

Be Ready!

Various

Introduction

In the past weeks' studies, we have seen the many different prophetic end times converging. In all ages there have been signs that would suggest the end was near, but we seem to have quite a number of them happening around us. We may be all sitting here 10 years from now looking back with a chuckle on what we thought. But we cannot deny the message from God's Word for us in these studies: **Be Ready!**

What Are Those Converging Prophecies?

6000 Years

The Jewish belief that there would be 6000 years of human history, followed by the 1000 year reign of God on the earth, following the Sabbath model. We are approaching the 6000th year of history, according to the Jewish calendar. (We are in 5775 (in Feb. 2015), but it is clear that their calendar is at least 165 years off due to intentional changes, and could be up to 240 years off.)

Israel's Rebirth

Israel became a nation again in May of 1948. Jesus' statement in Matthew 24:32-34 says that a generation won't pass before the end times happen. A generation in the Bible ranges from 40 to 70 years.

Can We Know When?

An Intentional Paradox

Most often we quote and focus on the passages that say we will not know when the end will come. Here are a couple of the many:

Matthew 24:36-41; 44 – **³⁶But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.** ³⁷For the coming of the Son of Man will be **just like the days of Noah.** ³⁸For as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, they were marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, ³⁹and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so shall the coming of the Son of Man be. ⁴⁰Then there shall be two men in the field; one will be taken, and one will be left. ⁴¹Two women *will be grinding at the mill*; one will be taken, and one will be left. ... **⁴⁴For this reason you be ready too; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will.**

Verses 37-41 illustrate "the kind of unknowability that characterizes the day and hour of the Son of Man's coming." - Gundry

Mark 13:35-36 – ³⁵Therefore, be on the alert--**for you do not know when the master of the house is coming, whether in the evening, at midnight, at cockcrow, or in the morning--** ³⁶lest he come suddenly and find you asleep."

There seems to be a delicate balance between Jesus' return being a surprise and Him giving us the signs to look for.

Matthew 24:25 – **"Behold, I have told you in advance."**

1 Thess. 5:4-6 – **⁴But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day should overtake you like a thief;** ⁵for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness; ⁶so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober.

He tells us that at the end, we will have new insight into the signs and events. (E.g., Dan. 12) Maybe we'll know the year? Or the season? Or even the Holy Day?

Or maybe not.

But He *has* told us the signs to look for, and given us instructions for what to do and how to act.

First, what are the signs of the end?

Overarching question: Can we know?

Matt. 24:1-51, Mark 13:1-37, Luke 21:5-36

Matthew 24:32-44 – **³²Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender, and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near; ³³even so you too, when you see all these things, recognize that He is near, *right* at the door.** **³⁴Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.** **³⁵Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words shall not pass away.** **³⁶But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.** **³⁷For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah.** **³⁸For as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, they were marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, ³⁹and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so shall the coming of the Son of Man be.** **⁴⁰Then there shall be two men in the field; one will be taken, and one will be left. ⁴¹Two women *will be grinding at the mill*; one will be taken, and one will be left. ⁴²Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming.** **⁴³But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into.** **⁴⁴For this reason you be ready too; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will.**

Israel will become a nation. May, 1948. Then within a generation, the end will come. What is a generation? Most people thought it meant 40 years, thus all the end times fervor during 1988. Maybe 70 years? (Ps. 90:10)

Like in the days of Noah. (Unexpected)

Mark 13:24-37 – ²⁴“But in those days, after that tribulation, THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, ²⁵AND THE STARS WILL BE FALLING from heaven, and the powers that are in the heavens will be shaken. ²⁶And then they will see THE SON OF MAN COMING IN CLOUDS with great power and glory. ²⁷And then He will send forth the angels, and will gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest end of the earth, to the farthest end of heaven.”

²⁸“Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender, and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. ²⁹Even so, you too, when you see these things happening, recognize that He is near, *right* at the door. ³⁰Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. ³¹Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away. ³²But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father *alone*. ³³Take heed, keep on the alert; for you do not know when the *appointed* time is. ³⁴*It is like a man, away on a journey, who upon leaving his house and putting his slaves in charge, assigning to each one his task, also commanded the doorkeeper to stay on the alert. ³⁵Therefore, be on the alert--for you do not know when the master of the house is coming, whether in the evening, at midnight, at cockcrow, or in the morning--* ³⁶lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. ³⁷And what I say to you I say to all, ‘Be on the alert!’”

Signs in the heavens.

1 Thess. 5:1-10 – ¹Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. ²For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. ³*While they are saying, “Peace and safety!”* then destruction will come upon them suddenly like birth pangs upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. ⁴But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day should overtake you like a thief; ⁵for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness;

⁶so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober. ⁷For those who sleep do their sleeping at night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night. ⁸But since we are of *the* day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation. ⁹For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁰who died for us, that whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with Him.

When everyone says everything is fine, that’s when you should look out.

How to Be Ready:

Overarching question: What should my life look like, regardless of whether it looks like the end?

The Wedding Feast

Matthew 22:1-14 – ¹And Jesus answered and spoke to them again in parables, saying, ²“The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king, who gave a wedding feast for his son. ³And he sent out his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding feast, and they were unwilling to come. ⁴Again he sent out other slaves saying, ‘Tell those who have been invited, “Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fattened livestock are *all* butchered and everything is ready; come to the wedding feast.”’ ⁵But they paid no attention and went their way, one to his own farm, another to his business, ⁶and the rest seized his slaves and mistreated them and killed them. ⁷But the king was enraged and sent his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and set their city on fire. ⁸Then he ^{*}said to his slaves, ‘The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. ⁹Go therefore to the main highways, and as many as you find *there*, invite to the wedding feast.’ ¹⁰And those slaves went out into the streets, and gathered together all they found, **both evil and good**; and the wedding hall was filled with dinner guests. ¹¹But when the king came in to look over the dinner guests, he saw there a man not dressed in wedding clothes, ¹²and he ^{*}said to him, ‘**Friend, how did you come in here without wedding clothes?’ And he was speechless.** ¹³Then the king said to the servants, ‘Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into the outer darkness; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ ¹⁴For many are called, but few *are* chosen.”

Be saved! The issue with being invited and allowed to stay was not whether you were good or bad. It was whether you had on wedding clothes!

(The issue with the one man was that he didn’t receive the wedding clothes offered him when he showed up. Unlike the others who obviously did.)

The Last Days

2 Peter 3:3-18 – ³Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with *their* mocking, following after their own lusts, ⁴and saying, “Where is the promise of His coming? For *ever* since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.” ⁵For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God *the* heavens existed long ago and *the* earth was formed out of water and by water, ⁶through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water. ⁷But the present heavens and earth by His word are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. ⁸But do not let this one *fact* escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. ⁹The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. ¹⁰But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.

¹¹Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in **holy conduct and godliness**, ¹²looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, on account of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will

melt with intense heat! ¹³But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells. ¹⁴Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in **peace, spotless and blameless**, ¹⁵and regard the patience of our Lord *to be* salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, ¹⁶as also in all *his* letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as *they do* also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction. ¹⁷You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard lest, being carried away by the error of unprincipled men, you fall from your own steadfastness, ¹⁸but **grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ**. To Him *be* the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

Holy conduct and godliness

In peace, spotless, and blameless

Grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord

Interlude

Is attending a weekly service the essence of your faith?

For many of us, this is the most Christian thing we do all week!

The Ten Virgins

Matt. 25:1-13 – ¹“Then the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to ten virgins, who took their lamps, and went out to meet the bridegroom. ²And five of them were foolish, and five were prudent. ³For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, ⁴but the prudent took oil in flasks along with their lamps. ⁵Now while the bridegroom was delaying, they all got drowsy and *began* to sleep. ⁶**But at midnight there was a shout, ‘Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.’** ⁷Then all those virgins rose, and trimmed their lamps. ⁸And the foolish said to the prudent, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ ⁹But the prudent answered, saying, ‘No, there will not be enough for us and you *too*; go instead to the dealers and buy *some* for yourselves.’ ¹⁰And while they were going away to make the purchase, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast; and the door was shut. ¹¹And later the other virgins also came, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open up for us.’ ¹²But he answered and said, ‘Truly I say to you, I do not know you.’ ¹³**Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour.”**

(The shout in verse 6 reminds me of Yom Teruah!)

Do Love!

The lamps tie back to 5:14-16 where the light is symbolic of good works. The foolish virgins’ lights would light temporarily, but not for the long term. That is just like the parable of the sower where some seed fell on shallow ground and sprang up, but quickly died due to the shallowness of earth.

Parable of the Talents

Intro: Don’t be distracted by the word “talent” in this story. **It is an unfortunate coincidence that we have a word talent that means something completely different, but that some have tried to say this parable is about.** This parable is not (only) about using your talents to serve God. It is a measurement of weight, and when describing a precious metal, it is an amount of money. It is approximately 26 pounds, so in this case, 26 pounds of silver.

Matthew 25:14-30 – ¹⁴For *it is* just like a **man about to go on a journey**, who called his own slaves, and entrusted his possessions to them. ¹⁵And to one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability; and he went on his journey. ¹⁶**Immediately the one who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and gained five more talents.** ¹⁷In the same manner the one who *had received* the two *talents* gained two more. ¹⁸But he who received the one *talent* went away and dug in the ground, and hid his master’s money. ¹⁹Now **after a long time** the master of those slaves **came* and **settled* accounts with them. ²⁰And the one who had received the five talents came up and brought five more talents, saying, ‘Master, you entrusted five talents to me; see, I have gained five more talents.’ ²¹His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful slave; you were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things, enter into the joy of your master.’ ²²The one also who *had received* the two talents came up and said, ‘Master, you entrusted to me two talents; see, I have gained two more talents.’ ²³His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful slave; you were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’ ²⁴And the one also who had received the one talent came up and said, ‘Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no *seed*. ²⁵And I was afraid, and went away and hid your talent in the ground; see, you have what is yours.’ ²⁶But his master answered and said to him, ‘You wicked, lazy slave, you knew that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I scattered no *seed*. ²⁷Then you ought to have put my money in the bank, and on my arrival I would have received my *money* back with interest. ²⁸Therefore take away the talent from him, and give it to the one who has the ten talents.’ ²⁹For to everyone who has shall *more* be given, and he shall have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away. ³⁰And cast out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Is this parable talking about the end? _____ How do you know? _____

What is the primary message of Jesus’ parable? _____

What is this passage teaching about what we should be doing while the “man” is away? _____

“The talents represent opportunities to do good deeds in obedience to Jesus’ teachings.” - Gundry

Do Love!

What significance is the number of talents given to the three servants? _____

Every person has different opportunities to “Do Love” to others. God’s expectation for us is that we take advantage of the opportunities we have. We will not be compared against others. We will be compared against what we could have done where we are.

The Sheep and the Goats

Matt. 25:31-46 – ³¹“But **when the Son of Man comes in His glory**, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. ³²And all the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; ³³and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left. ³⁴Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. ³⁵For **I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; ³⁶naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.**’ ³⁷Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You drink? ³⁸And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? ³⁹And when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ ⁴⁰And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, **even the least of them, you did it to Me.**’ ⁴¹Then He will also say to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; ⁴²for I was hungry, and you gave Me *nothing* to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink; ⁴³I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me.’ ⁴⁴Then they themselves also will answer, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of You?’ ⁴⁵Then He will answer them, saying, ‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.’ ⁴⁶And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

Is this parable talking about the end? _____ How do you know? _____

What is the primary message of Jesus’ parable? _____

In this passage, Jesus doesn’t use any symbolism for what He expects His followers to be doing before He comes.

Do Love!

Who are “the least of these”? _____

Who did you see this week that would be “the least of these”? _____

What did you do? _____

As was the case for the other parables in Matthew 25, it would be easy to incorrectly use these passages to say that our salvation is based on good works. But you have to remember what Jesus’ purpose was for these parables. They weren’t parables teaching how to get to heaven. They are parables teaching what He wants us doing as we wait for His return. That incorrect conclusion about works-based salvation would disagree with the rest of the New Testament, and thus cannot be correct. What the parables do, however, in the light of the eternal damnation ascribed to the disobedient ones in each parable, is reveal the ones who were not true followers of Jesus in the first place.

Bottom line: True followers of Jesus will be Doing Love while He is away, and will be blessed when He returns.

Be ready

Luke 12:33-48 – ³³“**Sell your possessions and give to charity**; make yourselves purses which do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near, nor moth destroys. ³⁴For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. [Matthew 6:20-21]

³⁵**Be dressed in readiness, and keep your lamps alight.** ³⁶And **be like men who are waiting for their master** when he returns from the wedding feast, so that they may immediately open *the door* to him when he comes and knocks. ³⁷**Blessed are those slaves whom the master shall find on the alert when he comes**; truly I say to you, that he will gird himself to serve, and have them recline *at the table*, and will come up and wait on them. ³⁸Whether he comes in the second watch, or even in the third, and finds *them* so, blessed are those slaves. ³⁹And be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have allowed his house to be broken into. ⁴⁰**You too, be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour that you do not expect.”**

⁴¹And Peter said, “Lord, are You addressing this parable to us, or to everyone *else* as well?”

⁴²And the Lord said, “Who then is the faithful and sensible steward, whom his master will put in charge of his servants, to give them their rations at the proper time? ⁴³**Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes.** ⁴⁴Truly I say to you, that he will put him in charge of all his possessions. ⁴⁵But if that slave says in his heart, ‘My master will be a long time in coming,’ and begins to beat the slaves, *both* men and women, and to eat and drink and get drunk; ⁴⁶the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect *him*, and at an hour he does not know, and will cut him in pieces, and assign him a place with the unbelievers. ⁴⁷And that slave who knew his master’s will and did not get ready or act in accord with his will, shall receive many lashes, ⁴⁸but the one who did not know *it*, and committed deeds worthy of a flogging, will receive but few. And from everyone who has been given much shall much be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more.

I love this passage, because Jesus basically mixes all of His metaphors that He ever uses to drive home the point that we should be ready. “Dressed.” “Lamps lit.” “Waiting for their master’s return.” “Wedding feast.” “Thief.”

In the transitional passage, Jesus tells us to be investing in eternity. How do we do that? _____

How does Jesus answer Peter’s question about who the parable was for? How do you get a promotion? You do the job you are wanting to get promoted into. How do you get ready for Jesus’ return? While He’s away, you do the job He’s going to be hiring for when He returns.

Invest in eternity

Keep your lamp lit = ?

Be waiting for Him – be on the alert when He comes.

Be handling your stewardship well.

3 groups – Know He’s coming and yet purposefully does everything wrong; knows He’s coming but doesn’t do what he should; and doesn’t know He’s coming and doesn’t act right.

I guess we’ve now set ourselves up for higher standards, and greater judgment if we don’t meet them. Sorry!

And there is, of course, **a fourth group**. Those who are expectantly living right, doing right, and alertly awaiting His return.

Signs of the End

Luke 21:5-19, 25-36 – ⁵And while some were talking about the temple, that it was adorned with beautiful stones and votive gifts, He said, ⁶“As for these things which you are looking at, the days will come in which there will not be left one stone upon another which will not be torn down.” ⁷And they questioned Him, saying, “Teacher, when therefore will these things be? And what *will be* the sign when these things are about to take place?” ⁸And He said, “See to it that you **be not misled**; for many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am He,’ and, ‘The time is at hand’; **do not go after them**. ⁹And when you hear of wars and disturbances, **do not be terrified**; for these things must take place first, but the end *does not follow* immediately.” ¹⁰Then He continued by saying to them, “Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, ¹¹and there will be great earthquakes, and in various places plagues and famines; and there will be terrors and great signs from heaven. ¹²But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and will persecute you, delivering you to the synagogues and prisons, bringing you before kings and governors for My name’s sake. ¹³It will lead to an opportunity for your testimony. ¹⁴So make up your minds not to prepare beforehand to defend yourselves; ¹⁵for I will give you utterance and wisdom which none of your opponents will be able to resist or refute. ¹⁶But you will be delivered up even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and

they will put some of you to death, ¹⁷and **you will be hated by all on account of My name.** ¹⁸Yet not a hair of your head will perish. ¹⁹By your endurance you will gain your lives.

[Verses 20-24 are referring to the coming destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.]

²⁵And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and upon the earth dismay among nations, in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves, ²⁶men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ²⁷And then they will see THE SON OF MAN COMING IN A CLOUD with power and great glory. ²⁸But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

²⁹And He told them a parable: “Behold the fig tree and all the trees; ³⁰as soon as they put forth *leaves*, you see it and know for yourselves that summer is now near. ³¹Even so you, too, when you see these things happening, recognize that the kingdom of God is near.

³²Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all things take place.

³³Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away. ³⁴**Be on guard, that your hearts may not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day come on you suddenly like a trap;** ³⁵for it will come upon all those who dwell on the face of all the earth. ³⁶But keep on the alert at all times, praying in order that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.”

Do not be misled

Do not go after false prophets and messiahs.

Do not be terrified by wars and disturbances.

Be ready for persecution.

Be ready for arrest.

Be ready for death.

Be ready to be hated by all.

Be on guard

Don’t be held back by dissipation, drunkenness, and the worries of life.

2897 κραπαλε kraipale {krahee-pal’-ay}

probably from the same as 726;; n f

AV - surfeiting 1; 1

1) the giddiness and headache caused by drinking wine to excess

Dissipation (NASB) – “overindulgence in the pursuit of physical pleasures” – Syn.: Debauchery - MS Dictionary

Surfeit (KJV) – “an uncomfortably full or crapulous feeling due to excessive eating or drinking” – Dictionary.com

3178 μεθε methe {meth'-ay}
apparently a root word; TDNT - 4:545,576; n f
AV - drunkenness 3; 3
1) intoxication
2) drunkenness

I believe this is a warning for us.

3308 μεριμνα merimna {mer'-im-nah}
from 3307 (through the idea of distraction); TDNT - 4:589,584; n f
AV - care 6; 6

1) care, anxiety

982 βιοτικός biotikos {bee-o-tee-kos'}
from a derivative of 980;; adj
AV - things pertaining to this life 1,
things that pertain to this life 1, of this life 1; 3
1) pertaining to life and the affairs of this life

This idea of the cares of this world has to remind us of the parable of the sower:

Luke 8:14 – “And the *seed* which fell among the thorns, these are the ones who have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with **worries and riches and pleasures of this life**, and bring no fruit to maturity.

Summary: Take heed that ye be not rendered *secure* by an improper use of lawful things. Clarke

The Persistent Widow

Luke 18:1-8 – ⁸Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart, ²saying, “There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God, and did not respect man. ³And there was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him, saying, ‘Give me legal protection from my opponent.’ ⁴And for a while he was unwilling; but afterward he said to himself, ‘Even though I do not fear God nor respect man, ⁵yet because this widow bothers me, I will give her legal protection, lest by continually coming she wear me out.’” ⁶And the Lord said, “Hear what the unrighteous judge *said; ⁷now shall not God bring about justice for His elect, who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them? ⁸I tell you that He will bring about justice for them speedily. However, **when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?”**

Be living by faith! Don't give up! Be on your face in prayer!

Summary of all of the passages above

Below are the things we learned from the passages we've covered over the last weeks. Today, let's talk about what this really looks like.

Be saved - _____

Holy conduct and godliness - _____

Grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord - _____

Be looking for His return - _____

Do not be misled - _____

Do not be terrified by wars and disturbances - _____

Be ready for persecution, arrest, and even death - _____

Don't waste time getting drunk and being hung over - _____

1 Cor. 6:12 – All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything.

Don't be distracted by the worries of life - _____

Invest in eternity - _____

Be living by faith! Don't give up! Pray! - _____

Take care of the responsibilities God has entrusted to you - _____

Do Love! - _____

Interlude (repeated for effect)

Is attending a weekly service the essence of your faith?

For many of us, this is the most Christian thing we do all week!

Suffering and Worse – For Christ's Sake. What Do You Do When Told to Deny Christ?

Overarching question: Whose life is it, anyway?

Remember Jesus' ominous promise from Luke 21 that we discussed earlier:

Luke 21:12-19 – ¹²But before all these things, **they will lay their hands on you and will persecute you, delivering you to the synagogues and prisons, bringing you before kings and governors for My name's sake.** ¹³It will lead to an opportunity for your testimony. ¹⁴So make up your minds not to prepare beforehand to defend yourselves; ¹⁵for I will give you utterance and wisdom which none of your opponents will be able to resist or refute. ¹⁶**But you will be delivered up even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and**

they will put *some* of you to death,¹⁷ and you will be hated by all on account of My name.

¹⁸Yet not a hair of your head will perish. ¹⁹By your endurance you will gain your lives.

First, let's clarify this suffering. This is not talking about suffering in general. In this life we'll have troubles. That's the way it is. And we don't need to make choices that will result in more suffering. There will be enough, and there's no special eternal blessing for going through it, though it certainly may build character. (See 1 Peter 2:20 below.)

1 Peter 2:19-24 – ¹⁹For this *finds* favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a man bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly. ²⁰For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer *for it* you patiently endure it, this *finds* favor with God. ²¹For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, ²²WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH; ²³and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting *Himself* to Him who judges righteously; ²⁴and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.

There is a special category of suffering that is entirely different: suffering for the sake of Christ. In the life of every believer who is truly living out an active faith, there will be circumstances where suffering, persecution, and worse will be likely. So, what do you do? Well, let's first look to see what great believers of the past did:

Daniel 3:1-30 – ¹Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, the height of which was sixty cubits and its width six cubits; he set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. ²Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent word to assemble the satraps, the prefects and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates and all the rulers of the provinces to come to the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up. ³Then the satraps, the prefects and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates and all the rulers of the provinces were assembled for the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up. ⁴Then the herald loudly proclaimed: "To you the command is given, O peoples, nations and *men of every language*, ⁵that at the moment you hear the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, bagpipe, and all kinds of music, you are to fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king has set up. ⁶But whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire." ⁷Therefore at that time, when all the peoples heard the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, bagpipe, and all kinds of music, all the peoples, nations and *men of every language* fell down and worshiped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.

⁸For this reason at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and brought charges against the Jews. ⁹They responded and said to Nebuchadnezzar the king: "O king, live forever!

¹⁰You yourself, O king, have made a decree that every man who hears the sound of the

horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, and bagpipe, and all kinds of music, is to fall down and worship the golden image. ¹¹But whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire. ¹²There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the administration of the province of Babylon, *namely* Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego. These men, O king, have disregarded you; they do not serve your gods or worship the golden image which you have set up." ¹³Then Nebuchadnezzar in rage and anger gave orders to bring Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego; then these men were brought before the king. ¹⁴Nebuchadnezzar responded and said to them, "Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the golden image that I have set up? ¹⁵Now if you are ready, at the moment you hear the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, and bagpipe, and all kinds of music, to fall down and worship the image that I have made, *very well*. But if you will not worship, you will immediately be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire; and what god is there who can deliver you out of my hands?" ¹⁶Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to give you an answer concerning this matter. ¹⁷If it be *so*, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. ¹⁸But *even* if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up."

¹⁹Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with wrath, and his facial expression was altered toward Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego. He answered by giving orders to heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated. ²⁰And he commanded certain valiant warriors who *were* in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, in order to cast *them* into the furnace of blazing fire. ²¹Then these men were tied up in their trousers, their coats, their caps and their *other* clothes, and were cast into the midst of the furnace of blazing fire. ²²For this reason, because the king's command *was* urgent and the furnace had been made extremely hot, the flame of the fire slew those men who carried up Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego. ²³But these three men, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, fell into the midst of the furnace of blazing fire *still* tied up. ²⁴Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astounded and stood up in haste; he responded and said to his high officials, "Was it not three men we cast bound into the midst of the fire?" They answered and said to the king, "Certainly, O king." ²⁵He answered and said, "Look! I see four men loosed *and* walking *about* in the midst of the fire without harm, and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of *the* gods!" ²⁶Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the door of the furnace of blazing fire; he responded and said, "Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, come out, you servants of the Most High God, and come here!" Then Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego came out of the midst of the fire. ²⁷And the satraps, the prefects, the governors and the king's high officials gathered around *and* saw in regard to these men that the fire had no effect on the bodies of these men nor was the hair of their head singed, nor were their trousers damaged, nor had the smell of fire *even* come upon them.

²⁸Nebuchadnezzar responded and said, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, who has sent His angel and delivered His servants who put their trust in Him, violating the king's command, and yielded up their bodies so as not to serve or

worship any god except their own God. ²⁹Therefore, I make a decree that any people, nation or tongue that speaks anything offensive against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego shall be torn limb from limb and their houses reduced to a rubbish heap, inasmuch as there is no other god who is able to deliver in this way.” ³⁰Then the king caused Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego to prosper in the province of Babylon.

And there were many others, as summarized in Hebrews 11, the “Hall of Faith.”

Hebrews 11:32-38 – ³²And what more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets, ³³who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed *acts of righteousness*, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, ³⁴quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. ³⁵Women received *back* their dead by resurrection; and *others were tortured, not accepting their release, in order that they might obtain a better resurrection*; ³⁶and others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment. ³⁷They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated ³⁸(*men of whom the world was not worthy*), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground.

And the New Testament is full of stories of suffering experienced by the apostles and others for following and obeying Jesus. Here is a great example.

Acts 5:26-42 – ²⁶Then the captain went along with the officers and *proceeded* to bring them *back* without violence (for they were afraid of the people, lest they should be stoned). ²⁷And when they had brought them, they stood them before the Council. And the high priest questioned them, ²⁸saying, “We gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in this name, and behold, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and intend to bring this man’s blood upon us.” ²⁹But Peter and the apostles answered and said, “*We must obey God rather than men.*” ³⁰The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you had put to death by hanging Him on a cross. ³¹He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. ³²And we are witnesses of these things; and *so is the Holy Spirit*, whom God has given to those who obey Him.” ³³But when they heard this, they were cut to the quick and were intending to slay them. ³⁴But a certain Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the Law, respected by all the people, stood up in the Council and gave orders to put the men outside for a short time. ³⁵And he said to them, “Men of Israel, take care what you propose to do with these men. ³⁶For some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody; and a group of about four hundred men joined up with him. And he was slain; and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing. ³⁷After this man Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of the census, and drew away *some* people after him, he too perished, and all those who followed him were scattered. ³⁸And so in the present case, I say to you, stay away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or action should be of men, it will be overthrown; ³⁹but if it is of God, you will not be able to

overthrow them; or else you may even be found fighting against God.” ⁴⁰And they took his advice; and after calling the apostles in, *they flogged them and ordered them to speak no more in the name of Jesus*, and *then* released them. ⁴¹So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, *rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name.* ⁴²And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus *as* the Christ.

Read section from end of chapter 1 of *Killing Christians*.

[The context of this next verse is most likely talking specifically to the disciples, and thus I won’t use it, even though it sure seems to fit today.]

John 16:2 – “They will make you outcasts from the synagogue, but *an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God.*”]

Hebrews 10:32-34 – ³²But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings, ³³partly, by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated. ³⁴For you showed sympathy to the prisoners, and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and an abiding one.

Matthew 5:10-12 – ¹⁰“Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ¹¹Blessed are you when *men* cast insults at you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me. ¹²Rejoice, and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

God promises us great blessings if we are persecuted for His sake.

Let’s talk specifically now about what we should do when threatened with torture or death unless we recant our faith.

Luke 21:12-19 – ¹²“But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and will persecute you, delivering you to the synagogues and prisons, bringing you before kings and governors for My name’s sake. ¹³It will lead to an opportunity for your testimony. ¹⁴*So make up your minds not to prepare beforehand to defend yourselves; ¹⁵for I will give you utterance and wisdom which none of your opponents will be able to resist or refute.* ¹⁶But you will be delivered up even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and they will put *some* of you to death, ¹⁷and you will be hated by all on account of My name. ¹⁸Yet not a hair of your head will perish. ¹⁹By your endurance you will gain your lives.”

[(Also, Mark 13:11-13) – ¹¹“*And when they arrest you and deliver you up, do not be anxious beforehand about what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour; for it is not you who speak, but it is the Holy Spirit.*” ¹²And brother will deliver brother to death, and a father *his* child; and children will rise up against parents and have them put to death. ¹³And you will be hated by all on account of My name, but the one who endures to the end, he shall be saved.]

First, we should not prepare ahead of time what we plan on saying to those who threaten us. God promises over and over that He will give us the words to say.

Now let's talk about a question that we have all thought of, and a few have asked already in class. "Can't you just lie to the person with a gun to your head? Surely God wants you to live longer so you can serve him and take care of your family."

Luke 12:8-9 – ⁸"And I say to you, everyone who confesses Me before men, the Son of Man shall confess him also before the angels of God; ⁹but he who denies Me before men shall be denied before the angels of God. ...

2 Tim. 2:11-13 – ¹¹It is a trustworthy statement: For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him; ¹²If we endure, we shall also reign with Him; ¹³If we are faithless, He remains faithful; for He cannot deny Himself.

Is denying your faith under the threat of death an "unpardonable sin"? Peter did it – three times. But that was before Jesus' resurrection. Does that matter? I don't know.

Some of us (like Peter) have imagined that in the face of the threat of death, we would be valiant, noble, and courageous, and would stand for our faith to the end – and with the perfect orchestral soundtrack playing in the background. Others weigh their families, dreams, and failures, and fear they would fail God at the most critical point of their lives. Truth is, only by the grace of God could one make that most difficult choice at the most trying moment of their lives. But that is exactly what God promises you will have. His grace at that moment would make you able.

"Every Christian should go to jail at least once in life because of their faith in Christ. It's good for you!" – A follower of Jesus in the Middle East.

Matthew 10:28 – "And do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

Marcus Aurelius, the emperor of Rome from x to x, oversaw the fourth major persecution of Christians around 165-180 A.D. During that time there was a man who became a famous Greek doctor and medical writer named Claudius Galenus. He wrote much that has been preserved and in his writings, he mentions Christians. Back in those days, it was illegal to examine a dead body. They couldn't do autopsies. So what doctors would do is hang around in the arenas and places where people were dying because they could examine dying bodies. One hundred and fifty years after Jesus, Christians were being tortured and killed. This famous writer who examined many dying bodies, examined many who were Christians. Claudius Galenus wrote, "For fearlessness of death and the hereafter, is something we witness in them every day." It was the fearlessness of early Christians that captured the attention of the Roman empire

because everybody fears death except those who believe in a risen savior. – Andy Stanley

Quote from chapter 4 of *Killing Christians*. The message from Khadija.

Should We Be "Preppers"?

Overarching question: Where is your heart?

Ps. 37:25 – I have been young, and now I am old; Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, Or his descendants begging bread.

Preppers – people who prepare for what they anticipate will be happen – our civilization coming apart at the seams.

Biblical examples of both sides:

Noah filled the ark with supplies for his family and all the animals.

Egypt prepped for a coming seven-year famine.

In the desert, the children of Israel could not prep, except one day's worth on Friday.

But, when prepping for the Shemitah, and especially when prepping for the Year of Jubilee, they had to prep. In fact, God provided for their prepping.

Leviticus 25:19-22 – ¹⁹"Then the land will yield its produce, so that you can eat your fill and live securely on it. ²⁰But if you say, "What are we going to eat on the seventh year if we do not sow or gather in our crops?" ²¹then I will so order My blessing for you in the sixth year that it will bring forth the crop for three years. ²²When you are sowing the eighth year, you can still eat old things from the crop, eating the old until the ninth year when its crop comes in."

Does preparing for a possible worst case scenario in our nation / culture disclose a lack of faith in God?

And is your prepping done in fear?

Is your prepping actually just greed?

Luke 12:13-21 – ¹³And someone in the crowd said to Him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me." ¹⁴But He said to him, "Man, who appointed Me a judge or arbiter over you?" ¹⁵And He said to them, "Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions." ¹⁶And He told them a parable, saying, "The land of a certain rich man was very productive. ¹⁷And he began reasoning to himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?' ¹⁸And he said, 'This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. ¹⁹And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry." ²⁰But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your

soul is required of you; and *now* who will own what you have prepared?’ ²¹So is the man who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”

Matthew 6:25-34 – ²⁵“For this reason I say to you, do not be anxious for your life, *as to* what you shall eat, or what you shall drink; nor for your body, *as to* what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body than clothing? ²⁶Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? ²⁷And which of you by being anxious can add a *single* cubit to his life’s span? ²⁸And why are you anxious about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, ²⁹yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory did not clothe himself like one of these. ³⁰But if God so arrays the grass of the field, which is *alive* today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more *do so for* you, O men of little faith? ³¹Do not be anxious then, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘With what shall we clothe ourselves?’ ³²For all these things the Gentiles eagerly seek; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. ³³But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you. ³⁴Therefore do not be anxious for tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. *Each* day has enough trouble of its own.”

It’s not that the Bible forbids preparing for future needs.

Proverbs 6:6-8 – ⁶Go to the ant, O sluggard, Observe her ways and be wise, ⁷Which, having no chief, Officer or ruler, ⁸Prepares her food in the summer, *And* gathers her provision in the harvest.

The key to this question is really your heart. What is driving your prepping? Is it fear? Lack of faith? Greed? If so, then it’s wrong. Is it keeping you from serving God and ministering to others’ needs today? Beware!

Is it solely rooted in taking care of your family and others?

If you decide to be a prepper, it should only be a secondary response to being ready for Christ’s return. And being ready is not a physical state; it is spiritual. It involves action, but not selfish action. Are you ready?

What Should We Do If Our Government Tells Us We Can’t Obey God?

Overarching question: What brings God glory?

First, be careful with what it means to obey God. We mustn’t confuse convictions, traditions, or preferences with God’s clear commands.

Second, realize that these matters are fraught with cultural baggage. Being from a weaponized, assertive, and arrogant culture doesn’t make attacking, retaliating, and defending right. Nor does being from a pacifist, weak, beaten down culture automatically make pacifism right.

We have to find out what God’s mind is on the matter. And that brings us to the third danger area. Should we look at the militaristic precedents of the children of Israel as our guide? Or ignore the Old Testament completely?

Obviously, this topic will be a difficult one to navigate.

First, let’s talk about a great example of this exact situation in the Old Testament: Daniel.

Daniel 6 – ¹It seemed good to Darius to appoint 120 satraps over the kingdom, that they should be in charge of the whole kingdom, ²and over them three commissioners (of whom Daniel was one), that these satraps might be accountable to them, and that the king might not suffer loss. ³Then this Daniel began distinguishing himself among the commissioners and satraps because he possessed an extraordinary spirit, and the king planned to appoint him over the entire kingdom. ⁴Then the commissioners and satraps began trying to find a ground of accusation against Daniel in regard to government affairs; but they could find no ground of accusation or *evidence of* corruption, inasmuch as he was faithful, and no negligence or corruption was *to be* found in him. ⁵Then these men said, “We shall not find any ground of accusation against this Daniel unless we find *it* against him with regard to the law of his God.”

⁶Then these commissioners and satraps came by agreement to the king and spoke to him as follows: “King Darius, live forever! ⁷All the commissioners of the kingdom, the prefects and the satraps, the high officials and the governors have consulted together that the king should establish a statute and enforce an injunction that anyone who makes a petition to any god or man besides you, O king, for thirty days, shall be cast into the lions’ den. ⁸Now, O king, establish the injunction and sign the document so that it may not be changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which may not be revoked.” ⁹Therefore King Darius signed the document, that is, the injunction. ¹⁰Now when Daniel knew that the document was signed, he entered his house (now in his roof chamber he had windows open toward Jerusalem); and he continued kneeling on his knees three times a day, praying and giving thanks before his God, as he had been doing previously.

¹¹Then these men came by agreement and found Daniel making petition and supplication before his God. ¹²Then they approached and spoke before the king about the king’s injunction, “Did you not sign an injunction that any man who makes a petition to any god or man besides you, O king, for thirty days, is to be cast into the lions’ den?” The king answered and said, “The statement is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which may not be revoked.” ¹³Then they answered and spoke before the king, “Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, or to the injunction which you signed, but keeps making his petition three times a day.” ¹⁴Then, as soon as the king heard this statement, he was deeply distressed and set *his* mind on delivering Daniel; and even until sunset he kept exerting himself to rescue him. ¹⁵Then these men came by agreement to the king and said to the king, “Recognize, O king, that it is a law of the Medes and Persians that no injunction or statute which the king establishes may be changed.” ¹⁶Then the king gave orders, and Daniel was brought in and cast into the lions’ den. The king spoke and said to Daniel, “Your God whom you constantly serve

will Himself deliver you.” ¹⁷And a stone was brought and laid over the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the signet rings of his nobles, so that nothing might be changed in regard to Daniel.

¹⁸Then the king went off to his palace and spent the night fasting, and no entertainment was brought before him; and his sleep fled from him. ¹⁹Then the king arose with the dawn, at the break of day, and went in haste to the lions’ den. ²⁰And when he had come near the den to Daniel, he cried out with a troubled voice. The king spoke and said to Daniel, “Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you constantly serve, been able to deliver you from the lions?” ²¹Then Daniel spoke to the king, “O king, live forever! ²²My God sent His angel and shut the lions’ mouths, and they have not harmed me, inasmuch as I was found innocent before Him; and also toward you, O king, I have committed no crime.” ²³Then the king was very pleased and gave orders for Daniel to be taken up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no injury whatever was found on him, because he had trusted in his God. ²⁴The king then gave orders, and they brought those men who had maliciously accused Daniel, and they cast them, their children, and their wives into the lions’ den; and they had not reached the bottom of the den before the lions overpowered them and crushed all their bones.

²⁵Then Darius the king wrote to all the peoples, nations, and *men of every* language who were living in all the land: “May your peace abound! ²⁶I make a decree that in all the dominion of my kingdom men are to fear and tremble before the God of Daniel; For He is the living God and enduring forever, And His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed, And His dominion *will be* forever. ²⁷He delivers and rescues and performs signs and wonders In heaven and on earth, Who has *also* delivered Daniel from the power of the lions.” ²⁸So this Daniel enjoyed success in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

Daniel illustrates the most important immediate answer to the section title. More important than whether or not we should fight back, is the idea that (from Peter and the apostles in Acts 5:29), “We must obey God rather than man.” No matter what.

And even though some have suggested that Jesus was a special case since He was God and since He had to die for our redemption, I still think He was the perfect example for us when faced with torture and death by the government.

1 Peter 2:21-24 – ²¹For you have been called for this purpose, **since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps,** ²²WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH; ²³**and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously;** ²⁴and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.

He didn’t fight back.

Read Hebrews 11:32-38. There are three different groups of people who are highlighted in the Hall of Faith:

Hebrews 11:32-38 – ³²And what more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets, ³³who by faith **conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions,** ³⁴quenched the power of fire, **escaped the edge of the sword,** from weakness were made strong, **became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight.** ³⁵Women received *back* their dead by resurrection; and **others were tortured,** not accepting their release, in order that they might obtain a better resurrection; ³⁶and others experienced **mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment.** ³⁷**They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword;** they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated ³⁸(*men* of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground.

There are three different groups listed here:

- Warriors
“Conquered kingdoms”, “shut the mouths of lions”, “became mighty in war”, “put foreign armies to flight”
- Fled from persecution / death – The “underground resistance”
“Escaped the edge of the sword”
Escaped = fled
5343 φευγο pheugo {fyoo'-go}
apparently a primary verb;; v
AV - flee 26, escape 3, flee away 2; 31
1) to flee away, seek safety by flight
2) metaph. to flee (to shun or avoid by flight) something abhorrent, esp. vices
3) to be saved by flight, to escape safely out of danger
4) poetically, to flee away, vanish
- Tortured / killed
“Others were tortured”, “mockings and scourgings”, “chains and imprisonment”, “stoned”, “sawn in two”, “tempted” (=assay), “put to death with the sword”
Assay – the process of establishing the purity of a precious metal. It’s never a pleasant process. Some methods use nitric acid to burn away the impurities. The most exact method uses extreme heat (up to 2000° F.) and chemical processes, and is completely destructive.

Three types of faithful people: victors who fight and win, martyrs who die, and the underground resistance. Make sure your study has room and grace for all three. Just a thought. – Andrew Rankin

There's not a lot of grace and forgiveness in the Bible for those who are coming against God's people. In addition to the many expressions in the OT (especially Psalms), here's one in the NT.

2 Thessalonians 1:5-10 – ⁵This is a plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering. ⁶For after all it is *only* just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, ⁷and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, ⁸dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. ⁹And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, ¹⁰when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed--for our testimony to you was believed.

God's retribution upon those who harm His people is clear and certain.

OK. Fine. Is there anything that those of us who are more on the side of defending the weak and fighting against evil? Here is a somewhat measured response by Jesus:

Luke 22:35-38, 47-51 – ³⁵And He said to them, "When I sent you out without purse and bag and sandals, you did not lack anything, did you?" And they said, "No, nothing."

³⁶And He said to them, "But now, let him who has a purse take it along, likewise also a bag, and let him who has no sword sell his robe and buy one. ³⁷For I tell you, that this which is written must be fulfilled in Me, 'AND HE WAS NUMBERED WITH TRANSGRESSORS'; for that which refers to Me has its fulfillment." ³⁸And they said, "Lord, look, here are two swords." And He said to them, "It is enough."

⁴⁷While He was still speaking, behold, a multitude came, and the one called Judas, one of the twelve, was preceding them; and he approached Jesus to kiss Him. ⁴⁸But Jesus said to him, "Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?" ⁴⁹And when those who were around Him saw what was going to happen, they said, "Lord, shall we strike with the sword?" ⁵⁰And a certain one of them struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his right ear. ⁵¹But Jesus answered and said, "Stop! No more of this." And He touched his ear and healed him.

In the light of threats and governmental oppression, what hope is there? Look at the prayer that God answered in Acts 4:

Acts 4:29-31 – ²⁹"And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that Thy bond-servants may speak Thy word with all confidence, ³⁰while Thou dost extend Thy hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of Thy holy servant Jesus."

³¹And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak the word of God with boldness.

So what should we all do? Well, first, our priority should always be peace.

Matthew 5:9 – "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

In times of evil where peace has been rejected, what brings God glory?

- In times of conflict and evil aggression, we have seen many godly individuals stand up and fight against evil.
- And in situations where a weak victim is being harmed, it appears to be a godly and God-honoring response to fight to protect them.
- And in situations where you or your family are being threatened with physical harm, not for the name of Christ, but just because the assailants are evil, then defending yourself appears to be OK. It is not about the glory of God.
- If we are individually confronted and given a choice to leave versus recanting our faith or being killed, then we should leave.
- Only in situations where we individually have only the option to recant or die should we choose death. And in those situations, we should not resist.

May God's Spirit guide us in each of these difficult situations, and may His grace give us the strength to supernaturally abound in them, and may He be glorified, no matter the outcome.

Conclusion

There is certainly a raging river of God's activity bringing life to our world today. God is doing miraculous works just like we read in the Bible on behalf of believers everywhere, and to prove His reality to unbelievers around them. Unfortunately, alongside that river is a swamp where there is little motion, and thus it has become stagnant and lifeless. That is the American church.

Is that the way you want it? _____

Most Christians in America are not ready for Christ's return. Are you? ____

Living the "Normal Christian Life" will make you look very different from other American Christians. It will be full of blessing and impact, but also loss and suffering.

Revelation 2:10 – "Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

Revelation 6:9-11 – ⁹And when He broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained; ¹⁰and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, wilt Thou refrain from judging and avenging our

blood on those who dwell on the earth?" ¹¹And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until *the number of* their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, should be completed also.

Most Christians in America are not ready for Christ's return. Are you? ____

Let's finish this series with a couple of verses that you certainly will recognize, if not know by memory.

Romans 12:1 – I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is* your spiritual service of worship.

I've always viewed this verse as a call to keep myself at a point where my life and everything I have is to always be at His service. But after reading *Killing Christians* and studying this topic, I think it is even more than that. I now understand that it is a call for me to always be at the ready to give up my life, either by submitting to ridicule, persecution, and loss, or even to die for His purpose. My life is not my own. Not a day or a minute. My plans are not my own. My family is not my own. My life and everything I am and possess is His for the taking.

Luke 9:23 – And He was saying to *them* all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and **take up his cross daily**, and follow Me.

And this verse, too, I've not understood as fully as I do after this study. Yes, we should always remember and reflect Jesus wherever we go. Yes, we should bear up under the burdens we carry in this life. And, yes, we should be dead to our selves. But even more specifically, and poignantly, we should live lives immediately and ultimately prepared for death. We should be ready for death. Once we are truly ready to die, we can begin living for Christ in a way we have never before, and we will begin seeing His presence and grace like we have never before.

Are you ready? _____

What are you going to do? _____