

Chapter Ten

The Elementary Principles of Preparation

Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. (Hebrews 6:1-2 KJV)

Maybe you have already made the connection. But the five elements in our Destiny Diagram are the same elementary principles listed in Hebrews 6:1-2. The terms vary slightly with different versions, but they mean the same thing. The King James Version calls them the “first principles of the oracles of God” (see Heb 5:12) and “the principles of the doctrine of Christ.” Both phrases are the same thing since Jesus Christ is the Word (oracle) of God manifested.

The context (Hebrews, chapter 5) also reveals that these principles or doctrines are the milk of the word, and the writer of Hebrews is exhorting us to know these and move on to maturity. Therefore, these principles are the first things every believer should know. Also implied is the idea that every mature believer should be able to teach these things to others. These principles are broken out in the list below:

- 1) Repentance from dead works and faith toward God.
- 2) Doctrines of baptisms (washings/cleansing/holiness)
- 3) Laying on of Hands
- 4) Resurrection of the dead
- 5) Eternal Judgment

Since these are the first or primary principles of the teaching of Christ, we should be able to see each of them in Christ’s teachings — and we can. We can see all five of these principles in the ministry of Jesus.

Principles About the Future

In Part One of this book, we looked at (4) Resurrection of the dead and (5) Eternal Judgment. These principles impart a vision for the future (and give purpose to the works we do in the present). As far as vision for the age to come, the coming messianic kingdom, the resurrection of the dead, and judgment were central beliefs of God’s people and Jesus reinforced these themes in His teaching. He came preaching the gospel of the kingdom (Luke 4:43) and spoke of going away to receive that kingdom and returning (Luke 19:12). He spoke of the resurrection (Luke 14:14) and He warned of judgement (Matt 12:41).

Principles of Preparation

In Part Two of this book we have looked at (1) repentance from dead works and faith toward God, (2) doctrines of baptisms, and (3) laying on of hands. These three are more instructional and teach us what to do in this present age as preparation for the age to come.

Jesus Ministry Models The Strategy of Preparation

If we look at Jesus’ ministry from a wide perspective, we can also see the same pattern of preparation correlating to principles 1, 2, and 3. He applied the first three as preparation for the

last two. This should not be surprising since they are called the principles of the doctrine (or teachings) of *Christ*.

First, Jesus’ confronted the hypocrisy and dead religious works of the Jews and, through a real relationship with His Father, demonstrated real faith. This is principle number one, repentance from dead works and faith toward God.

Principle number two, doctrines of baptisms/washings, can be summed up as purification or sanctification. Jesus accomplished this by His atoning death on the cross. We are sanctified by the blood of the covenant and through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all (see Heb.10:10, 29).

Next we see principle number three, summed up as impartation/empowerment. After Jesus death and resurrection, He sent the Holy spirit and the disciples received the power of the Holy Spirit for the purpose of being witnesses to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8).

Thus the early church was delivered from dead religion, they were cleansed from sin, and they were empowered for His purpose. The table below illustrates these three elements of Jesus Ministry as they relate to the preparation strategy.

	Principle One	Principle Two	Principle Three
Principles of Preparation	Repentance From Dead Works and Faith Toward God	Baptisms/ Washings (Holiness/Cleansing)	Laying on of Hands (Impartation/Empowerment)
Ministry of Jesus	Jesus Confronted Dead Religion and Demonstrated Real Faith	Jesus Provided cleansing through giving His life	Jesus Sent the Holy Spirit to empower

Peter’s Answer in Acts 2:38 Parallels the Preparation Principles

We can also see this same pattern and these three principles of preparation reflected in Peter’s answer to those who were convicted by the Holy Spirit after the outpouring of power on the day of Pentecost. After hearing Peter’s sermon, they asked, “What shall we do?” He replied: “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38).

Peter’s reply included three main points (see Acts 2:38):

- 1) Repent. This correlates with the first principle of repentance from dead works and faith toward God.
- 2) Be Baptized. This is the second principle, doctrines of baptisms or washings.
- 3) You shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This is the third principle, the laying on of hands. It was usually by the laying on of hands that the power of the Holy Spirit was

imparted manifesting often in healing, spiritual gifts, and Holy Spirit baptism itself (see Luke 4:40; 13:13; 1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6; Acts 8:17; 9:17; 19:6).

The table below illustrates how Acts 2:38 parallels the preparation strategy.

	Principle One	Principle Two	Principle Three
Principles of Preparation	Repentance From Dead Works and Faith Toward God	Baptisms/ (Washings Holiness/Cleansing)	Laying on of Hands (Impartation / Empowerment)
Acts 2:38	Repent	Be Baptized	And You Will Receive the Holy Spirit

Preparation implies action and those who heard Peter that day understood that. After hearing Peter’s sermon they asked, “What shall we do?” These are the foundational things we must do and teach others to do.

As pointed out in our overview of history, the early church, for the most part, grew corrupt and gradually lost its grip on these principles. But we have also seen how these principles have been restored or refreshed in the church and, once again, we are seeing a mighty church moving in power, preparing the way for the appearing of Christ and His Kingdom of peace on earth.

Chapter Eleven

Three “When-dicators”

How, then, shall we know when Jesus and His Kingdom will appear? This must be one of the most asked questions of all time. It is natural to want to know *when* Jesus will return and how to prepare. People have been asking this questions from the very beginning, starting with Jesus's disciples. They asked, "**Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel**" (Acts 1:6)? Jesus replied, "**It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority**" (Acts 1:7). Jesus also told us that no one knows the day or the hour (Matt. 24:36).

It seems pretty clear that we are not supposed to worry about *when* Jesus will return, at least according to clocks and calendars. Many have erred here through history and have upset the faith of many by setting dates for His return. Jesus' answer to His disciple's question continued, "**But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth**" (Acts 1:8).

At first glance, it appears that Jesus ignored the question concerning when he would return and set up His kingdom and simply pointed the disciples in a soul-winning direction to be pleasantly surprised someday by His return. However, upon closer examination, that is not the case. It was an answer that pointed them away from clocks and calendars and in effect answered the "when question" by saying, "*I will return when the good news of my Kingdom has spread over the entire earth*" This essentially the same thing He said in Matt. 24:14. This answer put the "ball in their court" and gave them a keen sense of purpose and responsibility, provoking them to love and good deeds. This would explain why some of the writers of the New Testament seemed to think that the return of Jesus was a possibility in their life-times. Maybe that is the attitude that God wants us to have!

If we look at the "when question" as it relates to a job being completed instead of years, days, or hours, then we begin to realize that the Bible has much to say about when Jesus will return. The Bible tells us that those who know God will *not* be surprised by the coming of the Lord. Yes, we are told that the day of the Lord will come "**like a thief in the night**" (1 Thes. 5:2), speaking of the wicked, "**But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief**" (1 Thes. 5:4).

There is a "time piece" we can watch which will indicate that the return of Christ is at hand. That time piece is the Church. A careful study reveals three general signs, or “when-dicators” that we will see in the church which indicate that the return of Christ is imminent.

1. When His Church is Mature and Walking in Unity of Faith

Jesus gave the five-fold ministry (apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers) for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ "**till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ**" (Eph 4:13). Therefore, the equipping of the church for the work of ministry must continue *until* the work is done. It takes a mature Church to lay aside petty disputes and thus hear God together (faith comes by hearing) and work together (faith without works is dead). Because of the word "till," we can

also conclude that *Jesus will return when there is a mature expression of the Church walking in the unity of the faith in the knowledge of God.* This action corresponds with the first strategic purpose - to know God and do good works.

2. When the Church is Walking in Purity and Holiness

Jesus said He would have a bride (the Church) that is **"a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish"** (Eph. 5:27). The Bible says this marriage between the Christ and the Church will come about when the bride is ready. **"Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready"** (Rev. 19:7).

It is interesting to note that this verse says the bride had made *herself* ready. This is in reference to holy living by the Church. We are instructed **"that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ"** (Titus 2:12-13). We also know that **"when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure"** (1 John 3:2-3). There are many other scriptures that tell us to live lives that are holy and pleasing to God. Therefore, *Christ will return when the Church is walking in purity and holiness.* There will be a revival of holiness in the Church before He returns. This corresponds with the second strategic purpose - to be holy as He is holy.

3. When the Church has Taken the Kingdom Message to the Entire Earth

In the parable of stewardship in Luke 19, some of those with Jesus thought that the Kingdom would appear immediately. This parable has tremendous significance concerning eschatology but, for now, one verse serves the point. **"He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return"** (Luke 19:12). Therefore Jesus told a parable which was clearly intended to give those listening an understanding as to when to expect the Kingdom of God on earth. After He has received the kingdom, then He will return. This clearly indicates a certain work must be done before He returns.

"Another parable He spoke to them: 'The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened'" (Matt. 13:33). This parable addresses the issue of the Kingdom of God increasing in the world while being hidden (from those in darkness upon whom the day of the Lord will come like a thief). Jesus told the Pharisees, **"The kingdom of God does not come with observation"** (Luke 17:20). The Kingdom of heaven is in the world now, though hidden from many, and is growing, spreading, and infiltrating the planet. Jesus told us to pray for the Kingdom to come **"on earth as it is in heaven"** (Matt. 6:10). Two verses in Jesus' parable in Luke 19 indicate that there is Kingdom work that must be completed before He will return.

"A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return ... And so it was that when he returned, having received the kingdom" (Luke 19:12,15)

Jesus made this very clear when He said, **"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" (Matt. 24:14). Many have preached the Gospel, but have they preached the Gospel of the Kingdom? Therefore, we can conclude that *Jesus will return when His victorious Church has taken the Gospel of the Kingdom to the entire earth.* This corresponds with the third strategic purpose - to be disciples who make disciples.

Principle to Purpose

It is one thing to learn foundational principles academically. It is another thing to translate principles into purpose. Purpose implies action. Therefore, we need to translate each of the foundational principles of preparation into a statement of purpose which will guide our actions.

Principle to Purpose #1

As we have seen, repentance from dead works requires faith and faith comes by hearing the Word of God. Hearing from God requires that we have a relationship with Jesus Christ—that we know Him. In that relationship is where we hear, get specific instructions, and then do works that are alive instead of dead. Living works come from a living relationship with Jesus. Therefore, our statement of purpose for the first principle of preparation is: *To Know Him and Do Good Works.*

Principle to Purpose #2

Baptism/washing speaks about cleansing, purity, and holiness. There is ample exhortation in the scriptures regarding holiness. We are told in Hebrews to pursue holiness, without which no one will see the Lord (Heb 12:14) and Peter exhorts saying, "...He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:15-16). Therefore our statement of purpose for the second principle of preparation is: *To Be Holy As He Is Holy.*

Principle to Purpose #3

We have also seen that the laying on of hands can be summed up as impartation. We have also seen that one of the movements of the 20th century corresponding to the restoration of the laying on of hands was discipleship. Discipleship is essentially imparting truths and practices from one person to another to create a multiplication of disciples. Paul instructed his disciple, Timothy saying, "And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Tim 2:2). There is a big difference between making converts and making disciples. Making converts is addition. Making disciples is multiplication. Therefore, our statement of purpose for the third principle of preparation is: *To be Disciples Who Make Disciples.*

The table below will help to show how the foundational principles of preparation, the foundational purposes, and the "when-dicators" relate to each other. God indeed has a plan to bring the manifest Kingdom of God to earth and the foundational principle of preparation represent a strategy to bring about the appearing of His kingdom, and with it, peace, order and justice to a world that has had war, injustice, and chaos.

Foundational Principle of Preparation	Foundational Purpose	When-dicator
Repentance from dead works and faith toward God	To know Him and do good works	When the church is walking in unity of the faith in the knowledge of God (Eph 4:13)
Doctrines of Baptisms or Washings (Holiness)	To be holy as He is holy	When the Church is walking in purity and holiness (Eph 5:27)
The Laying on of hands (Impartation)	To be disciples who make disciples	When the Church has taken the gospel of the Kingdom to the ends of the earth (Matt 24:14)

Training For Reigning

The basic idea of strategic preparation, implies a job to be done and leads to the practical conclusion that our works and His return are not unrelated. The practicalities of the Kingdom of God governing the earth go even further. Applying the foundational purposes to the areas we are presently responsible to govern, we conclude that we are in training for reigning.

There are three God-ordained institutions where we can and should apply the foundational purposes of doing good works, being holy, and making disciples. These areas are family government, church government and civil government. It is in these institutions where we develop and prove ourselves in preparation for the coming kingdom.

God really is that practical. Most Christians are aware that faithful and godly government of one's family prepares one for leadership in the Church (see qualifications for overseers in 1 Tim. 3:2-7). Paul says plainly to Timothy, "... if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?"(1 Tim 3:5). A similar question follows: "If a man does not know how to govern in the local Church how shall he govern in the Kingdom of God."

The Church is the Kingdom in a scaled down or compartmentalized fashion. Therefore, governing in the Church is preparation for something bigger. The same is true of taking foundational purposes into civil government. The church and civil government are both God's institutions. The primary difference is that in the Church, people are usually in agreement with the purposes of God while, in civil government, those who are in agreement and those who are not are thrown in together. This is why civil government is often a more challenging environment than church government. It makes sense after all, since both types of people will be present on earth when the Kingdom of God appears.

Hastening His Coming

By seeing these answers to "The When Question" and adopting the corresponding attitudes and actions, we can actually hasten the return of Jesus and the appearing of His kingdom. Peter said "**what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God**" (2 Peter 3: 11,12 NAS).

As the first foundational principle (repentance from dead works) indicates, repentance on our behalf is an integral part of God's strategy to bring the Church to the place of readiness and

thus precipitate His return and the resurrection. This is further clarified in the Book of Acts. **"Repent therefore and return, that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the Lord; And that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you, whom heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things"** (Acts 3:19-21 NAS). This passage indicates that the coming of Jesus is related to our cooperation with the purpose of God - in this case, repentance.

The Building and the Builders

We are instructed *not* to be concerned about the date and time when Jesus will return and establish His Kingdom, but rather about finishing the work of preparation, the Father has nevertheless set that time according to His great wisdom (Matt 24:36). How does that set time work with man's free will and fickle nature? Think of it like this:

There was a wealthy business man who wanted a new office building built by a certain time. His son was a general contractor so he gave his son the job of building the building. As the job progressed, labor problems arose. Some of the workers became lazy and wouldn't work hard and some wouldn't work at all. Still others built according to their own ideas instead of according to the master plan and their work had to be torn down and re-built. As the time drew near for the job to be completed, the wealthy business man spoke with his son and said, "At the current rate of progress, the building will not be done on time. Therefore, hire more workers and purchase more and better construction equipment for the workers. The cost does not matter, hire as many workers and buy as much equipment as is needed to finish the job. The building must be done on time."

I'm sure you can see the point being made by the parable above. God has given Jesus the job of building the Church. At times it seems the Church project has so many labor problems that the job will never be completed. But, when workers refuse to work or refuse to build according to God's plan, then He finds new ones to take their place. As seen in this study, God's work of building through history is progressing. New crews have been hired from time to time. As we near the return of Jesus, we can expect to see larger crews than ever! Let us hasten toward the completion of God's building! **When the LORD shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory** (Psalm 102:16).

We started this book by looking at the elements of a credible witness as defined by Jesus in John 8:14.

Jesus answered and said to them, "Even if I bear witness of Myself, **My witness is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going**; but you do not know where I come from and where I am going. (John 8:14 NKJV)

Thus far we have identified the strategy of preparation by looking at **where we came from and where we are going**. We are now ready to consider personal application of *The Strategy* in our present plans and actions so we, like Jesus, might be able to say, "My witness is true. I know where I came from and I and I know where I am going."