

Week 2 Delighting in Jesus' Leadership: A Season of Preparation

I. THE CORONAVIRUS: A GLOBAL TIME OF TRAINING

- A. Where is the Church in this season?
- B. Jesus, the apostles, and the Old Testament prophets identified many signs of the end times.
- C. Jesus identified 25 signs of the times—22 are negative (Matthew 24, and Luke 21).
1. Jesus highlighted 12 negative trends as the “beginning of birth pains” that will increase throughout the generation that He returns (Mt. 24:4-8; Lk. 21:8-11).
 2. Jesus identified 5 negative trends that will increase “after” the beginning of birth pains and continue to escalate during the final 7 years of this age (Mt. 24:9-12). They include the martyrdom of believers (Mt. 24:9), social anarchy as hatred, betrayal, and offense dominate society (Mt. 24:10), false prophets (Mt. 24:11), lawlessness (Mt. 24:12), and love growing cold due to many having a seared conscience (Mt. 24:12; 1 Tim. 4:2).
 3. He identified 8 signs to occur during the 3½ years of the Tribulation (Mt. 24:14-28; Lk. 21:20, 24). They include 2 positive trends in the gospel being preached in to all nations (Mt. 24:14) and the Sabbath restored in Israel (Mt. 24:20), one terrible event—the abomination of desolation (Mt. 24:15), and 2 negative trends—an unprecedented number of deaths (Mt. 24:22) and false prophets doing miracles (Mt. 24:24). Luke identified 3 more negative events (21:20)—Jerusalem being surrounded by armies (21:20), their people being killed by the sword, and led captive into all nations (21:24).
- D. Jesus commanded one generation to “know” that His return was near—this command was for the generation living when all the 22 signs He prophesied in Matthew 24:5-28 occur.
- ³³When you see all these things, know that it is near...³⁴this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place...³⁶Of that day and hour no one knows... (Mt. 24:33-36)***
- E. In the generation that Jesus returns “all” these signs will accelerate. Now, for the first time in history, most of these signs of the times are increasing and making headline news on a global level. The Lord indicated that a generation may last up to 100 years (Gen. 15:13-16).
- F. The current coronavirus crisis is much less intense than the pressures to come in the Tribulation.
- G. Jeremiah complained to the Lord about the message the Lord gave him to deliver in a time of pressure and judgment because it was a difficult message for people to receive. The Lord warned him that this was only the beginning and it was going to get worse (Jer. 12:5).
- ⁵“If you have run with the footmen, and they have wearied you, then how can you contend with horses? (Jer. 12:5)***
- H. This current crisis is a period of training for the Church to walk in power, peace and victory in the face of the greater pressures to come. This is a time of preparation and training for what lies ahead.
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II. THE PRESSURES IN THE EARTH ARE GOING TO INTENSIFY

- A. We must anchor our life in the Spirit now by cultivating a vibrant heart—as we enjoy intimacy with God, trust His leadership, and grow in our understanding of the biblical narrative of what is coming.
- B. Preparation includes refusing to be offended at His leadership nor seduced by the sins of the culture.
- C. Jesus warned that the Day of the Lord would come suddenly on the whole earth. He calls His people to watch and pray to be strengthened by growing in intimacy with God and confidence in His leadership, refusing to seek comfort or to self-medicate ourselves with alcohol or immorality, etc.
- ³⁴***“Now take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing [includes immorality], drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly.***
- ³⁵***For it will come as a snares on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth.***
- ³⁶***Watch...and pray always that you may be counted worthy [strengthened] to escape all these things [immorality, drunkenness, etc.]...and to stand [in victory] before the Son of Man.”***
(Lk. 21:34-36)
- D. In context to the greatest judgments to be poured out upon the Antichrist's empire, the Lord speaks to the Church about the importance of keeping our garments white or pure (Rev. 16:15)
- ¹***I saw...seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them the wrath of God is complete.***
- ²***I saw...those who have the victory over the beast [Antichrist]...standing on the sea of glass... ³They sing...saying: “Great and marvelous are Your works...⁴For all nations shall come and worship before You, for Your judgments have been manifested.”*** (Rev. 15:1-5)
- ⁵***“Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches and keeps his garments [pure]...”*** (Rev. 16:15)
- E. Many are even now being tempted to believe false promises made by those who are not preaching sound doctrine regarding God's righteousness, justice, and coming judgment (2 Tim. 4:3-4).
- ³***The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires they will heap up for themselves teachers; ⁴and they will turn their ears away from the truth...***
(2 Tim. 4:3-4)
- F. Many are deceived, thinking that everything in society will just get better and more comfortable before the end. We must see how far the Lord will go to uproot evil from the earth and establish justice.
- G. In the midst of this—our naïveté and deception about sin—the Lord is showing us just how far He wants to take us. He intends to make us worthy of our calling (2 Thes. 1:5). We must see *how far He will go* to establish righteousness and *how far sin will go* if we do not let Him help us, and it is all for *how far we can go* in our calling in Him and our relationship with Him.
- ⁵***...evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer; ⁶since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, ⁷and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is***

revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, ⁸in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who... do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Thess. 1:5-8)