

Introduction To The Signs Of The Times

I. Can We Know The Signs of the Times?

- a. God gives signs so that we will have clarity concerning what He is about to do on the earth, so that we can fully participate with Him. In general, signs point to something that is more significant than the sign itself. The Biblical signs of the times are always meant to point us to the coming King, but they also function as significant end-time mile markers and important timing indicators. God wants us to be informed about what He is doing, we have an important role to play in the end times.

(Amos 3:6-7 NASB), “If a trumpet is blown in a city, will the people not tremble? If a disaster occurs in a city, has the Lord not brought it about? 7 Certainly the Lord God does nothing unless He reveals His secret plan to His servants the prophets.”

- b. Even though Old Testament Prophets foretold of Jesus’ first coming (***Jeremiah 23:5-6, Isaiah 7:14***), the religious leaders of His day were unable to discern the signs of the times. Jesus rebuked those leaders for not being able to understand the significance of the hour that they were living in. They couldn’t discern the signs of the times, not because God didn’t give them signs, but because they overlooked those signs.

(Matthew 16:1-3 NASB), “The Pharisees and Sadducees came up, and putting Jesus to the test, they asked Him to show them a sign from heaven. 2 But He replied to them, “When it is evening, you say, ‘It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.’ 3 And in the morning, ‘There will be a storm today, for the sky is red and threatening.’ You know how to discern the appearance of the sky, but are you unable to discern the signs of the times?”

- c. Though the religious leaders of His day were unable to discern the signs of the times, there were some who were eager and expectant for the coming of the Messiah:
 - i. ***The Magi (Matthew 2:1-12)*** – A group of Babylonian astrologers came to visit Jesus when He was born. How did they know when He’d be born and where they should go? They discerned the times and seasons through Biblical signs in the Old Testament.

(Matthew 2:2 NASB), “Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him”

1. Hundreds of years before the birth of Jesus, the Angel Gabriel told Daniel (the highest ranking Wiseman [Magi] in Babylon) that from the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem, it would be 483 years until the Messiah was “cut off” (killed). The other Magi began to “fear the God of Daniel” as Daniel taught them the scriptures and prophecies.
2. With this prophetic knowledge, the Magi could have easily counted forward to determine the time when the Messiah would be “cut off”. They also would have known from the Hebrew Scriptures that service as a priest started at the age of 30 (***Numbers 4:43***), and that God promised He would raise up a faithful priest (***1 Samuel 2:35***). They simply had to count back 30+ years from Daniel’s prophesied date to have an approximate time of His birth.
3. For over 500 years the Babylonian Magi would have taught the details of this prophecy with anticipation and expectation. So the Magi who went to visit Jesus in Matthew 2, not only had an approximate time of His birth, but were also awaiting

the prophesied “star” (*Numbers 24:17*). The Magi were skilled in watching the stars. Once they saw the prophesied star they knew, the Messiah had been born.

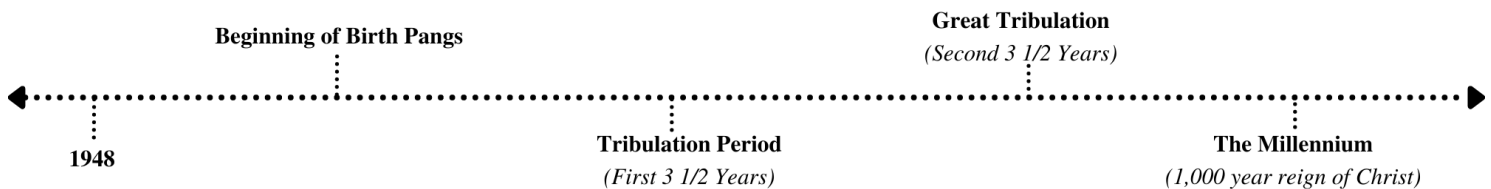
- d. When Jesus taught on the signs of the end of the age, He instructed His followers to discerning of those times. As the people of God, especially if we have roles of leadership & influence in the body of Christ, we cannot be like the religious leaders in Jesus’ day and miss what God is about to do. By learning the signs of the times, we can recognize the nearness of the return of Jesus so that we can be prepared to partner with Him as He shakes everything that hinders love.

(Matthew 24:32-33 NASB), “Now learn the parable from the fig tree: as soon as its branch has become tender and sprouts its leaves, you know that summer is near; 33 so you too, when you see all these things, recognize that He is near, right at the door.”

- e. Not only can we know the times and season of His return, we’re commissioned to do so. The Magi had been preparing for the first coming for 500 years and had a gift to offer the Messiah. With over 150 chapters devoted to the end times God has given us much clarity concerning the times and season of His second coming. Will we have a gift prepared to offer the coming King?

II. Prophetic Time Frames

- a. The Bible categorizes 4 main distinct time frames or “seasons” related to the end times. The last 7 years of this age is made up of 2 distinct times periods that each last 3 ½ years. Each season has signs that serve as indicators of that time period. Some signs overlap from one time period to the next.



- b. Beginning of Birth Pangs – This period is the first of the 4 time frames. This period of time lasts significantly longer than the other two time frames before the millennium. This period will last for several decades. I believe that we’re in this time period right now. See (*Matthew 24:5-28; Mark 13:5-37; Luke 21:8-36*).
- c. Tribulation, first 3 ½ Years – After the chaos of the “Beginning of Birth Pangs” we move to the “increased birth pangs”, which are described as a time of peace and safety. This period of time will not be characterized by peace and safety for believers, but God will protect and provide for believers in the midst of the tribulation. The antichrist will rise to power in the season, promote peace in the Middle East, but begin the intense persecution of believers. There will be a great falling away of the faith in this hour as the influence of the Antichrist and the Harlot Babylon system arises and pressure increases.
- d. The Great Tribulation, second 3 ½ years – This period of times is the season when judgments recorded in the Book of Revelation are poured out on the antichrist and His empire. The Church will experience the greatest victory as she walks in the greatest amount of power, partnering with God to release His true and righteous judgments.
- e. The Millennium – At the end of the Great Tribulation Jesus returns to the earth, the dead in Christ are raised, then He sends Angels to gather believers from across the earth and catches them up in the sky which begins His royal procession back to Jerusalem. After the royal procession and final war, Jesus takes His throne in Jerusalem and His 1,000 year reign begins. Over a thousand years

there will be peace in nature and across the nations as the earth returns to a garden of Eden-like state. Believers will have resurrected (glorified) bodies, and will have specific roles during the millennium as we long for the throne of the Father to come.

III. 4 Types of Prophetic Signs Of The Times

- a. Sign Events – Sign events are actual events that are predicted in Scripture that serve as indicators of the time frame we are in. Sign events are undeniable fulfillments of Biblical prophecy that will alert the church of the timing of Jesus’ return and stir great faith in them as they prepare for what God is about to do. Sign events include political events, spiritual events, economic, events, and religious events. Some examples of Sign events are: The rebirth of Israel as a nation, the future 10-nation confederation, the abomination of desolations, and the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem.
- b. Sign Trends – Sing trends are like a thread woven through the fabric of the end time drama that will escalate and be signposts to the final generation. Sing Trends can be positive or negative trends. Positive sing trends include: The gospel being preached in all nations, the global prayer movement, and the Church walking in power, purity, and unity, while standing with Israel despite pressure and persecution. Negative sign trends include: the increase of sin, famines, worldwide persecution of believers, and a great falling away.
- c. Cosmic Sings (Signs in the Heavens) – There will be dramatic sings in the heavens that are predicted by scripture. These sings will display the power and sovereignty of God and will build great faith among believers while causing the unrighteous to increase in fear. These unusual sings will include dramatic weather patterns, but is not limited to that alone. Some examples are; stars falling from heaven, the sun being darkened, the moon turning to what looks like blood, 100-pound hailstones.
- d. Personal & Corporate Signs – These are subjective prophetic encounters that will alert believers. At the end of the age, believers will operate in the prophetic at a greater level than we’ve ever seen. God will speak to believers through dreams, visions, and circumstances in order to give guidance, and directions to communities of faith. These types of signs are given to alert, encourage, and exhort believers. Because these signs are mostly for the personal edification of a believer, it’s not important to communicate them on a worldwide level.

IV. Significant Signs Related To Israel

- a. As we study the end times and the signs of the times it is essential that we understand that the bible is Israel-centric. God is a man of His word and His promises to Israel will be fulfilled when Jesus comes back. As gentile believers we recognize the privilege of being included in the story, but we cannot forget we’re included in a Jewish story.
- b. Two of the most dramatic and striking events are the return of the Jews to their ancient homeland to ***reestablish the state of Israel***, and also to ***regain control of Jerusalem (Ezekiel 38:8; Joel 3:2, 12; Zechariah 12:3,6; 14:2; Luke 21:24)***. Israel became a nation on May 14, 1948 after being scattered from their land in 70 AD. Israel then regained control of Jerusalem in the Six-Day War in June of 1967.

(Ezekiel 38:8 NASB), “After many days you will be summoned; in the latter years you will come into the land that is restored from the sword, whose inhabitants have been gathered from many nations to the mountains of Israel which had been a continual place of ruins; but its people were brought out from the nations, and they are living securely, all of them.”

(Zechariah 12:6 NASB), “On that day I will make the clans of Judah like a firepot among pieces of wood and a flaming torch among sheaves, so they will consume on the right and on the left all the surrounding peoples, while the inhabitants of Jerusalem again live on their own sites in Jerusalem.”

- i. No other nation besides Israel has ever been exiled from their homeland for more than forty years and returned to rebuild their nation while also continuing their language. Israel was out of their homeland for almost 2,000 years and against all odds, God performed a historical miracle and re-gathered the Jews to Israel. The Bible was clear that this would happen, however many Bible teachers for 1900 years were sure that the re-gathering of Israel was symbolic.
- c. Another dramatic sign event that will take place before the Lord returns is that there will be a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem, with sacrifices according to the Old Testament law. The 2nd temple was destroyed in 70 A.D. (***Matthew 24:15; Mark 13:14; 2 Thessalonians 2:4; Daniel. 9:26-27; 11:31; 12:11***). This is a literal event this is still yet to come and will serve as a clear timing indicator of the signs of the times. There is a growing movement, among Orthodox Jews, to have the temple rebuilt in Jerusalem. When the temple is rebuilt, it will be a huge faith-building event, and sign, that surely He will come soon.

(Matthew 24:15 NASB), “Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place—let the reader understand—“

(2 Thessalonians 2:4 NASB), “who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.”

(Daniel 11:31 NASB), “Forces from him will arise, desecrate the sanctuary fortress, and do away with the regular sacrifice. And they will set up the abomination of desolation.”

- d. The salvation of Israel is one of the most significant signs of the times too. Though the nation of Israel is one of the most hostile toward Jesus now, God will use gentile believers to provoke Israel to salvation (***Romans 11:25-26, Matthew 23:37-39***). As salvation springs up from the ground in Israel we can discern that He is coming soon.

(Romans 11:25-26 NASB), “For I do not want you, brothers and sisters, to be uninformed of this mystery—so that you will not be wise in your own estimation—that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; 26 and so all Israel will be saved...”

(Matthew 23:37-39 NASB), “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who have been sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. 38 Behold, your house is being left to you desolate! 39 For I say to you, from now on you will not see Me until you say, ‘Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord!’”

- i. Messianic Jewish churches are seeing more Jewish people in Israel come to Jesus than at any other time since the first century. There are over 120 Messianic congregations in currently in Israel, consisting of around 12,000 believers. This is an increase of over 500% in the last 10 years. [Statistic from Mike Bickle – Director of the International House of Prayer].

Questions for Discussion

- 1) How do you feel, or what comes to mind when you think about the fact that Jesus WANTS you to know the signs of His return?
- 2) Which is the most intriguing of the 4 end time prophetic time frames: The Beginning of Birth Pangs, The Tribulation, The Great Tribulation, The Millennium?
- 3) Identify a sign event, sign trend, or cosmic sign that the scriptures talk about. What do you think the significance of that sign is?
- 4) Did you realize that Israel and her salvation is at the center of what God is going to do at the end of the age? How do you feel knowing that throughout the end times you have a role to play in provoking Israel to salvation?