necessary to know that so many who are drawn to end-time teachers, teachings, and conferences are deficient in their own spiritual foundations. In ignoring this fatal flaw, we are not doing these individuals, the Church in general, nor the people to which this ministry in the “wilderness” is to be directed, any favors.

Whether you meet in the sanctuary of a mega-church, the living room of a private home, a rented hall, or a community in some rural area, unless we as a people are properly prepared in God’s way, any acquired end-time knowledge will be of little benefit in that day. We will be little better than “the blind leading the blind.”

“The Christ-Centered Church,” regardless of what formal title may be used, must be the focal point of all doctrinal teaching, or what will be presented will most assuredly lack the chief component which qualifies any teaching as manifesting sound doctrine.

It must not be relegated to some obligatory appendage or offered out of simple courtesy, regardless of who may be called upon to teach it. If we err in this, we will be promoting the very thing that we claim to despise. We will fall into the same trap as the vast majority of end-time teachers and conferences. And, I will go so far as to say, that we will be in danger of disputing the Lordship of Christ.

End-time prophetic knowledge can and must be built upon that foundation, but never supplant it or be a supplemental afterthought to it. I have no doubt that if I would ask any of you brothers about what a proper spiritual foundation comprises, I would fully expect to receive a Biblically sound reply of one accord. But the real challenge is getting beyond the theoretical. Yet, more than a challenge, it is a sacred responsibility.

Do I have a sense of urgency? Indeed, I do! But, the urgency is not in making haste in getting this end-time knowledge out to believers as the primary means and objective of this preparation. Rather, my sense of urgency is in relation to

making sure that the proper foundation is laid within the Church, both individually and corporately, so that this critical eschatological knowledge can be used to its fullest, “in due season,” as it was originally intended.

The issue is not, and has never been, justifying an activity for the sake of doing “some good” in the Name of the Lord.” This perpetual rationale has become no more than a convenient excuse to justify what many know in their heart of hearts that what they are engaged in is far from God’s ultimate intention. It is the mentality of this “some good” that is retarding the Body of Christ and keeping her from reaching her fullness in Christ.

The Institutional Church has long since had “Ichabod” written on its doorpost. It is being sustained by artificial life support systems, and if there was ever a case to be made for “pulling the plug” for the sake of mercy, this is it.

Luke 24:13–39 – What will be the ultimate message of the “End–Time Church” and how will it be made manifest to the Jew in that day known as the “Time of Jacob’s Trouble?” Not unlike the Lord, Himself, we will be the corporate expression of Jesus walking along a metaphorical “road to Emmaus.” It will be the same road the Jews will be compelled to travel down as they “flee into the wilderness,” and in which the Church will be equally compelled to walk alongside in order to fulfill her end–time mandate.

I have taken a bit of license in making a slight alteration to a portion of the preceding text in order to illustrate the consummation of all that has been said, but which, I do not believe, violates either the principle or spirit of the message:

”And beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, the Church explained to the Jews who had fled into the wilderness the things concerning Christ in all the Scriptures.” And it came about that when the Church had reclined at table with the Jews, they took the bread and blessed it, and breaking it, they began giving it to them. And the eyes of the Jews were opened and they recognized Jesus as their Messiah. And they said to one another, “Were not our hearts burning within us while they were speaking to us on the road, while they were opening the Scriptures to us?”

The following words in the Book of Isaiah have always had something of a haunting quality for me. It is my belief that this passage reflects the essence of the question which will be asked by the Jews in the midst of their darkest hour known as the “Time of Jacob’s Trouble,” followed by the essence of the prophetic reply of the Church:

Isaiah 21:11-12 – “Watchman, how far gone is the night? Watchman, how far gone is the night? The watchman says, ‘Morning comes but also night. If you would inquire, inquire. Come back again.’”

And, when they do, “Come back again,” the Church must be ready.