



The Last Days Beacon

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Equipping End-Time Saints

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CHRISTIAN PREPARATION IN THE LAST DAYS

By James Wiley

The Christian today lives in a world filled with strife, tension, and division. Increasingly he sees his faith challenged and ridiculed as old-fashioned, outdated, and obsolete. The world is becoming increasingly hostile to the Church, and many feel it will only continue to do so. If we are living in the last days, what must Christians do to prepare for them? We will touch on a few subjects of great importance which may have escaped the notice of the believer. What Christians need is Repentance, Knowledge, and Protection. Without these, any other preparations mean little.

REPENTANCE



As we begin this discussion on Christian preparation, it is vitally important that we begin that preparation by an honest appraisal and introspection of our own spiritual condition. Where am I in my walk with the Lord? The matter of proper worship - literally *prostrate* or *genuflect* - before our Heavenly Father is of first importance! Throughout the recorded history of God's people we see time and time again a prophet or teacher coming to them with emphatic warnings of coming judgment should they fail to repent - *turn away* - from their present course of rampant sin and disobedience. God's people have repeatedly maintained a lofty opinion of their own spiritual condition before their Father, one far more optimistic than it should be. We read in I Kings 19:14 that Elijah *despaired* at the lack of the faithful: ". . . the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left. . ." We later read that God had set aside *seven thousand* which "have not bowed unto Baal" (v 18). Seven thousand out of Israel! These were the ancient, biblical people of God who had a covenant relationship with Yahweh through the prophets and the teachers! These were the people who had experienced deliverance at the hand of their mighty God from the land of Egypt, from Pharaoh! These were the people who were shown signs and wonders and fed with heavenly manna! Only seven thousand!

Let us examine ourselves: are we walking in the faith? Are we holding fast to the commandments and precepts, the teachings and traditions given to us through his Holy Word? I think we ought to caution ourselves, so that we might not repeat the mistakes our predecessors made, thinking themselves high and mighty, protected and shielded by the power of God. They found His wrath awaiting them; they were convicted of their shortcomings, of their sin and rebellion against His commandments, given *directly* to them through His servant Moses. Only through God's foreordaining were a mere *seven thousand* preserved as a remnant out of all of Israel.

Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology describes repentance as involving "turning from evil, and turning to the good." Ezekiel 14:6 states, "Repent, and turn yourselves from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your abominations." Consider also the strong words in Isaiah 1:16-17, "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow." What challenging words for us to contemplate!

Biblical history gives us account after account of the judgment awaiting unrepentant Israel at the hands of wicked nations oppressing her and waging wars against her as well as the worm of decay allowed to fester in her as morality and justice declined, replaced with *wickedness* and *injustice*, often from her own leaders. Let not Christians in America be deceived into thinking "God would never allow this to happen to us!" What foolish thinking! How could *anyone* be spared if those who communed directly with their God, those who received signs and wonders from the Son of Man, those who saw the work of their Father with their own eyes, were not spared for their iniquity? "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Lk 13:3).

Across the world Christians need to recommit themselves to their faith, their religion, their Heavenly Father, and turn away from their wicked deeds, for “the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like . . . they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (Ga 5:19-20). We are admonished again, “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?” (Ro 6:1, 2)

It does not require an individual of any particular cleverness or intelligence to spot hypocrisy. Our witness as *ambassadors* for Christ is hindered when the world can hear words that do not match with deeds. Some of Christ's harshest words were directed at the hypocrite: “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchers, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness” (Mt 23:27). Let us not pretend such hypocrisy is outside the realm of possibility for us. It is far more difficult to walk the narrow path, full of trials and arduous labor and to finish the race set before us, but we must remember this life granted to us is for the glory of the Father above and it is not for the glory or happiness of the creation. We must “count it all joy, when ye fall into diverse temptations” (Ja 1:2). The road is difficult, the journey long, but it is our calling as those who are joint-heirs. We have a higher calling, and with such a calling comes great accountability. Again, we must TURN and REPENT!

KNOWLEDGE



In order to *act* correctly, one must *know* correctly. Too often we hear of Christians who are earnest in spirit but devoid of knowledge or training. Too often the Christian of today is largely disinterested in study of the Word, in growth in the faith, in exegesis of the Scriptures. In his letter to the Corinthian believers, Paul speaks of the importance of love. How are we to love without knowledge of that which we are to love? The depth of our love for our Father, our fellow brethren, our lost world in which we dwell, is limited by our knowledge of these subjects. How are we to repent if we do not know what correct behavior is? We must know correctly, unless we somehow act correctly by random chance or our ignorance is overridden by divine inspiration. “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. . .” (Ho 4:6). Knowledge must be viewed with greater value to the beholding believer if he is to grow in the faith and become a more effective servant for Christ. The great Solomon, above all other things, asked for knowledge and wisdom, prizing it above other treasures.

How might knowledge be increased? The Christian of today must make an effort to pray for it! Too often the Christian forgets the power of prayer, the worth of “seeking, asking, and knocking” (Mt 7:7). The Christian must also commit to the task at hand of increasing in knowledge. This is no small matter, but a lifelong task, as gleaning further understanding of the Scriptures is like intense study in a school - there must be *time* devoted which the Christian of today finds less and less of, having whittled and wasted it away pursuing the vanities of this modern life; there must be *focus* in these times of diminishing attention spans and myriad distractions roaming about, seeking again to devour one's time.

These modern times are fraught with potential pitfalls, but they also offer significant advantages to the student. There are a plethora of resources readily available in digital format, from commentaries and translations, study tools and guides, lesson plans and syllabi; all these things are available to better inform the seeking Christian. Let us not omit the invaluable help of Christians more mature in the faith or small groups which can better engage in discourse and discussion about finer points of doctrine than in a formal congregational setting. There are resources aplenty, to the extent the Christian living in today's world has no excuse for ignorance. Using these resources, we must strive to increase in knowledge, that we might reach “the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ, that *we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men.* . . .” (Eph 4:13, 14).

As the Christian increases in knowledge, his discernment should also increase, having grown in understanding of doctrine and correct action. Without knowledge, one cannot easily resist false doctrines and teachers infiltrating the Church. How can this be? How could our Heavenly Father allow such a thing to happen? “But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, *even denying the Lord that bought them*, and bring upon themselves swift destruction” (2 Pe 2:1). We are guaranteed to have infiltration and falsehood in the Church because *it is foretold*. Whether Christians understand or not, we, as children of the Most High, have *enemies*, and these enemies seek our destruction.

Christians may understand this, but may not fully appreciate that “. . . we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the ruler of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Eph 6:12). These fallen angelic powers have EARTHLY, HUMAN servants. These individuals are motivated and organized, and they are seeking to destroy the Church. Only with knowledge and discernment can they be found and exposed for the wolves in sheep's clothing they are.

PROTECTION



The dangers and pitfalls to which the Christian of today is exposed are numerous. We have just touched on spiritual dangers which are perilous, indeed; however, there are just as many physical dangers to the modern Christian, and they affect our lives as well. Protecting ourselves from these dangers is as much an issue of knowledge as anything else. Again, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge” (Ho 4:6), and in these times, one would need to spend full-time researching the dangers surrounding us to know of them all.

This modern age, with its miraculous technologies and scientific progress, has witnessed some of the most rapid development in transportation, energy, subsistence, production, manufacturing, habitation, and education ever seen in history. At what cost, though? That is a question which must be posed. Disease and chronic illness and disability rob the modern Christian in America of his vigor and ability to contribute toward anything, whether it be his own fate, that of his family, his community, or his society. Cancer, heart disease, Alzheimer's, diabetes, obesity, autism and other maladies are growing in this modern world while man boasts of his dominance and prowess, intelligence and development. Meanwhile, the United States slips further and further down with increasing infant mortality rates - one of the highest in the developed world - with such countries as *Cuba* having lower mortality rates despite greater and greater spending on healthcare in America.

It is time for America, and especially American Christians, to become more aware of and more involved in their own health. How many pews are sagging beneath the weight of heavier and heavier parishioners destined to decline from the ravages of disease, never contributing to the Kingdom their full potential? Something must be done, and it isn't popping more pills manufactured by pharmaceutical companies motivated by profit over lives and repeatedly exposed as liars and swindlers as to the effectiveness and appropriateness of their drugs, with over *\$13 billion* (\$13,000,000,000) paid in settlements just in the past few years. The protections afforded Americans from fraudulent marketing and defective products are depressingly weak with companies having exemption from liability in some states for defects in generic drugs based on their products. With 80% of the market composed of generics, most people in these states have no recourse for damages suffered from these so-called “miracles of science”.

How might we address the rampant health issues facing all who live in these modern times? It is imperative to remove contaminants, toxins, and chemicals from our environment and create one which is conducive to health. One of the first things someone thinks nowadays when realizing he has health issues is, “I should eat better.” This is good - and we will explore this topic - but we must also consider how our body functions. Our bodies need many things to function, but they are all generally acquired through breathing, drinking, or eating. Consider the rate at which our bodies deteriorate and die should we deny them any of these actions with the general rule of three: three weeks without food, three days without water, three *minutes* without air. If you can only do one thing, go and acquire an air filter machine. The modern home is becoming increasingly hermetically sealed - that is, airtight, and this poses significant health risks and it is reported the air quality inside our homes is significantly *worse* than outside. Modern construction techniques and materials result in airtight homes filled with pollutants unable to escape. A complete list of pollutants would be too lengthy, but suffice to say a home filled with fabric softeners, harsh cleaners, and chemicals, and constructed of materials filled with preservatives is a house which will adversely affect your health. When selecting an air machine, it is advantageous to find one equipped with HEPA filters, an ionizer, UV-light purification, ozone generation, or a combination of any and all of these to maximize the benefits, although any step toward air purification is better than none.

Water purification is also greatly needed in this age of large urban and suburban centers and millions of tons of contaminants leeching into the water supply. Whatever your source of water, it is probable it is contaminated with chemicals, toxins, pharmaceutical agents, and more; it is not merely water, but rather it is 'chemical soup.' To combat this exposure, access to a clean spring or your own private well for water is very helpful; for most, however, these are not options and filters for one's home are the solution. Selecting a water filter can be difficult, as there are many kinds and many levels of filtration. For the best results, a reverse osmosis filter should be used that is certified

to handle bacteria, viruses, heavy metals, dirt and grime, and chemicals such as toxic fluoride and disinfection byproducts (such as chlorine, chloramines, and chlorine dioxide). Ensure these filters are changed regularly as needed. Exposure to these contaminants is not limited to water consumed: skin exposure through bathing, swimming, and washing of hands, laundry, and other items all contribute to this exposure, especially bathing - a single shower brings about much greater exposure than consumption. To address this, filters for showers and other water sources in the home should be used as well. Whole house filters are available to filter all the water entering the home as well.

“You are what you eat,” is a commonly recited phrase, and it is no wonder disease and nutrient deficiencies are rampant in modern life, for they are rampant in the food supply. Gone are the days of happy livestock grazing on open fields of grass and eating what is biologically appropriate to their bodies; instead, we have concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFO) which pack the poor creatures into cramped holding areas where they are fed cheap feed made of inappropriate foods for their bodies, given no access to free movement, and are kept trapped in their own waste. This 'operation' results in sickly animals which are given large doses of antibiotics to stem the inevitable disease they encounter. It is these animals which are sent to slaughter and then to the shelves of the grocery store. Genetically modified organisms also now dominate the most popular crops used in products today - corn, soy, sugar beets, and the list goes on. These GMOs have not been adequately tested for safety, nor do they lend themselves to increased production. These crops are often modified to be able to tolerate higher doses of herbicides, fungicides, and pesticides (Roundup Ready), which only adds to the chemical load the consumer faces when eating foods which are increasingly processed and denatured. The chemicals and artificial ingredients in modern foods are widespread and difficult to avoid, and they are all linked to increased incidences of debilitating disease.

In order to successfully avoid the hazards associated with a modern diet, one must carefully study and search out wholesome sources of food. Thankfully, the organic certification is largely solid - these products are grown without artificial chemicals and cannot contain GMOs by definition. One must take care, however, because organic junk food is still junk food: there are many organic versions of common quick snacks coming out which will have higher quality ingredients, they still do not possess much nutritive value. Keep in mind 'all-natural' has no official definition and can mean anything; it usually means nothing as to the quality of the product. The low fat craze has been proven to have had no merit, as the wholesome fats which were demonized were replaced with over processed and unhealthy vegetable oils contributing to chronic inflammation, among other maladies. Olive, coconut, avocado, and sunflower (in moderation) oils are wholesome, provided a quality source can be found, while, provided a quality source can be found, traditional fats such as butter and tallow are also wholesome. Find a whole food based supplement which your body can use; 'regular' supplements are in unusable forms and can contribute to disease instead of the health they are supposed to promote. Supplementation is necessary even with a clean diet of good food because of the farming practices this country has used for so long which have drained the soil of nutrients which our bodies need.

In order to eat, drink, and breathe healthily, one must engage in just as much study as any other subject. Doing so will not only improve one's quality of life, but it is also in accordance with the “caring for the temple,” which we are instructed to do. Diets come and go, with some having merit while others falling short. Whatever diet you decide to follow, ensure you are using foods of the highest quality, devoid of the toxic load which taints the modern food supply. Remember the saying, “the bitterness of poor quality remains long after the sweetness of low price is forgotten.” Keep in mind that practicing a healthy lifestyle will save you tremendously in health costs, stave off deterioration of quality of life, and allow you to live more fully and effectively for our Father.

Christians in the modern world face many difficult issues, especially as the end times are approaching. In order to prepare for these times, Christians should humble themselves and REPENT, study to gain KNOWLEDGE and take care to PROTECT their bodies. As we do so, we can be sure of the Lord's approving ". . . Well done, thou good and faithful servant. . ." (Mt 25:21).

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