

PREPARING FOR THE MESSIAH

Part IV

Text: Matthew 24:1-51

Key Word: Opportunity

Key Thought: Opportunities Abound as we Approach the Coming of the Messiah

The disciples were curious as well about some very important questions dealing with future events. They asked three questions.

1. When will this happen?
2. What will be the sign of Your coming?
3. What will be the sign of the end of the age?

What Were These Disciples Told about the Signs Proceeding the Return of Christ?

III. THE ABUNDANCE OF OPPORTUNITY (Matthew 24:12-14)

We live in a day of incredible opportunities. We need to decide whether we will put our resources of time, talent and treasure toward these opportunities that God has place before us. The Oxford Dictionary writes that the word “**opportunity**” means “*a favourable time or set of circumstances for doing something.*” The time for action is now because all of the other signs that I’ve spoke about have all been happening with increasing repetition. There is an open door that has been set before us. We must decide how we will respond to it.

“Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.”

Galatians 6:10

Jesus made it very clear that we must go beyond doing good among ourselves. There comes a time when we need to expand our horizons. We are fast approaching the coming of the Lord and the end of this age.

When Will this Happen?

I. IT WILL HAPPEN WITH THE INCREASE OF WICKEDNESS (Matthew 24:12)

II. IT WILL HAPPEN AS WE STAND FIRMLY FOR TRUTH (Matthew 24:13)

**III. IT WILL HAPPEN WHEN WE PROCLAIM THE GOSPEL WORLDWIDE
(Matthew 24:14)**

I. IT WILL HAPPEN WITH THE INCREASE OF WICKEDNESS (Matthew 24:12)

A. A Clear Perspective is Needed

I wonder what God wants us to see in our surroundings? Are we missing anything important? How would our nation and our church handle a situation like that in the Ukraine if we were invaded by a hostile regime? How can we balance the work load today so we can be able to help in the future?

“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.

4. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

5. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus”

Philippians 2:3-5

One of the most important signs that Christ is soon to return is the condition of the church. Are we ready for His return?

*** A few weeks after returning home from the Galapagos, our family went to the National Zoo in Washington, DC. The National Zoo is a great zoo, but zoos are ruined for me. Looking at caged animals isn't nearly as exhilarating as witnessing a wild animal in its natural habitat—it's too safe, it's too tame, and it's too predictable.

As we walked through the ape house, the four-hundredpound gorillas looked so bored, so emasculated, behind protective plexiglass. That's when a thought fired across my synapses: I wonder if churches do to people what zoos do to animals.

I don't think it's intentional. In fact, it's well-intentioned. But I wonder if our attempts to help people sometimes hurt them. We try to remove the danger, remove the risk. We attempt to tame people in the name of Christ, forgetting that Jesus didn't die to keep us safe. Jesus died to make us dangerous.

I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves.

That doesn't sound safe, does it? That's because it's not. The will of God isn't an insurance plan. The will of God is a dangerous plan. It takes tons of testosterone, and it produces high levels of holy adrenaline. ***

Mark Batterson

“Play the Man: Becoming the Man God Created You to Be”

Baker Books, 2017

I. IT WILL HAPPEN WITH THE INCREASE OF WICKEDNESS (Matthew 24:12)(Contd.)

B. Balance will be Maintained

One the great messages that the Church needs to hear and apply is to be more balanced. The Bible actually tells us that we can be **overrighteous** as well as **overwicked**. Extreme living can cause us to die before our time.

“In this meaningless life of mine I have seen both of these: a righteous man perishing in his righteousness, and a wicked man living long in his wickedness.

16. Do not be overrighteous, neither be overwise—why destroy yourself?

17. Do not be overwicked, and do not be a fool—why die before your time?

*18. It is good to grasp the one and not let go of the other. **The man who fears God will avoid all extremes**”*

Ecclesiastes 7:15-18

C. Righteousness will Succeed

This is not a doom and gloom message. You and I need to know and believe that righteousness is the way to pattern our lives after. It will ultimately succeed. There have been many times throughout history that those who have lived wicked lives have seemed to be the heroes. They become the kings and cruelly rule over the righteous. **It will not last forever.**

“The sceptre of the wicked will not remain over the land allotted to the righteous, for then the righteous might use their hands to do evil.”

Psalms 125:3

**I. IT WILL HAPPEN WITH THE INCREASE OF WICKEDNESS (Matthew 24:12)
(Contd.)**

C. Righteousness will Succeed (Contd.)

*** The story is told of a farmer in a Midwestern state who had a strong disdain for “religious” things. As he plowed his field on Sunday morning, he would shake his fist at the church people who passed by on their way to worship. October came and the farmer had his finest crop ever—the best in the entire county.

When the harvest was complete, he placed an advertisement in the local paper which belittled the Christians for their faith in God. Near the end of his diatribe he wrote, “*Faith in God must not mean much if someone like me can prosper.*”

The response from the Christians in the community was quiet and polite. In the next edition of the town paper, a small ad appeared. It read simply, “*God doesn’t always settle His accounts in October.*”

William E. Brown
“*Making Sense of Your Faith*”

D. Justice Will Prevail

“Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble, and that day that is coming will set them on fire,’ says the LORD Almighty. ‘Not a root or a branch will be left to them.’”

Malachi 4:1

The closer we come to the Return of the Messiah, the closer also comes the day when Justice will finally prevail. Every arrogant and evildoer will receive their reward. Nothing will be left of them. There will no place for boasting on that day. So even though wickedness will increase until the end of this age, its day of reckoning is also soon to come.

II. IT WILL HAPPEN AS WE STAND FIRMLY FOR TRUTH (Matthew 24:13)

It is one thing to believe in something it is quite another to stand up for it. It is becoming quite apparent that the things we value are the things we must stand up and fight for.

“What we tolerate today, we will embrace tomorrow.”

Giving rights to one group will now demand that rights are removed from another. There is no way out from this fact. **It basically means that if we want to maintain our rights then we must stand up for them.**

Our pluralistic society is quickly trying to make anything and everything available to every group UNLESS you are Christian or Jewish. Unfortunately, we are often seen as fundamentalists when we stand up for what we believe in. On the other hand, when other groups do the same thing they are triumphed as standing up for their rights against the status quo. **There is clearly double standard that is taking shape.** That is why we must stand up for what we believe.

“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.

11. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.

12. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

13. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.”

Ephesians 6:10-13

Our Messiah will be returning in the midst of this type of battle. We will not be kept from these difficult times.

III. IT WILL HAPPEN WHEN WE PROCLAIM THE GOSPEL WORLDWIDE (Matthew 24:14)

The mandate for evangelism rests upon the shoulders of all Christians. As long as there are those who have never heard the gospel of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus, those who have heard and accepted it are obligated to help pass on the message.

A. Pray It - First, we can pray for the labourers and for the lost. Jesus said . . .

“the fields are white for harvest”

John 4:35

*"The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few.
38. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send
out workers into his harvest field."*

Matthew 9:37,38

In addition, we can pray specifically for individual evangelists (see Ephesians 6:19–20 and II Thessalonians 3:1–2). We can pray for those who need to hear the message. Scripture teaches that no man can come unto Jesus unless the Father draws him (John 6:44). Each one must be convicted of his sin by the Holy Spirit (John 16:8).

B. Give It - We need to give of our financial resources to support Christian ministries that further evangelism. If we look in bank statements and see regular giving to Christian ministries beginning with our local church, we know our priorities are in order. If we don't see regular giving, it means we are still needing to grow in that area. We may not be able to give a lot of money. That isn't the issue. Jesus pointed out a woman who gave mere pennies to the temple treasury, and He said she gave out of her need; therefore, in His eyes she had given more than anyone else (Mark 12:41–44). There will never be enough money in the world to win the world to Christ. It is not money that wins people to Christ. It will help but it is not the bottom line. God is able to multiply our contributions, just as He multiplied the loaves and the fish

C. Live It - The third thing we can do is live a life that attracts people to the gospel (see Matthew 5:16). God's primary goal for us after we become Christians is to work in our hearts to cause us to change into the character image of Jesus. People look at our lives. The only "Bible" some people will ever read is YOU and ME. Of course, none of us will show forth Jesus perfectly. But if we live lives in continuous spiritual growth, people will look at us and desire to know Jesus because if they see the changes He is making in our lives.

III. IT WILL HAPPEN WHEN WE PROCLAIM THE GOSPEL WORLDWIDE (24:14)

D. Share It - The fourth thing we can do to help pass the message on is to commit our lives to telling others about Christ. As we live a life of “relationship evangelism,” we seek opportunities to tell others about Jesus. How we do this will vary with different individuals. The key is for each of us to ask the Lord how He wants us to be a witness and then be faithful to that.

*** I once heard of a unique approach by a man who had been used to lead many people to Christ. Someone asked him how it happened that so many people he talked to ended up trusting Christ. He said, “*I only talk to people who are interested in spiritual things.*” The inquirer said, “*Well, how do you know who is interested in spiritual things?*” The man said, “*I ask them.*” The inquirer said, “*How do you ask them?*” The man said, “*I say, ‘Are you interested in spiritual things?’ If they say yes, we begin talking about spiritual things. If they say no, we don’t.*” ***

Using this unusual but rather obvious screening device, this man has led many, many people to Christ. Some people are specially gifted for evangelism (see Ephesians 4:11). Others are not. But all are to do the work of an evangelist.

“But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.”

II Timothy 2:5

I believe each person should get alone with God and say, “***Dear Lord, you have commissioned me to go into my ‘world’ and preach the gospel. What, in light of the specific gifts, experiences, and relationships, etc., that You have given me, do You want me to do to further the Great Commission? I now accept the Great Commission as my Personal Commission and will do whatever You ask of me.***”

The key is not how many people we lead to Christ. The key is whether we are being obedient to the Great Commission.

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Date: Aug 28/22 (Updated) Place: FCA Time: 10:30 Am

Song: The Potter's Hands - G

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The disciples were curious as well about some very important questions dealing with future events. They asked three questions.

1. When will this happen?
2. What will be the sign of Your coming?
3. What will be the sign of the end of the age?

What Were These Disciples Told about the Signs Proceeding the Return of Christ?

- I. THE BEGINNING OF BIRTH PAINS (Matthew 24:4-8)**
- II. THE INCREASE OF PERSECUTION (Matthew 24:9-10)**
- III. THE ABUNDANCE OF OPPORTUNITY (Matthew 24:12-14)**

When Will this Happen?

I. IT WILL HAPPEN WITH THE INCREASE OF WICKEDNESS (Matthew 24:12)

- A. A Clear Perspective is Needed - *Philippians 2:3-5*
- B. Balance will be Maintained - *Ecclesiastes 7:15-18*
- C. Righteousness will Succeed - *Psalms 125:3*
- D. Justice Will Prevail - *Malachi 4:1*

II. IT WILL HAPPEN AS WE STAND FIRMLY FOR TRUTH (Matthew 24:13) -

Ephesians 6:10-13

III. IT WILL HAPPEN WHEN WE PROCLAIM THE GOSPEL WORLDWIDE (24:14)

- A. Pray It - *John 4:35; Matthew 9:37,38; see Ephesians 6:19-20 and II Thessalonians 3:1-2; John 6:44; John 16:8*
- B. Give It - *Mark 12:41-44*
- C. Live It - *Matthew 5:16*
- D. Share It - *II Timothy 2:5*