

Foundations

John O. Reid (1930-2016)

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Many years ago now Dolores and I were blessed with being able to go on the first Worldwide Church of God Mediterranean cruise with the church. We packed about twice as many suitcases as we needed and off we went.

It was an exciting trip, and we were able to visit Ephesus, Patmos, Corinth, Santorini, Istanbul, and many other areas. But by far the most exciting area we visited was the Acropolis with the Parthenon sitting on top of it.

To walk where Paul walked on Mars Hill, otherwise known as the Areopagus, and to see buildings still standing that were over 2500 years old, was a moving experience. We had always seen pictures of the Parthenon standing alone on a hilltop, and it surprised us to see the city of Athens, a city of 3.7 million in the metropolitan area surrounding it.

The Parthenon with its many beautiful pillars has been an example of architecture used around the world. Our tour guide told us how those pillars had supported the upper structure for over 2500 years through wars, storms, earthquakes, and they are still standing up even under all the pollution today.

We also visited Corinth, and saw the pillars there as well. These pillars were older and cut out of one huge piece of stone. One of our friends who was with us was almost five feet tall, and I think if we could have stacked ten or twelve of her one atop the other she might have reached the top—the column she stood next to was huge.

But the pillars in Athens were not cut from one piece of stone, but were cut in sections and fitted together with a bronze locking fixture that locked the sections together, and only now are they needing to be replaced. It truly seemed amazing that after all these thousands of years these pillars are still doing their job.

I know when one stands there gazing at this marvelous structure one cannot help but think of Revelation 3:12 where God mentions He called us to be faithful pillars in His house.

What are the characteristics of a pillar? The primary function of a pillar is to support. Synonyms include column, support, backbone, and strength. Verbs that apply would be bolster, brace, prop-up, strengthen, and sustain. *Strong's #4769* Pillar: A support column. Figuratively, it is any firm support; or persons of authority and influence as in the church, as that which upholds the truth. This could apply to each one of you as well. Do not think that it is only for ministers.

However, when one stands looking at the Parthenon, one never sees or notices something that is vital to the sustaining of the pillars. They look at the marble floor all littered with broken parts of statues, and never give it a thought, other than to many it is unsightly. They never stop to consider that this unsightly dirty floor is the reason the Parthenon stands to day.

A pillar, no matter how well constructed, no matter how lovely, or how impressive, can only serve its function if it is set on a solid foundation. That dirty unkempt floor the columns of the Parthenon

stand on is the reason this beautiful structure has withstood all the earthquakes, wars, and other difficulties for over 2,500 years.

Matthew 7:21-27 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven [all by Himself is key]. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' [But do you see appreciation?] And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!' Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall."

One of the reasons it was so great a fall is because of the tremendous potential that individual had. And yet he gave it up.

In Luke 6:48 Luke states that the man dug deep, and then laid his foundation on solid rock. And the phrase is that you and I, we are to build our foundation on *the rock*, individually. This is not a collective thing. You build your house on the rock. The sense of this is, "Every man that doesn't put My words into practice, is like the foolish man who builds his house on sand."

These verses show the contrast of hearing versus doing. You must remember that we have to do what Jesus Christ commands. The wise person represents those who put Jesus' words into practice; they are building to withstand anything. Those who pretend to have faith, or who merely have intellectual commitment, are foolish builders. When the storms of life come their structure will collapse. God of course cannot be fooled. He knows what we are in our heart.

Why must we build on bedrock? It is so that when the storm comes you will be safe. I want to tell you, brethren, I hope we realize that the storm is here!

Not too many years past, we were all a part of a large church organization with roughly 140,000 members, many ministers, and a large legal department. We lived in a time when we for the most part could take our children out of school to the Feast. Keeping the Sabbath was not as difficult as it is now. We had the feeling of support around us.

And we knew that Christ was going to come in 1975, too! However, I am not laughing at that. I know what you mean. Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong wrote that book back in 1955, and surely Christ would be here in 20 years. But I do not think that the phrase, "I delay My coming," really sank into us as it does at this time today.

Today we live in a world that is far different, a world as mentioned in the book *The Marketing Of Evil* by David Kupelian. In the introduction we are told what has taken place over the last fifty years. We are being marketed to get us off our foundation—to forget it, to leave it, to do what the world does. Listen to what has happened here.

As Americans, we've come to tolerate, embrace, and even champion things that would have horrified our parents' generations.

These are things like abortion-on-demand, virtually up to the moment of birth. [What is the number, 40 million? And by the way, where would we have put all these illegals if all 40 million had been born like they were supposed to? America would be a different place.] Judges banning the Ten Commandments from public places. [Who would have ever thought that was possible?] A national explosion of middle school sex. [This is kids 12, 13, and 14 having sex. It is horrendous.] The slow starvation of the disabled. Thousands of homosexuals openly flouting the law and getting married. [I remember we had gone to San Francisco, but it was during some special gay day. It was unbelievable.] The on-line porn industry creating late night sex addicts in millions of middle class homes. [This is what is going on in our nation today. And, this is being marketed toward you, and your family. This is why you have to be very careful of your foundation.] At the same time our courts have scrubbed America's school rooms surgically clean of every vestige of the religion on which this nation was founded—Christianity. Indeed in fifty years we have gone from a nation unified by traditional Judeo-Christian values to one in which those same values are increasingly scorned, rejected and demonized.

What is the end time environment we will have to face? What kind of an environment does Israel always display before correction from God?

Isaiah 2:5-19 (NEV) "O people of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord. You have abandoned your people the house of Judah; for they are crowded with traders, hawkers [marketing men], and barbarians like the Philistines, and with children of foreigners [King James Version "eastern ways] everywhere. Their land is filled with silver and gold, and there is no end to their treasure; their land is filled with horses, and there is no end to their chariots; their land is filled with idols, and they bow down to the work of their own hands, to what their fingers have made [worshipping society]. Mankind shall be brought low, all men shall be humbled; and how can they raise themselves? Get you into the rocks and hide yourselves in the ground from the dread of the Lord, and the splendor of His majesty. Man's pride shall be humbled, the loftiness of men shall be brought low, and the Lord alone shall be exalted."

So then, what will this produce?

Amos 8:1-10 Thus the Lord GOD showed me: Behold, a basket of summer fruit. And He said, "Amos, what do you see?" So I said, "A basket of summer fruit." Then the LORD said to me: "The end has come upon My people Israel; I will not pass by them anymore. And the songs of the temple shall be wailing in that day," says the Lord GOD—"Many dead bodies everywhere, they shall be thrown out in silence." "Hear this, you who swallow up the needy, and make the poor of the land fail, saying: "When will the new moon be past, that we may sell grain? And the Sabbath, that we may trade wheat? Making the ephah small and the shekel large, falsifying the scales by deceit, that we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals—even sell the bad wheat?" The LORD has sworn by the pride of Jacob: "Surely I will never forget any of their works. Shall the land not tremble for this, and everyone mourn who dwells in it? All of it shall swell like the river, heave and subside like the River of Egypt. "And it shall come to pass in that day," says the Lord GOD, "That I will make the sun go down at noon, and I will

darken the earth in broad daylight; I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation; I will bring sackcloth on every waist, and baldness on every head; I will make it like mourning for an only son, and its end like a bitter day.

And then He goes on to say (and I will amplify this a bit),

Amos 8:11 “Behold, the days are coming,” says the Lord God, that I will send famine on the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord.

There will be no prophet to instruct the people. There will be no one to give spiritual direction. This is a time of enmity between God and man.

Amos 8:12-14 They shall wander [Staggering as one frustrated in a panic, in anger, searching for the truth.], from sea to sea, and from north to the east, they shall run to and fro seeking the word of the Lord, but shall not find it. [I mean, no one to direct them how to live. God has pulled back.] In that day the fair virgins and strong young men faint from thirst. [It is as if a veil came over them, blinding them as to what to do. It is going to be a frightening time.] Those who swear by the sin of Samaria [Ashima, a Syrian goddess. They fall for eastern religions], who say, ‘As Your god lives, O Dan!’ and ‘As the way of Beersheba lives!’ [Beersheba stands for “god” worship] They shall fall, and never rise again.

These will be some more quotes from the book, *The Marketing of Evil*. What is the religious world around us like? Do they really believe God? Do they understand God? Do they know what God wants? Are they trying to do that?

In 1960 on the cover of *Time Magazine*, run in giant letters against a black background, *IS GOD DEAD?* The churches and organized religion has gone down hill since then.

The article goes on to state, “There is an acute feeling that the churches on Sunday are preaching the existence of a God who is nowhere visible in their daily lives.” They just cannot see God. They go on and live their lives like they always did.

Francis B. Sayre, dean of Washington’s famed National Cathedral admitted, “I am confused as to what God is, but so is the rest of America.” They do not know what God is!

Lutheran historian Martin Marty argues that, “All too many pews are filled on Sunday with practical atheists—disguised nonbelievers who behave during the rest of the week as if God did not exist.” *The Barna Report* says the same thing—that churchgoers act just like the world around them.

Reverend Nathan Scott states, “I look out at the faces of my people, and I’m not sure what meaning these words, gestures, and rituals have for them.” It does not seem to change a thing.

You see, the same pressure is on us. I hope you realize this. The world is letting down, and it is easy for us to let down too, but we had better not do that.

And finally, Michael Novak of Stanford writes, “I do not understand God, nor the way in which He works. If occasionally, I raise my heart in prayer, it is to no God I can see, or hear, or feel. It is to a God in as cold and obscure a polar night as any non-believer has known.”

We have the most wonderful neighbors across the street. I mean, they really are. They are just neat people. They are Protestant. When Mr. Obama got elected, I asked them, “What did you think about election?” They replied, “Oh, it was wonderful!” I replied, “You mean you wanted the man who preached homosexuality, and babies to be killed—that is not important?” They replied, “Oh, that’s not important! Did you see how he unified the Democrat Party?” I could only be quiet after that. I did not say a word. There is just no sense today in this country.

The above grouping of religious leaders have basically given up on God and feel lost as to how to lift their people up. And in the world around us there is a general malaise—an apathy—toward anything religious. This is so true. Apathy can be very contagious if we are not careful.

Now, what does God have to say about this time regarding His church? Turn to II Peter 2. This is almost unbelievable to me.

II Peter 2:1-3 But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.

These false prophets are among us, meaning in the remnants of the WCG. They appear to be with the truth, doctrines, but along with preaching truth, they slip in their particular ideas, and prophetic thoughts. We have all had a recent dose of that in that we have had three “Two Witnesses.” One of these ‘Two Witnesses’ prophesied that John Ritenbaugh, Rod Meredith, and Dave Pack would all die by the end of the year. And he was on a radio program, announcing himself as one of the Two Witnesses, and then he announced that his wife was the other one!

Then, another man left another organization, and he was going to be one of the Two Witnesses. So, we now have three individuals claiming to be part of the Two Witnesses. We have one minister who states he has been appointed to *select* the Two Witnesses and is training them now. So now we have five “Two Witnesses.”

This is some of what God is warning us about. I have been in the church of God 42 years now, and I have seen everybody who claims to completely understand prophecy leave after a while. It is true. It just does not happen the way that they planned for it.

Now, just so you will know what God says about His Two Witnesses, in Revelation 11:3 God states that he will give power to his Two Witnesses. He does not mention anyone else doing it. It is so easy to become sarcastic in these situations. And it is easy to find them too.

II Timothy 3:1-6 But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come [pay attention to this]: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy [so many things wrong],

unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness [an attraction to those who left the old Worldwide Church of God] but denying its power. And from such people turn away! For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts.

I could not help but think of Satan. Who does Satan attack? It was not Adam. It was Eve. This was part of what we have to face.

This serious warning comes to show the vital necessity of using every precaution to preserve the purity of our beliefs or foundations. This is not something you read, and then put down. God is serious here. He expects us to do these to build our foundation, and to take care of it.

The pressures on us will be great times of falsehood, danger, persecution, and trial. One of the characteristics of these times will be that men will be eminently selfish under a religious disguise. They will have a base and narrow passion, having no real care for those they pretend to serve. You are just money. That is what you are to them.

And to top it off, they commit one of the worst crimes in God's sight—ungratefulness. They are unthankful. They disregard agreements, one of the lowest indicators of degradation. And the word incontinent in this case shows they cannot control their passions. They have no self-control. They show no kindness or gentleness, and they are harsh and cruel, and despisers of those who are doing their best to obey God—those who seem simple to them.

They love their desires and passions far more than any love of God. They commit treason, they do not stop and consider, but rush into activities that can or will bring their destruction, they are puffed up in their desire, and they love their sensual pleasures more than any obedience to the Living God. And then again, in verse 6 we note that they follow Satan's plan and try to subvert the women first.

I want to read some more quotes from the book, *The Marketing of Evil* regarding the family meltdown around us. This environment, whether we know it or not, pushes at us—our children, our neighbors, and ourselves.

From Gloria Steinem quoted [probably in the late 1990s] in the "Saturday Review of Education," "We have to abolish and reform the institution of marriage. By the year 2000 we will, I hope, raise our children to believe in human potential, not God. We must understand what we are attempting is a revolution, not a public relations program."

Vivian Gornick, tenured professor at the University of Arizona, said, "Being a housewife is an illegitimate profession. The choice to serve, and be protected, and plan towards being a family maker is a choice that should not be. The heart of radical feminism is to change that."

Feminist author Robin Morgan Editor of *Ms Magazine*, "We cannot destroy the inequities between men and women until we destroy marriage."

Germaine Greer, lecturer at the University of Warwick England, "If women are to effect a significant amelioration in their condition, they must refuse to marry...The plight of mothers is more desperate than that of other women, and the more children, the more hopeless the situation seems to be...Most

women would shrink at the notion of leaving husband and children, but this is precisely the case in which brutally clear rethinking must be undertaken.”

Radical feminist author Andrea Dworkin, “Like prostitution, marriage is an institution that is extremely dangerous for women.” Jill Johnson, feminist author, “Until all women are lesbians, there will be no true political revolution.”

This is what is attacking the society all around us. Do we understand that? These are the influences upon our children at school. It seems subtle, but it is there.

Sex (2004)

According to the Internet Review in 2004, there were 4.2 million pornographic Web sites. That is 12% of all web sites, totaling 372 million pages. Search engine requests run 68 million a day. What is it like today being five years later?

I will not go into what this has produced, but rather I remind us that Satan has done a masterful job in this area, and this is a serious part of the storm that confronts us, and our foundation. You may want to read Numbers 25 later on, because it is an old trick by Satan to act this way. He knows exactly what he is doing.

One of Satan’s main leaders in this perverted industry is Dr. Kinsey. This man opened the doors to perverted sex in these last years more than any other individual. His personal history is unbelievable.

Schools Today

Is there any balance or sense in the world around us? No! In days past the big crime in schools was running in the halls, talking, or chewing gum in class. Now, in Los Angeles not too many years ago, teachers were awarded burial packages in their contracts (as I recall) in case they got killed while at their jobs in school.

A thirteen-year-old boy was suspended for violating Derby Kansas’ Unified School District’s zero tolerance policy against racial harassment and intimidation when he drew a replica of the confederate flag on a scrap of paper. The flag was listed as a prohibited symbol of racial hatred.

A New Jersey nine-year-old student was suspended from school and ordered to undergo a psychological evaluation after mentioning to a friend his intent to “shoot” a classmate with a wad of paper. The fourth grader had planned to launch spitballs at the girl using a rubber band. The local police went to the boy’s home after midnight and questioned him about the “shooting incident.”

In Florida a female high school sophomore with a good academic record and no disciplinary problems was suspended for possession of a nail clipper. She had lent the clipper to a friend who used the two-inch file attachment to clean under her nails, but the school officer deemed the attachment to be a knife blade.

We could go on and on at the over-reacting because of a school shooting.

Muslim Faith Learned But Not Christianity

The ACLU sues government schools over alleged violations of the separation of church and state. As a result, public schools are now so intimidated they go to absurd lengths to censor the slightest reference to God. A recent example was a California school that prohibited a teacher from giving his history students excerpts from the Declaration of Independence, the diaries of George Washington and John Adams, the writings of William Penn, and various state constitutions because of the document's references to God.

Brethren, all of these quotes are just the tip of the iceberg of the world we find ourselves in today, and all of this hammers at us. Satan will do anything to destroy you, and our youth.

Turn to Matthew 24. Jesus' disciples came to Him asking what shall be the sign of your coming, and I think this is a good question for us to ask today in relation to our foundations.

Matthew 24:1-3 Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down." Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"

He answered their question in the remainder of this chapter, as well as in chapter 25.

Matthew 24:4-6 And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. . .

Indeed we have wars all over the world, and the world is like a time bomb. When it will go off, no one knows. But it is on the edge.

Matthew 24:7 "For nation will rise against nation . . .

Matthew 24:8-12 "All these are the beginning of sorrows. Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold."

Because the pressure will be so great by Satan at this time to kick us off our foundation.

Matthew 24:14 "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.

Matthew 24:22 "And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake [which you are] those days will be shortened.

Matthew 24:24 "For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.

I am going to skip over this next portion, and start next in verse 42.

Matthew 24:42-25:1 "Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. [You do not let down!] "But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect. [This next portion is truly important.] "Who then is a faithful and wise servant [all of you here today], whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods [the tremendous future!]. But if that evil servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming [and it surely seems that was, does it not?],' and begins to beat his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. [And then He says,] "Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.

We are going to spend some time here.

Jesus tells them of the events that will take place and then in verse 42 warns them to watch, stressing that he who is faithful will rule over all His goods.

But then in Matthew 25, He shows the condition of the church just prior to the return of Jesus Christ. This is not the story of "ten virgins" as such, but this is the story of THE CHURCH! This is the story of you and me as we face the end of the age!

This is the parable of the ten virgins, those called in these last days; it is an end time parable and the sense of it is repent while you have the opportunity! Again the picture being presented is that this is the condition of the end time church.

Matthew 25:1-2 "Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish.

I once saw a picture of these lamps that they took on these wedding feasts. When we think of lamps, we think of the old time kerosene lamps, or maybe Aladdin's lamps. But these were lamps on a pole, big metal baskets on top filled with rags. You put oil on the basket of rags, and then you light it, and away you would go. Being on long poles, they would march in procession with their poles and lamps. This is what we are talking about here. The wise long for the return of the Bridegroom, but they had to go through the drudgery and the stupidity of this world sometimes, but yet they were waiting for God, and they were serious.

Five were wise and five were foolish. The wise had their foundations on solid rock, and the foolish on sand. The wise were serious regarding their commitment, the foolish casual regarding what was being offered to them. What a sadness to be so casual about this.

Matthew 25:3-4 "Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

So, the foolish probably just coated the rags on top with oil, and thought that would do, but the wise thought better of it and brought more oil along just in case.

The foolish took their lamps with perhaps oil that would last for just a short time, and they traveled a certain distance in the wedding procession with the wise, thinking the wedding would be immediate, but lacked the essential preparation to continue if the groom delayed his coming.

Could that oil represent the Spirit of God, and the amount drawn from God? The wise viewed the wedding with seriousness. Even though time had gone on, and the Bridegroom had not come, they trusted that He would, and this could be it, and they seriously prepared for it.

The foolish took the delay as just another of many delays, thus treating the occasion in a very casual fashion. Some say, "Mr. Armstrong and Mr. Waterhouse were wrong, so why should we sweat it this time?"

Matthew 25:5-9 "But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight a cry was heard: 'Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!' Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' But the wise answered, saying, 'No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.'

At midnight, when the Bridegroom would be least expected, the cry came to go out and meet Him. What an exciting moment this had to be. Everything hoped for at last was coming to pass! They were so excited. They were going to meet God at last! And they were just thrilled! It was everything that they had hoped for. All the trials they suffered, all the pain, all the fears, all the concerns were behind them now. And here was their Lord, and their King. What a wonderful time that will be.

The foolish asked for oil, but righteousness cannot be shared, thus they had to go to purchase for themselves. It is interesting to contemplate where one would go at midnight to purchase oil, and indeed considering the end time events, where would any oil be available. It was just too late...

Matthew 25:10-11 "And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut. Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us!'"

Barnes Notes on verse 11:

This is not to be understood as implying that any will come after the righteous into the kingdom, and claim admission then. It is a part of the parable to illustrate the general truth inculcated, or to prepare the way for what is afterwards said, and to keep up the narrative and make it consistent.

So, lest any of you thought that if you missed the first one, you get the second one, you are mistaken. It does not work that way. This is it for us.

Matthew 25:12 "But he answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.'

How come? I looked up this in *Expositor's Commentary*. It stated that the reason they were not admitted was that they were not prepared. That made me wonder, "Am I prepared?" You may wonder the same thing. They were not prepared.

They had offices of responsibility, positions to help others were set aside for them—king, judge or some other office—but because they were not concerned about it very seriously, they were not prepared, and those offices were given to somebody else. It is no small thing. The fact that the end of the age is not here when think it should be takes away the importance of it. And when it does come, and you cannot get it. They were not ready.

Matthew 25:13 "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.

In this next parable Jesus amplifies the duties of those waiting for the return of their King. This is for us, not just somebody in the Bible there. It is there for you and me to grow. Jesus expects watchfulness to grow as times become more difficult, not only in being prepared and in performance of duties even if there is a long delay, but also in improvement in the talents, or offices given.

Now, you can find the gifts of God in I Corinthians 12, and Romans 12. Please turn to Romans 12. I typed them out using the New English Bible. I want you to listen to what has been given to you. You do not all have the same things, as you know. But these were gifts given. And you are going to see how important they are in compared to the talents.

Romans 12:1-21 (NEB) "Therefore my brothers, I implore you by God's mercy to offer your very selves to Him: a living sacrifice, dedicated and fit for this acceptance, the worship offered by mind and heart. Adapt yourselves no longer to the pattern of this present world, but let your minds be remade and your whole nature thus transformed. Then you will be able to discern the will of God and know what is good, acceptable, and perfect. In virtue of the gift that God in His grace has given me, I say to everyone among you; do not be conceited or think too highly of yourself; but think your way to a sober estimate based on the measure of faith that God has given to each of you. For just as in a single human body there are many limbs and organs, all with different functions, so all of us, unite with Christ, from one body, serving individually as limbs and organs to one another. The gifts we possess differ, as they are allotted to us by God's grace, and must be exercised accordingly [He has given them; He knows you; He knows your limits; He knows what you need; must be exercised accordingly]: The gift of inspired utterance, for example in proportion to a man's faith; or the gift of administration in administration. A teacher should employ his gift in teaching and one who has the gift of stirring speech should use it to stir his hearers. If you give to charity, give with all your heart; if you are a leader, exert yourself to lead; if you are helping others in distress, do it cheerfully. Love in all sincerity, loathing evil and clinging to the good. Let love for our brotherhood breed warmth of mutual affection. Give pride of place to one another in esteem. With unflagging energy, ardor of spirit serve the Lord. Let hope keep you joyful; in trouble stand firm; persist in prayer. Contribute to the needs of God's people and practice hospitality. Call down blessings on your persecutors, blessings not curses. With the joyful be joyful, and mourn with the mourners. Care about each other, as about yourselves. Do not be haughty, but go about with humble folk. Do not keep thinking how wise you are. Never pay back evil for evil. Let your alms be such as all men count

honorable. If possible, so far as it lies with you, live at peace with all men. My dear friends, do not seek revenge, but leave a place for divine retribution; for there is a text which reads "Justice is mine, says the Lord, I will repay [you do not exact revenge]." But there is another text: If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty give him a drink; by doing this you will heap live coals on his head. Do not let evil conquer you, but use good to defeat evil."

The above are some of the qualities, gifts, and abilities incorporated in the talents which you received!

In this second parable of amplification of the tale of the church during Christ's delayed coming, Jesus starts out in a much more personal manner.

Matthew 25:14 "For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them.

Now, who did Jesus call? The servants in this story? Or did He call you? You are the servants that Jesus called.

Here we see Jesus Christ pictured as a man traveling to a far country and He delivers His gifts to His servants. Who are the servants of Jesus Christ? We are. What are the gifts? All the above: Offices, opportunities for doing good, abilities, and the wonderful opportunity to be in God's Kingdom. These gifts, and many more, have been given to you for you to grow with and produce fruit that you can provide tremendous help in the world tomorrow.

Matthew 25:15 "And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey.

Did you get that? He gave the gifts to you based on your ability to receive them, to handle them, and to use them, and to grow with [by] them.

He gave them talents; one 5, one 2, and one 1. He gave them the gifts according to their abilities. A talent weighs 70 pounds and is a very large sum. It could be gold, silver, or copper. These were expensive and precious gifts. He very carefully gave these gifts with full knowledge that those receiving them were adapted and able to improve them.

Now these gifts are not talents of gold, silver, or copper to us. These gifts we have been given are much more valuable than that. These are the gifts that are going to be used in the world tomorrow to save the entire world. This is why we have been given them. This is why Christ gave them to us, so that we can grow, and accomplish, and do the things that we need to do in saving all of mankind. It is no small thing.

Again, who are these servants these gifts were given to? Those called by God! Brethren, we have been given those gifts! I do not know what yours are.

Matthew 25:16-17 "Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. And likewise he who had received two gained two more also. But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money.

You can see what was accomplished with those first two individuals who represent the church of God. And then we see the man who buried his gift, and there is no reason or excuse to justify doing this, as God has given the abilities He knows we can grow with and thrive in His Kingdom. Whether the delay, or some other reason, he buried it.

Matthew 25:19-30 "After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them. So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, 'Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.' His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.' He also who had received two talents came and said, 'Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them.' His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.' [These faithful servants stuck it out the whole time the Lord delayed His coming. He was also excited about the opportunity he had.] Then he who had received the one talent came and said, 'Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. 'And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.' But his lord answered and said to him, 'You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest. Therefore take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents. For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

The first servant is thrilled to see his Lord and is proud to state that he has earned five additional talents. This was something special—this was Jesus Christ returning! His reward is to be made ruler over many things. The second servant receives his reward as well.

The prophetic setting that God wants us to have in our thinking is that our reward will be far above anything we can imagine. It is not just our “Boss” coming to us and stating that was a good job, as it states in Romans 8:17. We will be joint heirs with Jesus Christ, and if we suffer with Him, we will be glorified together. The future set before us is absolutely awesome.

Romans 8:18 “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us!

That is you, and me. We have such a future!

The third servant loses all. He shows his lack of love toward the master who gave him a chance for greatness. Yes, each of us has a chance for greatness. This unprofitable servant attempts to justify himself, by blaming his master for requiring too much of him, but with clear vision the master had assigned him exactly what he could handle. His talent is taken from him and his relationship with his master is severed.

This parable insists that the watchfulness that must mark all Jesus' disciples does not lead to becoming passive, but to doing our duty, to growing, and developing the resources and abilities God has given us, until after what seems a long time, Jesus Christ returns and settles accounts.

It is now three days until Jesus is to be crucified, and He now gives us a picture of what He is after in those who will rule with Him. The kind heart, the works, the love, the concern for others, the kindness, the mercy, the utter generosity of spirit—that is what He is looking for in those that will help Him to prepare this world for the Father.

Matthew 25:31 When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory.

I read over that for 42 years, and never gave it a thought. Jesus Christ's return will be absolutely awesome this time. When I was younger, I used to be a photographer in my spare time, and I used to shoot new car lot openings, with search lights, and all that. This is not going to be like a new car lot opening. This is not going to be like the Academy Awards. This is not going to be like the Presidential Inauguration. This is going to be the return of the Living God, our Creator Jesus Christ. It will be an awesome display. A gigantic retinue will be with Him when He returns as all His holy angels will be with Him. Daniel 7:10 states that the Father has millions of angels.

Matthew 24:30-31 states that Jesus will be seen by the world, a spectacular thing, stunning in glory,

Matthew 25:32-34 "All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'

That word prepared would be better translated "designed." Everything about this world has been designed for us—the distance from the sun and the moon; the weather patterns; the plants and animals on the earth; have all been designed to produce wonderful things in us. And the things that we do not like, they are designed for us to resist in some cases, for our training.

Next, notice the things that Jesus Christ wants, the gifts that He wants us to have, because we think of gifts as being money, or jobs, or things.

Matthew 25:35-36 For I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.'

Back in those days, when you went to visit someone in prison, you had to bring them their food too. We have some in the church today that we are sending material to who are in prison. I was talking to one man who is in prison, and he said, "When I finish reading the Berean, I put them out in the common area. And you would be surprised at the number of prisoners who pick those things up, and study them."

Matthew 25:37-39 "Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a

stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?'

Now, here is the thing that we have to take to heart. He said that when you give it to one of the least of men, you have done it to Christ. It is no small thing. Again, concern and love for one another. What are you going to have to have in the world tomorrow? The same things—concern for the people God puts us over. It is no small task.

Turn to Mark 9. This shows how tender Jesus Christ is toward what we do. And I might add that it also shows how closely He watches us, those He is working with, lest you think that He does not see. He does!

Mark 9:41 "For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink in My name, because you belong to Christ, assuredly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.

Whoever will give a cup of water to one who belongs to me shall not lose his reward.

Matthew 25:41-43 "Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me.

"You could not have cared less, because you were comfortable."

I was recently watching an old YouTube from a lady that came through the Depression. And she said that she could remember (she must be about my age, old and tired), that people would knock on the door, and ask, "Do you have any food we could have? Please help us!" This could very well happen again. We do not know.

Matthew 25:44 "Then they also will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?'

"I would have been there, if it had been you Lord! I sure would!"

Matthew 25:45-46 "Then He will answer them, saying, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.' And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

Brethren, with what is required of us in these two end time chapters, and in the storm descending upon us, it requires we build our house on rock, because nothing else will do. That is your job, my job, John's job—for all of us. We have got to build on our Rock, our Foundation. There will be plenty of folks who would like to take you off of it. But, it is your job to do it anyway.

I Corinthians 10:1-4 Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.

Ephesians 2:18-22 For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father. Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God [you and me], having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

I Peter 2:1-6 Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word [your foundation], that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious. Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Therefore it is also contained in the scripture, "Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious, and he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame."

The cornerstone sustains the principal weight of an edifice, as the weight of two walls is concentrated on it. Hence, it is of such importance that it should be solid and firmly fixed.

I Peter 2:7-10 Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient, "The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone," and, "A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense." They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed. But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.

Now the question for you: Does Jesus Christ have a Rock who He looks to? Does He have a cornerstone and foundation He relies upon?

Colossians 1:12-15 Giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.

Is Christ in the image of the Father?

John 14:8-10 Philip said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us." Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works.

Do we exhibit the gifts that He gave us, brethren?

One of the scriptures I like happens to be found in Luke 7, because it shows the heart that He has. This passage shows the attitude, heart, concern, and nature of Jesus Christ. And also, because He imitates His Father, it shows the attitude, heart, nature, and concern of God the Father as well, the kindness, love, and mercy.

Luke 7:11-17 Now it happened, the day after, that He went into a city called Nain; and many of His disciples went with Him, and a large crowd. And when He came near the gate of the city, behold, a dead man was being carried out, the only son of his mother; and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the city was with her. [He knew the bleak future of this woman, and His heart went out to her.] When the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her and said to her, "Do not weep." Then He came and touched the open coffin, and those who carried him stood still. And He said, "Young man, I say to you, arise." So he who was dead sat up and began to speak. And He presented him to his mother. Then fear came upon all, and they glorified God, saying, "A great prophet has risen up among us"; and, "God has visited His people." And this report about Him went throughout all Judea and all the surrounding region.

In kindness, love, and generosity, He raised the widow's son. Jesus Christ knew the plight of the woman—what she would face. And up until now, she had no one to provide for her. And out of compassion, He healed her son.

Now, for the last scripture, turn to Revelation 3.

Revelation 3:7-13 "And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, 'These things says He who is holy, He who is true, 'He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens': 'I know your works. [I have been watching you.] See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word [stayed on the right foundation], and have not denied My name. Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie—indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you. Because [here is the reason] you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown. He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. And I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'"

What He is saying here is that you had very little political strength, and yet you hung on to the truth. And no one will be able to stop you from presenting the truth. Because you kept My command to persevere I will keep you from the hour of trial that shall come upon all the world. And I bring rewards with Me.

Barnes' Notes makes this remark: The church is the temple, Jesus is the foundation, and the saints or ministers are the pillars that adorn it.

They have a law in Athens, that a building cannot be over six stories high, the reason being that they have so many earthquakes in that part of the world that it just is not safe. And it is said the safest place to stand in an earthquake is next to a pillar. You see brethren, this is exactly what God and Christ want us to become, pillars with the solid foundation of Jesus Christ, to help this tired worn out world to become new again.

So brethren, let us all of us do the best that we can to be sure that we stay on the foundation of Jesus Christ.