

Acts 1:2 Jerry Arnold, Feb 18, 2006

Father in Heaven, Lord, please, please be strong in our midst. We are about to open Your word. We know this is a sacred, sacred event. We pray that Your Holy Spirit will be here to teach us, to lead us, to direct our thoughts, to bring conviction and to bring conversion. We pray that everyone of us will be changed for eternity as a result of Your presence and Your teaching here today. Lord, we know that You are a God of healing, and all of us know people that need to be healed, or we sense it in our own lives. We are asking that You would be strong to heal people physically, spiritually, emotionally and that You would heal relationships. Lord, we present those people to You in our thoughts now. We ask that You would be glorified. Lord, I pray that You will help me to teach today and to say what You want to say. This I pray in Jesus name, Amen.

It was the worst trip I had ever been on. There may have been others but I can't think of one that was worse. Karen and I hadn't been married that long, probably about 4 months. When we got married we were dirt poor. I had to borrow her father's car to get to the wedding. We didn't have a car. For several months in marriage we didn't even have a car, we just walked everywhere. See, 28 years ago people got married on love. They didn't worry about anything else. I'm glad we didn't wait, Karen, because we've never really had money.

We got married and a couple months into marriage, her sister gave us a car that they didn't need any more. It was an Oldsmobile and it ran fairly good. We were so excited to have a car. But the front seat was just worn out to a frazzle. You couldn't even sit in it really. So we went to a junkyard, and I found a seat. It was from a Buick, big comfortable Buick seat. I put it in there and welded it to the floor. We called it our OldsmoBuick. That seat was so comfortable that we liked it. In fact, in our impoverished condition it was the most comfortable piece of furniture we had.

We were zealous for God. We were young. We were in love with each other, and we were in love with the Lord. But we were naive. Our zeal was without knowledge in many ways. We were around a group of people that believed Jesus was going to return soon. So 28 years ago we believed He was going to come anytime, and we needed to be ready.

Unfortunately, the people we were around and the literature we were reading all gave us the impression that the way to prepare for Jesus coming was there would be a tremendous time of trouble before He arrived. So you needed to be out in the country, you needed to be isolated, you needed to be self sufficient. So I began studying about how you build green houses so we could have nice fresh vegetables all year round up there in Michigan. I learned how you could hook a bicycle up to a generator and hook that generator up to these big truck batteries. If you got on the bicycle and rode about an hour a day with that generator you could keep those batteries propped up, and you could have the luxury of a refrigerator. I learned all that stuff and was excited about it and thought that was the preparation. We didn't know better. We were just 23 years old. We're in love with each other, and we loved the Lord. This is the information we had.

We became acquainted with one fellow that was particularly influential in our lives. He said, "Yes, I have a place in Southwestern Wisconsin, and it's all self sufficient, no electricity, nothing. I'd like to teach you how to do it." Well, we felt this was the leading of God. So we headed out for the worst trip of our lives.

It started out bad. My wife, unfortunately, was very sick as we started to drive. She was two months pregnant and she had morning sickness all day long every day. It was bad. She was really, really ill. But she wanted to go, and I wanted her to go. So we went. She was in the car. She's not feeling well.

This guy, I don't know if he was taking speed, no dose, I have no idea what it was, but we left at night. We left from Southwestern Michigan, and we drove all the way around through Chicago, and all the way across the southern side of Wisconsin to where their farm was. I'm telling you I was having the hardest time staying awake. It was just incredibly difficult. But I managed to stay awake. And when we got there, they don't have any electricity, they don't have any hot water. They don't have anything like that. In fact, they didn't have any food. He told us the next day we had to go out in the woods and find it.

Now ladies, if you've ever been pregnant before, you can only begin to imagine what that must have felt like, especially if you've got morning sickness. The only thing we could find, and I didn't even know we could find it but he showed us where they were, were a bunch of mushrooms. So we found these mushrooms and made some type of horrendous meal out of these mushrooms. That's what we ate for several days, whatever we could find.

Well, the trip didn't improve. We decided to go to his parent's place which was back in the eastern part of the lower part of Wisconsin. So we were driving along in the Oldsmobile Buick and it's a hot, hot day, bright sunny hot day. All the way across there for hours, the glare off of the dash is just beaming into my wife's eyes. It's just the right level for her, and she doesn't have sunglasses on. We couldn't afford sunglasses. Even with the visor down it was still shining on her.

We arrived at this guy's parent's house. We got the room up in the attic. It was hot and we were laying there in a pool of sweat with this little dinky fan that hummed more than it did anything else. We were just so uncomfortable and miserable longing for something that even looked like and felt like civilization. In the middle of the night the pain in my wife's eyes was such that she cried out. Then, when she cried out and sat up, she couldn't open her eyes and that even made it more of a fearful thing for her. When she finally got them open, worse case scenario, she couldn't see.

We learned later that her eyes were actually burned. It was like the flash that a welder may get, a flash burn. You know when a welder is welding, you know how bright that is, and they wear the protective eye gear. Sometimes they don't get that down in time and they get these flash burns. Her eyes were burned and she needed ointment.

We finally got her eyes taken care of where she could travel well enough, and we wanted out of there. We decided this trip was long enough. We were trying to prepare for the time of trouble. We realized we were bringing it upon ourselves. So we headed back to Southwestern Michigan where we were living at the time. I had a couple of days before I had to report for work, and I called my Mom and Dad and they said come on up here. So we headed for civilization.

Now, I want you to know, Brothers and Sisters, that there are many, many sincere seekers after God who have a false understanding of how to prepare for the return of Jesus Christ. I believe He's coming soon. Twenty-eight years later I still believe He's coming soon. I still believe we need to be prepared. But I do not believe that the preparation is being self-sufficient out in the wilderness somewhere. Praise God for that. I'm going to risk Ravens feeding me like Elijah had. Because I've learned in my life, rugged camping is a Motel 6 instead of a Holiday Inn.

I want to show you from the word of God how to prepare for Jesus return. It's found in Acts chapter 1. As we continue our series in the book of Acts, we're going to discover some things about Jesus that I believe will be very exciting for you. We'll discover some things about ourselves and then we'll see how it applies to our preparation. In Acts chapter 1 we'll read verse 1 and 2. "The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen."

Last week we studied the phrase, "...He, through the Holy Spirit..." Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit taught his apostles. We looked at two passages in the book of Isaiah that gave us an insight into God Himself because of this phrase of Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Today we're going to continue that study about Jesus and the Holy Spirit, but we're going to see how it applies to us regarding the Holy Spirit and Jesus experience.

Let's look at Isaiah 61. Isaiah chapter 61 will be a very familiar passage to most of you. You've either read it in Isaiah or you've read it in the book of Luke chapter 4. It's the passage. You know the story. Jesus went to church in Nazareth. When he stood up to read they handed Him the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. He opened it up to this section of scripture and He read it. He will make a little sermon after it. They get so upset with Him they drag Him out of church, drag Him to a precipice, try to throw Him off the hill and kill Him, but Jesus walks through the midst of them.

So that's the passage we're reading. Here it is 700 years before Jesus would be born. "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn, to console those who mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified."

The very first part of the first verse says, “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me...” That is Jesus that is being referred to there. That is Jesus that is speaking. In the Hebrew, the word anointed is *mashach*. If you turn it into a noun *mashiyach*, you come up with anointed one or Messiah. Jesus is the Messiah. He is the anointed one. In the Greek, the name Jesus means Savior, Christ. *Christos* in the Greek means “anointed one.” So Jesus, the Savior, the Anointed One of God. That’s what His full name is. Here’s a reference to that: “...because the Lord has anointed Me...”

There are a number of texts that refer to Jesus being anointed. Let’s look at Psalm 2. In Psalm 2 we read in verse 1. “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?’”

Here is a prophecy written a thousand years before Jesus would be born in Bethlehem. It is prophesied that the nations would rage against the Lord and His anointed or His Christ. If you continue reading this, I would encourage you to do that this afternoon, you will come to verse 9 and it will talk about the Anointed One breaking the enemies of God with a rod of iron and dashing them in pieces like a potter’s vessel. When you read that, turn to Revelation 19:11 and following and you will have a description of Jesus coming and the second coming. This is quoted how He will do this to the enemies of God. We will not turn there today because of lack of time.

I’d like for you to turn to Psalm 45:6 & 7. Another reference about Jesus is made regarding His anointing. It says here, “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom. You love righteousness and hate wickedness; Therefore God, your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness more than Your companions.”

Now let’s turn to Hebrews chapter 1. Because I want to make this very clear who is being spoken of here in Psalm 45. Hebrews 1:8 & 9. This passage is referred to by the author of the book of Hebrews. In chapter 1 verse 8 it says, “But to the Son He says: (Who says? God says this to the Son.) Your throne, O God, “(Here is God the Father calling God the Son, O God) “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness. Therefore God, your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness more than Your companions.” So it’s pretty clear from the word of God that Jesus is the Anointed One of God. He is the Savior of the world. He is the Anointed One.

Was Jesus the only one in the Bible to be anointed? No, it’s kind of interesting. In fact, it helps us to understand some things about our spiritual journey. Let’s look at Exodus chapter 40. God will be speaking. He will speak to Moses. He’s going to give Moses directions of what to do with Moses brother, Aaron. In Exodus 40:13 God says this. “You shall put the holy garments on Aaron, and anoint him and consecrate him, that he may minister to Me as priest.” Aaron, the very first high priest is anointed. His brother

Moses anoints him under the direction of God. You can read in the scriptures that other priests will be anointed by God.

Look at I Samuel 10:1. We have an experience with the prophet Samuel and an anointing that takes place. It says, "Then Samuel took a flask of oil and poured it on his head, (That's not on his own head. It is on the head of Saul, actually.) ...poured it on his head, and kissed him and said: 'Is it not because the Lord has anointed you commander over His inheritance.'" Samuel anointed the first king, Saul, and David was anointed and later David's son, Solomon, was anointed and on down the line. Many kings were anointed. So we see in the scriptures that priests were anointed, kings were anointed.

Let's look at one more category of individuals who were anointed. You'll find that in I Kings chapter 19. Elijah is on the run. He's had the showdown on Mt. Carmel. He heard Jezebel wants to kill him. So he's fled to Mt. Horeb, which is actually Mt. Sinai. While he's there God speaks to him. He speaks to him words of encouragement. He gives him directions in I Kings 19:16. God says to Elijah, "Also you shall anoint Jehu the son of Nimshi as king over Israel. And Elisha, the son of Shaphat of Abel Meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place." Elisha, a prophet was anointed as a prophet.

One of my favorite words in the Bible or titles is Abel Meholah. It was the name of the farm that Elisha lived on. It is the Meadow of the Dance. In the scriptures, dancing is associated with praise to God. This guy, Elisha, grew up in a home where they praised God. The Meadow of the Dance. So we see that prophets were anointed, kings were anointed and so were priests. Let me show you how this wraps together in the experience of Jesus. Then we're going to look at it in our experience and we're going to discover the answer to the question "How can we be ready to meet the Lord when he comes?"

Turn in your Bibles to Deuteronomy 18. Deuteronomy will be the 5th book in the Bible way back in the writings of Moses. Deuteronomy is kind of a wrap up of the experiences, Moses last words to the people before he dies. So he rehearses their history. In Deuteronomy 18:15 this is Moses speaking, and he's saying to the people, "The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me in your midst from your brethren. Him you shall hear."

As you study that passage in different commentaries and with different Bible scholars, you'll discover that almost all of them say that is a direct prophecy about Jesus, that He would be the prophet who would come up and the people would listen to Him. If you were to turn to the New Testament to the experience of Jesus in John chapter 4 where he's walking along and he sits down at a well and he sends his disciples into town to get food, and a woman comes out at noon in the heat of the day, he converses with her, and he tells her to go home to her husband. She says, "I have no husband." Jesus says "That's right, you've had many husbands." Remember that story? You know what she says? "Sir, I perceive you are a prophet." He does not correct her. But He does go on to tell her that He is the Messiah. Jesus is referred to as a prophet in a number of verses in the New Testament. So Jesus is a prophet.

Now I want to ask you a question. Was Jesus a priest? Look at Hebrews chapter 4. We see in the life of Jesus a culmination of all the anointings of God. Hebrews 4:14. The author of Hebrews says, "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God. Let us hold fast our confession." Was Jesus a priest? Yes. And now he ministers on our behalf in heaven. So Jesus was a prophet, Jesus was a priest. Was Jesus a king?

Let's look at Revelation 17:14. It talks about the enemies of God lining up to make war against him. It says, "These will make war with the lamb." Who is the lamb in the book of Revelation? It is Jesus. If you aren't sure about that or if you don't know how we come to that conclusion, talk to me afterward and I'll give you some texts. But the lamb in the book of Revelation is Jesus himself. "These will make war with the lamb and the Lamb will overcome him, because He is Lord of Lords and King of Kings. And those who are with Him are called chosen and faithful." So is Jesus a King? Yes. So we see in the anointing of Jesus the culmination of all who have been anointed, prophet, priest and king.

Now the question is, "What does that have to do with us?" I'm glad you asked that. Let's go to Joel chapter 2. Joel is a little slice of a book in the Old Testament. You'll find it after Hosea and before Amos. If that doesn't work, the index in the front of the Bible is a good way. Joel is going to write a prophecy about the latter times of earth's history.

In Joel 2:28 we read, "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh. Your sons and your daughters shall prophecy. Your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions. And also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out my Spirit in those days." In what days? It goes on to describe certain phenomena that has already taken place. So we know it's sometime now between that phenomena and when Jesus will return. It is in the days in which we are living. God is planning on pouring out His Spirit and when He pours out His Spirit upon His people, His people will prophecy, they will dream dreams, they will see visions. What will that make them? Prophets of God.

Will they ever be priests? Look at Revelation 1. There are several passages we could go to about the people of God being priests. In Revelation chapter 1 it's going to tell us two things in one verse. So using the economy of time, we'll take one verse here. Revelation 1:5 We catch the greeting, the salutation halfway through "...and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness the first born from the dead and ruler over the kings of the earth, to Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood," (that's a powerful sermon right there) Verse 6 "...and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father." Some of your Bibles say a kingdom of priests. It can be translated either way—kings and priests. God's people filled with the Spirit of God are prophets, priests and kings. Jesus was a prophet, a priest and a king.

Now the question is, "Is there anything about anointing that deals with God's people in the last days?" If so, can we learn something from it that would prepare us to meet Jesus

when He comes in the clouds? Let's go to Revelation 3:14. It begins by saying, "And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write: 'These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God.'"

Now for those of you who may not be familiar with the book of Revelation, how it's structured in its literary form, here's what happens. In the very first couple chapters of the book of Revelation, seven churches are identified. There are seven literal churches in the day when John wrote the book of Revelation about the year 96 AD. Those churches actually existed. Those towns existed and there were churches there. The problems in those churches and the blessings of those churches were real. But Jesus specifically chose what churches he wanted John to write about because not only were they literal churches back in that day, but they demonstrate a prophetic stream of time from the first church Ephesus down to the last church Laodicea so that we currently are living in the time period of the church of Laodicea. So that this not just a nice message for people who are having problems back then. It is the message for God's people just before He returns. This is us. We are here. We are in this passage. We have to see if there's anything about anointing in here.

Verse 15. "I know your works that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then because you are lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth. (It means to vomit.) Verse 17, "Because you say I am rich, have become wealthy and have need of nothing, and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor blind and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire that you may be rich and white garments that you may be clothed that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed and (do you see it?) anoint your eyes with eye salve that you may see." He goes on to say, "As many as I love I rebuke." Verse 20: "Behold I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door I will come in to him and dine with him and he with Me."

What is the problem in God's church in the last days? What is the problem? It's a church without Christ. He's on the outside. It's a church of people who have learned to do church without the converting influence of Jesus in their lives. They know all the answers. They've figured out all the theology. They've got all the lifestyle down pat. But they do not have a Savior. They think they don't need a Savior.

But He says, get gold, that is faith that has been refined by experience, He says get white raiment, that is the righteousness of Jesus Christ that we cover our sinfulness in and then He says and anoint yourself with eye salve that you may see. This anointing is the anointing of the Holy Spirit where He opens our eyes to the reality of our utter depravity and sinfulness and there's no behavior or series of behaviors that we can participate in that would qualify us to go to heaven. It can't happen. We're lost. And the people of Laodicea, they don't think they are. They've got it all together. Brothers and Sisters, the preparation to meet Jesus when He returns is to open the hearts door to Him today. Walk with Him today. He'll take care of tomorrow.

Let me share with you a story. I held an evangelist meeting not too far from here in the mountains of Tennessee. I was holding and conducting the meetings in a church of our denomination. There were six names that we had of people that no one in the local church knew who they were. But they had attended the meetings because I had their names. We had their address but its Rural Route this and Box that. Where in the world is that up there in those mountains? So we went to the post office, laid those names before the people and they had a map. The postmaster pointed out where each one of them lived. Then he said a strange thing. He identified what church they all were members of—our denomination.

I got to meet those people. Every single one of them had moved up into the mountains to be isolated from other people so nobody would know where they were or what they were doing so they could be ready for Jesus to come. But everybody in town knew who they were and where they were. You see, let me share something with you. You move out in the country, those people ask questions. They know your comings, they know your goings, who you're related to and what you do. They probably knew whether they ate meat or not. You move next door to somebody in the suburb and they could care less about you.

I'm sharing that with you to demonstrate that all this earnest desire to be out there so you can be safe during the time of trouble, they knew where they were more than they know where you live. Human plans, human devising, human ways will all fall. They will not stand. They will not work. What we need, Brothers and Sisters, is to be anointed by God and have our eyes opened to our need to have Jesus in our hearts, knocking. You see, Jesus is close to the church, but he's not in the church. Jesus is here now. Only you know if he's really in your heart or not.

I called my father. "Dad, you going to be home for the next couple of days?" "Yes." "Karen and I want to come and visit. Can we?" They were delighted. We drove up to Cadillac, Michigan. There was a salad. Mom knew that Karen and I were vegetarians. She had the food all ready. There was warm soup. We got a hot shower, we slept in a comfortable bed, all set up for us. It was like going to heaven for us.

And you know that's really what it's going to be like. The Father knows. Jesus is preparing a place for us, right? He's got it all set. There's going to be a table set. Here it says, "Open the door and I'll come in and sup with you." He's bringing the goods. I mean all we do is say "yes" to Him. We have Him as our Savior. He's preparing a place. And when we get there it will be the best trip we've ever taken.

Some of you are on a bad trip right now spiritually. You're struggling, you're failing, you are trying hard, trying , pride, you know what I'm talking about. It just seems so utterly difficult. Let's pray for an anointing from God to open our eyes to see two things: our great need and our great Savior. Let's today open our heart's door and let Him be our Savior. If you would like to say that to God right now, I'm going to ask you to stand.

Father in Heaven, Anoint our eyes, Lord. Help us to see our need of You. And then Lord, help us to open that door and to see You as our Savior and to experience the oil of gladness that You want us to be anointed with. We thank You in Jesus name, Amen.