

I. WHY STUDY THE END-TIMES?

- A. The driving motivation for studying the end-times themes of the bible is that the content shows us the heart of God to bring justice on the earth which calls forth a response from the human heart.
- B. End-times themes reveal the love and character of God the Father and his son Jesus which empowers the human heart with boldness, confidence and significantly dials down fear.
- C. As we review the themes involving God's end time plan, we mostly meet a man (Jesus) and are called to love him, and value his plan for restoring order and blessing to the earth.

II. THE COMMAND TO KNOW THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES

- A. Jesus commanded the people in the generation of His return to know that His return was near when they saw ALL the sign events of Mt. 24 occurring at the same time. There is only one generation in which all these things happen simultaneously on a global basis.

33 When you see all these things, know that it is near--at the doors! 34 Assuredly...this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place... (Mt. 24:33-34)

- B. How long is a biblical generation? A generation in Scripture ranges from 40 to 100 years (Gen. 15:13-16; Num. 32:13; Ps. 90:10; Mt. 1:17; Acts 7:6). Moses spoke of Israel's captivity in Egypt as lasting 400 years or 4 generations (Gen. 15:13). Thus, a generation could refer to 100 years. There were 14 generations from Abraham to David (Mt. 1:17) each averaging about 70 years.
- C. Jesus rebuked His generation for not being able to read the signs of His first coming. Asking for a sign was a legitimate request because Joel prophesied that the Messiah would give signs from heaven (Joel 2:30).
- D. Israel's unresponsiveness to God was partly related to them not knowing the time of their visitation. There is a relationship between the measure to which people are informed of coming prophetic events and the measure in which they respond to God in context to those events.
 - 1. Many have an interest in knowing what others think of these issues but do very little for themselves in terms of Bible reading and study. When we rely on what someone else says we leave our hearts barren of God's word, and susceptible to fear and anxiety.

42 If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace...43 For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, 44 and level you, and your children within you, to the ground...because you did not know the time of your visitation. (Lk. 19:42-44)

- E. Paul taught that the Church should know the times and seasons related to the Lord's coming.

1 Concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. 2 For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night (the unprepared suffer unnecessary loss)...4 But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief...6 Therefore...let us watch and be sober. (1 Thes. 5:1-6)

- F. Paul said that we are not in darkness that the Day of the Lord should overtake us as a thief. A thief causes one to suffer loss of things that could have been avoided by watching. The thief motif mostly emphasizes the element of loss that one suffers because of an unexpected coming.

III. FOUR TYPES OF PROPHETIC SIGNS

- A. There are four types of prophetic signs as presented by Jesus.
1. **Sign Events:** signs predicted in Scripture will alert the Church to the timing of His return.
 2. **Sign Trends:** in society and creation and will escalate and thus signal the final generation.
 3. **Cosmic Signs:** highly unusual phenomena will happen in the sky, this even includes weather
 4. **Personal Signs:** subjective prophetic experiences will alert believers to the End-Times.

NOTE: We do not put undue focus on these because they are subjective and fallible.

IV. COMMON LIES AGAINST KNOWING THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES

- A. Lie #1: we cannot understand End-Time Scriptures or the signs of the times. Actually, Scripture was written to be understood by all. The majority of people throughout history have been uneducated.
- B. Lie #2: some think that understanding the End-Times will minimize the work of the Kingdom.
- C. Lie #3: since we are not able to know the day or hour of Jesus' return, we should not try to know the times and seasons or the signs of the generation in which Jesus returns. The truth is that the Scripture requires those in the generation the Lord returns to know it and prepare accordingly. Jesus and Paul emphasized the know-ability of the prophetic signs of the End-Times (Mt. 24:32-34; Lk. 21:25-29; 1 Thes. 5:1-6; 2 Thes. 2:1-11).

- D. Lie #4: every generation believed they were the last one. It is probably true that a very small number (less than 1%) in each generation believed this. In only one generation has the majority of God's people believed in a sustained way (for decades) that we will see Jesus' return. Some in history spoke of the End-Times when a great crisis occurred (but the emphasis was temporary). There was Millennial fervor for a short time just before 1,000 AD but it was not sustained.

V. JESUS' PRIMARY MOTIVE IN TEACHING END-TIMES

- A. Jesus' primary purpose for teaching on the subject of his return was three-fold.
1. To inspire faith, hope and love.
 2. To empower the Church with perseverance even when under pressure.
 3. To mature wholehearted love in the Church.

VI. HOW TO STUDY THE END-TIMES.

- A. Cultivating understanding regarding the Signs of the End-Times comes through ardent systematic study of God's word within a context of prayer, fasting and consistent fellowship with other believers.
- B. In my weekly schedule I have my 'end-times bible study day'. It is this day that I focus on a chapter from the bible that focuses on the return of Jesus (150+ chapters). With each chapter I do the following:
1. **Remember.** Jesus wants us to understand the Signs of the Times or he would have never told us about it nor placed such emphasis on it. This tells me of his love for me.
 2. **Focus.** As part of the love gift you give Jesus, cultivate a lifestyle that develops deep understanding of the person of Christ, not just topics about him. This is about loving Christ, not about filling our brains full of head knowledge.
 3. **Read.** Set a reading schedule for yourself that the word of God would penetrate and soften your heart.
 4. **Pray.** Set a prayer schedule that includes a weekly routine of time spent alone with Jesus. As you prayer read the Word of God, ask Holy Spirit to open your understanding of what you are reading. Write down the impressions you hear and check them later against the Word of God.
 5. **Fast.** Create a weekly routine of fasting, choosing to purposely govern your lifestyle choices as a further love gift to Jesus.

6. **Record.** I write down my thoughts and impressions and prepare them to share with others.
7. **Share.** I take that which I am seeing or is touching my heart and share it with others asking them questions to seek their input and feedback.