

## THE "SIGNS" OF THE TIME

This is how God works! He tells us what is going to happen and then He brings it to pass.

### **Amos 3:7 (NKJV)**

**7** Surely the Lord God does nothing, Unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets.

The ability to KNOW the future and sovereignly CONTROL it is God's glory alone. This is HIS GLORY ALONE that He will not share with any other (Isa. 42:8-9). Want to know about the future? See what God has to say! There is no other source that can give "for sure" insight about the future!

In Matthew 25 Jesus told the parable of the talents. In the parable He illustrated the DELAY of the kingdom by explaining it is like a man leaving on a journey who entrusted to his slaves certain talents. And then Matthew 25:19 says, "After a long time the lord of those servants came...". Note that in the parable there would be a LONG period of DELAY between when the lord was present and when he returned (cf. Mk. 13:34-37; Lk. 19:11-20). This LONG period as seen in further New Testament revelation corresponds essentially to THE CHURCH AGE! This is where we live!

In 1Chronicles 12:32 it says the sons of Issachar "had understanding of the times". This insight enabled them to know what Israel should do. Jesus rebuked the Pharisees and Sadducees for knowing how to predict the weather but not being able to "discern the signs of the times" (Mt. 16:1-3). In Romans Paul said, "knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed." (Rom. 13:11). If Paul KNEW that is was time to be wide awake spiritually 2000 years ago, how much more should we KNOW it now! Paul also said that we are those "upon whom the ends of the ages have come." (1Cor. 10:11).

A key interpretive principle is that the proper understanding of Scripture involves "rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). A PROPER division in Scripture is that Israel is distinct from the Church. If a person messes this up they will NEVER properly understand prophecy.

We need to keep in mind that the Bible makes a distinction between what is termed the “*last days*” in relation to the Church Age and the “*last days*” (The Tribulation Period) in relationship to Israel. The one segues into the other, but they are not the same. We are living in the last days of the Church Age, but not in the last days related to Israel.

Specific dates and signs are given to Israel in regard to the last days; but no specific signposts or dates are given to the Church. The Church began suddenly and signlessly (Acts 2) and it will be completed suddenly (1 Cor. 15:52) and signlessly (Matt. 24:42-44). The Church, including the rapture of the Church, was a total mystery not seen in the OT but rather is exclusively New Testament revelation (cf. 1 Cor. 15:51-58).

However, while no clear DEFINITIVE SIGNPOSTS are given to the Church, we do in general see the Day of Christ’s coming approach as noted in Heb. 10:25. We don’t know how many “last days” of the Church there will be, but we do live in the era of THE END. And therefore, our calling as the CHURCH is to constantly LIVE READY!

But while we as the Church are NOT given definitive signs there are PROPHETIC TRENDS that we see being developed that are ongoing indicators that we are living in the last days of the Church Age. I note THREE OF THEM.

### 1) ON-GOING WAR DESOLATIONS FOR ISRAEL

In Daniel 9:26 God revealed that from the time of temple being destroyed (A.D. 70) and throughout the duration of the GAP PERIOD (between the 69th and 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel) the on-going experience for Israel would be “war desolations”. This continues to be the experience of Israel to this very day. The Bible nailed it! The land of Israel has been ravaged by the Gentiles in one form or another all down through the GAP PERIOD which continues to the present. The ONLY thing that will eventually break this pattern (albeit only for a short time) is the 7-year covenant with Antichrist that Daniel 9:27 goes on to describe. The TREND of war desolations for Israel continues unabated.

### 2) ISRAEL IS BACK IN THE LAND

Israel being back in the land and officially reconstituted as a nation has been called the SUPER SIGN related to the last days. It is HUGE because

the WHOLE of last days prophecy related to Israel swirls around Jerusalem and is built on the fact that Israel is indeed a functioning nation once again re-established back in the land.

### **Ezekiel 38:8 (NKJV)**

**8** After many days you will be visited. In the latter years you will come into the land of those brought back from the sword and gathered from many people on the mountains of Israel, which had long been desolate; they were brought out of the nations, and now all of them dwell safely.

Ezekiel 38-39 deals with the “latter days” (Ezek. 38:16) war in which Israel will be invaded during the Tribulation Period by Gog and Magog. But note that this invasion is preceded by Israel being back in the land as described CLEARLY in a number of ways.

- Those brought back from the sword.
- Gathered from many people on the mountains of Israel, which had long been desolate.
- They were brought out of the nations.

In order for this to be fulfilled Israel had to be restored as a nation and they were in 1948. Today we see Israel back in the land which is a necessary pre-requisite for the fulfillment of last days prophecy. Thus, as we see all kinds of activities and alignments taking shape in relation to Israel we see a very definite TREND related to the times.

### **3) GROWING APOSTASY**

The gospel of Jesus Christ went far and wide during the course of the Church Age at the command of Christ (Mt. 28:18-20). So powerful has this movement been that it became the LARGEST organized religion in the entire world. Sadly, MOST of it is apostate and this is a defining TREND for the end of the Church Age.

Paul’s last words (and last words are important words) are the warning of last days APOSTASY. Paul warned of “last days perilous times” (2 Tim. 3:1) in which professing Christians would have “a form of godliness” but deny its power (2 Tim. 3:5). He said, “evil men and imposters will grow worse and worse” (2 Tim. 3:13). And he said the time would come “when they will not endure sound doctrine” (2 Tim. 4:3). The defining TREND of last days madness in the Church Age is GROWING APOSTASY.

**1 John 2:18–19 (NKJV)**

**18** Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour.

**19** They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.

We know it is the last hour because of the prevailing spirit of antichrist which is a spirit of lawlessness and rebellion against God's truth. Many "antichrists" on the scene are preparing the way for THE ANTICHRIST. And the spirit of antichrist is reflected in APOSTATES who abandon the faith and the fellowship of God's people. This is indicative of "the last hour" that will climax in the coming of Antichrist.

The Church is not given definitive signs or dates, but we are given general TRENDS that are indicative of the end of the ages that will ultimately usher in the last days related to Israel.

Israel is back in the land, war desolations continue, apostasy abounds!

LIVE READY!