

Why Understanding the Biblical View of the End Times is Important

I. THE GENERATION THE LORD RETURNS

- A. ***Unique dynamics:*** The generation that Jesus returns has very unique dynamics—unprecedented pressures (shaking, sin, and darkness) and an unprecedented outpouring of the Spirit and revival.
²For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and deep darkness the people; but the Lord will arise over you, and His glory will be seen upon you. (Isa. 60:2).
⁶For thus says the Lord of hosts: “...I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land; ⁷and I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations [Jesus], and I will fill this temple with glory... ⁸The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine,” says the Lord... (Hag 2:6-8)
- B. ***Theological considerations:*** Scripture highlights one generation *much more* than all the others. There are over **150 chapters in the Bible** in which God’s plan for the end-times is the main focus. See <http://mikebickle.org/resources/resource/2888> for a list of these. There has been a partial fulfillment of some of these chapters—we await the complete fulfillment at the end of the age.
- C. ***Prophetic considerations:*** The biblical signs of the times include events and trends predicted in Scripture that alert us to the timing of Jesus’ return. Jesus identified **17 trends** that indicate the generation of His return (Mt. 24:4-14; Lk. 21:11, 25); they include ***deception/distortion of truth*** (24:4-5, 11), ***wars and ethnic conflict*** (24:7), ***famines, pestilences, and earthquakes*** (24:8), ***hostility toward believers*** (24:9), ***relational breakdown in society*** (24:10), and ***lawlessness*** (24:12).
- D. Now, for the first time, most of these trends are increasing and making headline news on a global level. Most of the trends that *will be seen in fullness* at the time of Jesus’ return are *increasing now*.
- E. ***State of Israel:*** Two of most striking events in biblical prophecy are the return of the Jewish people to their ancient land to establish the ***state of Israel*** in 1948 and to gain control of ***Jerusalem*** in 1967 (Joel 3:2, 12; Zech. 12:3, 6; 14:2; Lk. 21:24). This end-time sign is dramatic and convincing.
⁸In the latter years you [Antichrist] will come into the land of those [Israel]...gathered from many people [nations] on the mountains of Israel, which had long been desolate. (Ezek. 38:8)
- F. ***Gospel preached to all nations:*** Jesus connected the timing of His return to the preaching of the gospel to all nations—there are 3,300 people groups (Mt. 24:14). Leading mission leaders predict that the gospel will be preached to every people group by 2020. God promised to pour out His Spirit on all believers (Acts 2:17-21). The increase of the number of believers with “charismatic” theology and experience has grown from *one million* (1920) to *60 million* (1970) to over *600 million* today.
¹⁴This gospel...will be preached...to all the nations [ethnos] and then the end will come. (Mt. 24:14)
- G. ***Understanding of God’s end-time plans:*** The Lord will raise up “people of understanding,” who will make known to “many” the events and trends prophesied in Scripture related to the end times (Dan. 11:33; cf. Jer. 23:20; 30:24; Ps. 47:7). “Many” will be hungry for answers from God’s Word.
³³And those of the people who understand shall instruct many. (Dan. 11:33)

II. THE COMMAND TO KNOW THE GENERATION (MT. 24:33)

- A. Jesus *commanded* one generation of believers to “*know*” that His return was near—the generation that is alive when *all* the signs that He prophesied in Matthew 24 come to pass. Some confuse not being able to know the day and hour (24:36) with not being able to know the generation (24:34). The Lord clarified that a generation in the Scripture may last up to 100 years (Gen. 15:13-16).

³³...when you see all these things, know that it is near—at the doors! ³⁴...this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place... ³⁶Of that day and hour no one knows... (Mt 24:33-36)

- B. *Pastoral considerations*: Forerunner messengers are to equip people to *stand strong* so that they will not be *fearful*, *offended* at God's leadership, *deceived* by the enemy, overcome by *compromise* (as lust greatly increases in the culture), or *confused* by where things are going in the nations.

³Let no one deceive you by any means for that Day [the Lord's return] will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin [Antichrist] is revealed... (2 Thes. 2:3)

III. OVERCOMING COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS

- A. *Misconception #1*: Since we are not able to know the day or hour of His return, God's people living in the generation in which He returns cannot know it. Scripture emphasizes the know-ability of the generation of His return (Mt. 24:32-34; Lk. 19:42-44; 21:25-29; 1 Thes. 5:1-6; 2 Thes. 2:1-11).
- B. *Misconception #2*: Studying the end-time Scriptures causes us to minimize our work in the kingdom. There is an escapist mentality embraced by some who teach the pretribulation rapture.
- C. *Misconception #3*: No one can understand end-time prophecy—it's too complicated, so why try?
- D. *Misconception #4*: Every generation believed they were the last one. *The fact* is that the believers in the first century were the *only* generation in which a *majority* of God's people believed in a sustained way (for decades) that they might see the return of Jesus in their lifetime.

IV. MY PERSONAL JOURNEY

- A. In September 1982, the Lord spoke to me in Cairo, Egypt, about radical change coming, saying, “*I will change the understanding and expression of Christianity in the earth in one generation.*”
- B. On May 7, 1997, in Assisi, Italy, the Lord said, “*I will raise up ‘friend-of-the-Bridegroom’ forerunner messengers*” who will proclaim Jesus as Bridegroom, King, and Judge (Jn. 3:29).
- C. On September 17, 1997, during a prayer meeting, the Spirit highlighted Isaiah 63:1-6 to me.

¹Who is this who comes from Edom, with dyed garments...this One who is glorious in His apparel, traveling in the greatness of His strength?—“I [Jesus] who speak in righteousness, mighty to save.” ²Why is Your apparel red, and Your garments like one who treads in the winepress? ³“I have trodden the winepress alone, and from the peoples no one was with Me. For I have trodden them in My anger...their blood is sprinkled upon My garments, and I have stained all My robes. ⁴For the day of vengeance is in My heart....” (Isa. 63:1-4)