

The New World Order Rises

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The titles of my previous messages this feast have been, “How Prepared Are You?,” “Who Deserves Our Loyalty?,” and “Being Alert to Our Enemy.” Each is a stage of progression in major areas that we need to be alert to and prepare for as time moves toward Christ return.

I believe that if given our faithful attention and work through these issues it will allow God to willingly empower us to succeed, and our hope can be strong despite all the troubles that may be going on in our environment.

In looking at an overview of Revelation 14:1-5 and Revelation 19:7,19, which have been gone into quite a bit of detail in several sermons, it is clear that Jesus Christ and the army under Him, which consists of the glorified saints and multitudes of angelic beings, has been prepared through the ages up until the time given in those contexts.

It is also clear that Jesus follows the principles of orderly preparation for the next stage toward the completion of God's purpose. Everything is prepared for down to the last detail so that every action is accomplished as planned.

Revelation 19:19 And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army.

This shows that Satan has learned these lessons of preparation too, and follows them to the best of his ability. However, he is handicapped in that we know that the army under him is saturated with the same manner of disloyalties that are part of his character. Jesus said in Matthew 12:25,

Matthew 12:25 But Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them, “Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand.

Satan's kingdom is a divided kingdom filled with devious rebellious personnel. They are held together only through fear of their leader and hatred of God and of mankind that God is working in and through. At this time everyone under Jesus Christ has proved himself loyal through much testing and they will not break faith with their Leader.

Do not allow the idea to take hold that Satan is simply a free wheeling mad genius who is constantly winging it without planning and preparation. Remember, he is the ruler of this world, he is over it, and governs it with his laws and principles. I believe that aside from our own weaknesses of faith, the world that is his is the most constant supplier of pressures urging us toward lack of love, the works of the flesh, and thus disloyalty to Jesus Christ.

Even as Christ is readying us, Satan has been readying his forces for generations in order that he will be prepared. We are seeing the effects of Satan and his army's activities on a daily basis in the reports of the immoral cesspool this nation and others are sinking into.

Galatians 1:3-4 Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father.

This is the Bible's description of the world we are in contact with every day. Its manipulations cannot be totally avoided—it is the source of a tsunami of information that threatens to overwhelm us. Its influence surrounds our daily activities; it is almost like we are swimming in it. We must understand more clearly that this world under, and the Kingdom of God under Jesus Christ, are readying themselves for the climactic confrontation that will occur when Christ returns.

We see evidence of this in the world's preparation in the massive departures that people are making away from any belief in God, any deference to God, and into atheistic materialism. Personal idolatries virtually dominate the life of many. Europe appears to be ahead of us in this degeneration but we are gaining fast.

I John 5:18-21 We know that whoever is born of God does not sin [We do not continuously sin; certainly we sin on occasions but we are not living sin as a way of life.]; but he who has been born of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him. We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one. And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.

Here is sound counsel, a gentle and encouraging reminder from the apostle of love, of a reality that we surely intellectually know but in the rush of daily life can easily slip from our minds simply because we are so accustomed to it being there that we take it for granted.

In verse 18, without directly saying it, he is encouraging us to remember it is Jesus Christ who keeps us safe from the evil one, Satan. God has not taken down the hedge of safety keeping us. *Therefore, the way to be prepared and stay safe is to stay close to Jesus Christ constantly.* Our responsibility is to stay close within a combination of daily prayer, daily Bible study, daily meditation, daily study, and careful obedience in every aspect of life so that sin is not a continuous factor in our life.

Verse 19 makes it clear that the way of Satan dominates life in world and that accounts for why Paul can rightly call this age evil, despite the other reality that there is much in the world attractive to human nature and at the same time also conducive to helping us being prepared for the Kingdom of God. If it were no good at all God would not allow it to exist but it is a vehicle to help us become prepared if only to resist the evil that is within it, and to make a witness before those in the world—those unconverted—of the glories of God.

I John 2:15-17 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

In my holy day message as we began this Feast of Tabernacles, we heard the reality of where those who believe that they are citizens of the Kingdom of God stand before God as contrasted to the system that now exists and is called by Jesus Christ, the world. Recall that the term 'world' is used in

the Bible as a code word meaning “Not connected to Christianity,” it is of the world. The Kingdom of God and the world are two very different entities and they are enemies of each other. They are enemies in three different and very important categories of life.

First, the world is clearly physically visible. It is an entity at hand but we are called upon to live by faith not by sight. We do not live by what we see in the world, we live by faith in God's Word. We see God's Word but we do not see Him.

Second, the world is appealing emotionally. Here is one of the major reasons why. Friends, relatives, and many many experiences have been had by us within it and these ties pull at us to continue life on within it. So we want to be with friends that are of the same blood, and so they are within it, but we are not really within it. We sure love those people and we want to be with them but Jesus gave a warning that we are going to have to love Him more than father, mother, sister, brother, aunt, uncle, and so forth. There is a constant gentle pull that comes from our associates in the world.

Third, these two entities are different spiritually, morally, and doctrinally. Thus we are warned that the world is passing away and being tied to it is death. Thus we are urged to consider carefully.

So we must live our life and work within it but we must not be tied to it, always considering it as the enemy of God's purpose and therefore because we are of God, the world is against us individually as well. *Despite all the appeal from the world, it is our enemy* .

Bible prophecy shows that as time moves on these two are going to war against each other in a fight to the finish. One will survive, the other will be gone, perished eternally, forever. Only one will survive and take over complete rulership of the earth.

What does our commander in chief, Jesus Christ, expect of us? I have summed it in one word, *loyalty* , which I hopefully made plain in the second sermon in this series. That is what God wants, willing loyalty, even though our nature is fighting against us and even though the world is so appealing against our Savior.

Most of us understand clearly that first warning in the Olivet prophecy. It is to take heed that no one deceives you. We immediately think of that as being aimed at false religion. Of course it is, but even though that is an answer, it is a narrow answer. There is far more involved in the world than religion that is deceiving and therefore, misleading.

Revelation 12:9 So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

Deceives the whole world, not just the religious area, he has deceived the entire world. Except where God's truth resides in the lives of those called, Satan has deceived virtually every facet of the entire world.

We will go back to the term *cosmos*, translated ‘world.’ *Cosmos* in the Greek indicates an interrelated system consisting of any number of smaller components that in this case, in addition to religion, consists of education which is part of this world.

Science has been deceived, engineering has been deceived, architecture has been deceived, entertainment has been deceived, astronomy has been deceived, biology has been deceived, medicine has been deceived, the growing of food has been deceived, chemistry has been deceived, and on and on.

Are you getting the point when it says that Satan has deceived the whole world it means exactly what God meant it to mean? The entire world system has been deceived, all of the interrelated parts have been touched by the great deceiver and we have to be very careful. We cannot withdraw from the world, we have to live in the world, but God expects us to be thinking about what is going on, because *everything matters*, and that is a hard thing to do; to be thinking in this category all of the time, and striving hard to only permit ourselves to do that which we know is right.

I want you to consider this. I once possessed a book written by a German man, whose name I have forgotten. I loaned the book out and they liked it so well they kept it! I wish I had it again. The book was titled, *A Dance With the Devil*.

The term 'dance' indicates a close relationship even if it is but for a short period of time. But what if 'dance' indicates a much longer relationship, meaning the closeness of the relationship, but the length of the time together all the while the relationship is going on, is like a dance.

The theme of the book is that Satan is of course planet earth's main governing force. However, as I said in the beginning, he has learned lessons about how to organize from the Master, from God. He tries to follow through as well in his own purposes. This main leader of the world has in turn assigned invisible demons under him to oversee humans, whom they in turn choose to work in and through to manage every aspect of life.

The humans, who are of course visible to fellow humans, become instruments of Satan's and the demons' misdirection and confusion of mankind. So in the book, the man describes, there was a demon, perhaps many demons, assigned to work through humans to confuse people about God's existence and the trustworthiness of the Bible and to so divide the interpretation of even very plain scriptures as to cause doubt and to raise points for mankind to argue about.

There was another demon assigned to pollute the water, another demon to destroy the forest, another to create medicines that are life destroyers rather than life savers. Another demon to purposely create friction between the races, another to destroy the weather patterns, another to help mankind develop ever more powerful weapons to kill each other with. Another demon to make universities to be instruments of frivolous, useless education and to undercut the existing cultural structure in every nation in order to create revolutionary classes. Are you aware most revolutions begin in the universities? They do.

Other demons to lead geologists to devise false instruments of ages, other demons to manipulate biology to misinform mankind regarding reproduction, genetics, and plant production. Other demons to manipulate pharmaceutical, also called drugs, to be poisonous.

In each case mankind is led to ill-consider the long range effects of his discoveries. The only aspect to seriously consider is, can it be done? Not whether, or should, it be done? Each of these circumstances is in the end an instrument of death. Is it any wonder the world is evil?

In one sense the overall point of the book is to throw mankind into a confused and bickering mass of blithering misinformed people who argue almost constantly about who is right while at the same time killing off truly constructive thoughts about God and life, having true purpose and hope within it.

Satan has deceived the entire world, not just the religious aspect of it, and he has probably used a system not very far from what I just described. When Paul said this present evil world, he intended far more than just the area of religion.

Satan does have a demonic hierarchy and they are getting their ducks in order for the great and massive challenge against God for rule of this creation. This is why persecution is increasing; the increase of persecution is purposely planned. Nothing happens by chance. Do you know who said that? Franklin Delano Roosevelt. He put it this way, "Everything in Washington D.C. is planned to happen." Things do not happen there accidentally because even he recognized that there is a ruling hand over the politicians that are manipulating the politicians. Do not toss that thought out.

Persecution is part of a major operation that has been underway for centuries, whose purpose is to bring all of mankind under a counterfeit of God's rule over all of mankind through Jesus Christ, and is assisted by his [Satan's] own spiritual children. In this case the counterfeit is headed by Satan and under him are his demons and human beings captive to Satan in much the same way as he used Judas to manipulate Jesus' crucifixion to seemingly get rid of the Christ.

We will begin with Satan who is undoubtedly the chief of this operation. First see how God places him at the head of what is operating basically right before our eyes. We can see a measure of what is underway by means of being enabled to grasp the prophecies.

Please turn to Job 41. Here we are at the tail end of a metaphor that was being used, and I believe describing Satan the Devil, because of things it says in other parts of the Bible.

Job 41:33-34 On earth there is nothing like him, which is made without fear. He beholds every high thing; he is king over all the children of pride.

Satan is so twisted that he fears nothing. It is his pride that God specifically mentions, his pride did him in to the place where he thought that he could actually defeat God in a war—and he still thinks that way. He has infected his people with his pride and he is king over them and they like him are so full of themselves they think that they are going to accomplish their objective and take the world for themselves.

They do not consider whether they should be involved in doing what they are plotting. The only consideration is whether they can, and just like Satan, their pride tells them they not only can but they deserve to do it. It is these folks who are planning for the new world order. Plotting, planning, carrying things out, for what they want to accomplish regardless of you and me, and millions of other human beings. They think they deserve it.

It is Satan who initiates conspiracies among men and keeps them working through generations of time. If one of the human leaders dies, it is not a serious matter to the conspiracy's operations because Satan simply replaces him with another person with the same basic mind set. He has an endless supply of human beings to work in and through. In one sense Satan is creating humans in his image. The major conspiracies involve the rise of the beast, and that is what they are forming.

The stage is being set for the appearance of the beast. For many years now we have been seeing evidence of a massive organized conspiracy underway. I want you to understand that I believe that the chief conspirator is Satan but he is using his minions among men to operate it within mankind. It is very interesting to read all these things that people write about the conspiracy and they always want to blame human beings. It is bad enough that these people are involved in it, but they never mention Satan the Devil operating the whole shebang.

Satan is the author of the beast that is rising. It even tells you where they get their power in the book of Revelation, they get their power from the dragon. It is a forgone conclusion that the beast is a reality and it is coming to pass. Step by step, Satan is using his fellow demons and human beings to bring it into visible existence.

Ultimately its aim is for control of the world, but this conspiracy is by far most active in the Western world, especially in the scattered nations of Israel. It appears on the surface that while Britain, France, Germany, and the United States are most actively involved, the other nations of Israel are too, and add to this the Gentile nations in Europe as well, like the Spanish, and the Italians, Poles, and others. Sometimes this movement is called globalism. Are there people in the United States working to draw the United States within its web? We are right in the middle of it. The answer to that question is absolutely—big names that you would recognize immediately as being part of it.

It has gotten to the place where they are feeling so strong they do not even bother to hide it anymore. They feel they have the world by the tail and they are going to go on in triumph and achieve those things that they want on this earth.

I mentioned to you earlier that even though you would recognize these names, its development has been going on in the United States of America for well over one hundred years. That is why I can tell you authoritatively if one person dies, Satan just replaces him with someone else. It does not matter how important the person who died was, they can shuffle one more right in.

The foundation for the end time conspiracy was laid by Satan and his minions through men in the formation of privately-owned national banks and economics systems within certain leading nations. The key words there are 'privately owned.' These banks have grown so wealthy they are in reality beyond the pale of government control. They in fact control the major operations of governments.

This began to show its head first of all in Germany, then France became a part of it, then England. We have all heard of the Rothschild banks. They are the heart and the core of what is going on here and they are really central to the issue. The last major link formed was when the Federal Reserve Bank in the United States of America formed in 1913.

This group's first major effort toward governmental organization: first you have to get control of the money. Money talks, money is a power, you have money and the politicians are going to beat a path to your door. And they are going to do what you want them to do because it is good for them and good for you. All the while those banks keep growing and growing and growing in income because they are the ones that are making the profit over a long period of time and their wealth keeps piling up and becomes more effective in getting done what they want to get done.

Their first effort towards governmental organization was the organization of the League of Nations following World War I. It failed quickly, the timing was definitely not right, there was not enough cooperation going on.

Then came the United Nations, following World War II. Both of these organizations were primarily American- and British-lead leftist concepts. The advertised purpose of which these groups such as the United Nations was to unite nations on common grounds. The United Nations is of course still viable but by many Americans, very ill-considered that we should not be part of it.

What about the word "conspire"? To conspire means, "joining together in a secret agreement to do unlawful acts." It appears thirty times in the Kings James Version as either conspiracy, conspirator, or conspire. In modern translations, the act of conspiracy may also appear in Scripture as plot, plan, scheme, or take counsel together.

Ephesians 2:1-3 And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

Satan has a huge reservoir of people to work through, and we used to be part of that reservoir. Only by the mercy of God who called us have we been taken away from that reservoir that he has to work in and through. We have to be careful. That is why in I John 2:15-17 is in the Book—to warn us that the whole world lies under Satan and Satan is the governor of all these things that are going on here on earth.

Is Satan a deceiving, plotting, conspirator? What does the book tell us? He deceived one third of the angels, and he did that right under the nose of God when all of these demons had God in view, and he was so slick, so convincing, so conniving that he was able to pull that off. God let him, of course, because it suited God's purpose.

Think about what he did with one third of the angels and he managed to get them to follow him even with God in plain view. This is why I told you in the other sermon, do not think you are going to outwit Satan. Do not think that you are going to defeat him, he is far too powerful in too many ways for us to consider it. That is why the book of James said, "Resist him." That is why I Peter says, "Resist him." If we do that, we have defeated him. Do not challenge him in any way! That would be foolish for us to believe that all of those under his sway would be different from him in character and purpose.

We have all been subject to him and he managed to make us of the same basic mindset that appears here in Ephesians 2:1-3, because we all imbibed his spirit and he is the chief conspirator walking on this earth and he clearly possesses evil leadership qualities. So people of pride, like the king of pride, are a conspiring people just like their spiritual father.

Have we not read in John 8 that those he is father to desire to do what he does. In one sense it is an easy thing for him to raise up an army of people to conspire to carry out his plans to take over the world from God—to do it politically, economically, militarily. In one sense we might say he has everything going for him—except for Jesus Christ. That is a big "except."

We have all been subject to him, and he managed to make us of the same basic mind as his, because we have imbibed in his spirit so he is the chief conspirator walking on earth and he clearly possesses evil leadership qualities.

Did not Absalom conspire against David? Of course he did. Did not Jezebel conspire against Nabob? Many conspiracies are recorded in Judges, Kings, Chronicles. The people of the land conspired against Ezra and Nehemiah, and the people conspired against Paul, so that he had to escape from the city by being let down the city wall in a basket at night.

Even as God chooses people to be part of the body of Jesus Christ and gives them His Spirit, and enables them to perform their responsibilities in like manner, Satan follows the same pattern. It is these people we may see and hear publicly but do not forget, ever, that Satan is the instigator and leader over them. Always remember God, in His sovereign might, is overseeing all.

We are now going to look at the conspiracies against Jesus Christ.

Luke 22:1-6 Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread drew near, which is called Passover. And the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might kill Him, for they feared the people. Then Satan entered Judas, surnamed Iscariot, who was numbered among the twelve. So he went his way and conferred with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray Him to them. And they were glad, and agreed to give him money. Then he promised and sought opportunity to betray Him to them in the absence of the multitude.

What we are looking at here is at the end of the conspiring process that ended in Christ's crucifixion. The one who tipped everything and set it into action was of course Judas. I want to take you to very early in Christ's ministry.

Mark 3:5-6 And when he had looked around at them with anger, being grieved by the hardness of their hearts, He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand," and he stretched it out, and his hand was restored as whole as the other. Then the Pharisees went out and immediately plotted with the Herodians against Him, how they might destroy Him.

This happened early in Christ's ministry, and already they were plotting to put Him to death.

Matthew 22:15 Then the Pharisees went and plotted how they might entangle Him in His talk.

Just another way to try to destroy Him.

John 11:53-54 Then from that day on, they plotted to put Him to death. Therefore Jesus no longer walked openly among the Jews, but went from there into the country near the wilderness, to a city called Ephraim, and there remained with His disciples.

Matthew 26:3-4 Then the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders of the people assembled at the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, and plotted to take Jesus by trickery and kill Him.

Matthew 27:1 When morning came, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put Him to death.

I think that it is pretty well established that Jesus was crucified on the basis of a conspiracy of lies against Him in order to just get Him out of the way. I think that we can also conclude that it is easily seen that this conspiracy held together for years until it accomplished its goal. It began right after His

ministry began, and it did not accomplish his goal until Jesus voluntarily gave His life to it as Savior. He allowed them to put Him to death.

The next question to consider is that since the conspiracy worked before, why would not Satan attempt it again? He is, but this time the conspiracy is much larger, and also aimed not only at Christ Himself and rule of the world, but also the body of Jesus Christ, the church. Please turn to Psalms where we can see what is going on. The history is being repeated once again. Satan is putting it together. He has already done it—a conspiracy to do away with God.

Psalm 2:1-3 Why do the nations rage, and the people plot a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying, “Let us break their bonds in pieces and cast away their cords from us.”

Very clearly a conspiracy is underway and we have a prophecy here that it is taking place at the end time. I think it is interesting that it says, "the kings of the earth." This is high falutin' stuff compared to what happened when Jesus was walking on the earth. There were high officials against Him but they were only local officials. Now we have kings of nations involved in this conspiracy, and that is exactly the way it is being played out in the public. The people who are engineering this thing are well-known personalities, not just in the United States but also in England, France, Germany, and other nations that are involved in it as well.

What you have to remember is that Satan has these people convinced that they deserve to do this. They basically want the earth for themselves and they are willing to share it with the serfs who happen to live through the warfare that this is going to culminate in.

They are taking care of themselves but they do not care all that much, maybe not at all if they can kill hundreds of millions of people that they call nothing but 'eaters.' That is the kind of attitude that Satan has injected in his people regarding you. You are nothing but an eater and they want everything for themselves. That is Satan's mind and he has these people convinced that it is theirs. They think the same way that he does.

Psalm 83:1-8 Do not keep silent, O God! Do not hold Your peace, and do not be still, O God. For behold, Your enemies make a tumult; and those who hate You have lifted up their head. They have taken crafty counsel against Your people, and consulted together against Your sheltered ones. They have said, “Come and let us cut them off from being a nation, that the name of Israel may be remembered no more.” For they have consulted together with one consent. They form a confederacy against You. The tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites, Moab, and the Hagarites, Gebal, Ammon, and Amalek, Philistia with the inhabitants of Tyre; Assyria also has joined with them, they have helped the children of Lot.

It may be a possibility because of Satan's mind revealed in the Bible, that Satan is operating quite a number of conspiracies in different parts of the world all at the same time. He is certainly capable of doing that. We are really only aware of the one in which our nations of Israel are participating in and being moved about as a result of what they are doing.

We can see that the beast power is rising. It has not formed enough yet to really cause a major disturbance civilly here in our nations. What are we to do? This is part of our preparations. It *is*

coming. I do not know the time; it is coming, though. The beast has got to rise and it is going to look like the rise of some kind of a political movement, and it will be.

I am telling you the power that is behind it is right in this book. It is Satan the Devil and it is part of his operations to attack God. In the attack on God, he wants to destroy Israel, he wants to destroy the church, as well as take over God's position. We are like a step, a stage, part of a progression that he is planning, so we watch it coming to pass and we have to prepare spiritually. I told you at the beginning of the sermon, *stay close to Jesus Christ* .

One thing that we know for sure is that God's purpose *never* stops. His purpose continues on for one thousand years beyond Christ's return and by then the conspiracy will be over. After that one thousand years, eternity opens up for all saved at that time. What that means to us in practical terms is that preparation never stops and we are called not only to become part of God's family but also as His servants to continue carrying forward in the preparation responsibilities already given. I want you to notice this approach. It is something that is easily understood but it is not always easily carried out.

Matthew 24 ends on the same basic note as Mark 13. However, Matthew continues on in chapter 25. Jesus did not stop at the end of what is now chapter 24. So Matthew continues on in chapter 25 by giving a series of parables directed at giving instruction specifically intended for this critical period of time right on the heels of Matthew 24, and the Olivet prophecy.

The lesson of the fig tree is we are able to look at a tree producing its fruit and see that the tree goes through various progressions before the fruit is actually able to be eaten.

Mark 13:28 “Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender, and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. So you also, when you see these things happening, know that it is near—at the very doors!”

What is it? It is Christ's return.

Mark 13:32 “But of that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven nor the Son, but only the Father. Take heed, watch and pray, for you do not know when the time is. It is like a man going into a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch. Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming—in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster or in the morning—lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!

We will go back in thought in Matthew 25, we will give an overview. Mark told us that we have to be both alert and busy. He said watch and he also said to work. Busy at what? This is what we are going to learn from the book of Matthew. What is the subject of the Parable of the Ten Virgins? Make sure we are committed to increasing the oil of God's Holy Spirit. That is the lesson. This is what we are to do in preparation for what is taking place and forming here in the world around us.

What is the lesson of the Parable of the Talents? That follows on the heels of the Parable of the Ten Virgins. The lesson there is make use of our God-given talents, or gifts, or capabilities, and increase them. Work hard and be profitable.

What is the point of the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats? This also is on the heels of Matthew 24. The point is there: Do not be self-centered. Practice love fervently with emphasis on the brethren—the family of God.

We are going to go one step further here. You can write down I Corinthians 4:1-2 where Paul mentions that he is a steward, he and his fellow ministers are stewards. A steward is one who bears a responsibility to his owner. Who owns us? Who employs us? Who supervises us? In order to accomplish the services of his employment, often a steward is shown as one in a supervisory or managerial capacity. Jesus spoke two parables regarding stewards as the central figures who either did or did not carry out duties faithfully. In this context, Paul specifically applies the term to himself and others laboring in their responsibilities assigned by Christ within the church as ministers.

Turn to I Peter 4. This whole section applies to stewardship and we are all stewards in our responsibilities given to us by God who gave us capabilities to carry these things out that He wants carried out. Notice the context in terms of time, it is almost like this section was written specifically for us.

I Peter 4:7-19 But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious [everything matters] and watchful in your prayers. And above all things have fervent love for one another, for love will cover a multitude of sins. [He is not saying that our love will forgive sins of other people but love calms things down.] Be hospitable to one another without grumbling. As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. [Romans 12:6. Paul gives a whole listing of capabilities that have been given to the congregation so that they can serve the congregation.] If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God, if anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen. Beloved do not think strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you. But rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter. For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God, and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?

That is what we are preparing for, and this is how our part is carried out. We become stewards of God, using the capabilities, using the gifts that God has given us by His Spirit, first of all to serve one another here in practical ways, and thus glorifying God in what we do.