

Foundations For A Biblical Approach To The End Times

I. Why Study The End Times

- a. The generation the Lord returns will have unique dynamics as unprecedented pressures (shaking, sin, darkness) collide with an unprecedented outpouring of the Spirit (*Isaiah 60:2*). The most highlighted generation in scripture is the generation of the Lord's return (over 150 chapters are dedicated to the end times). It is imperative that the Church embrace the Biblical narrative of the end-times in order to be better equipped to remain faithful and victorious in the days to come.

(Isaiah 60:2 NASB), “For behold, darkness will cover the earth And deep darkness the peoples; But the Lord will rise upon you And His glory will appear upon you.”

- i. Jesus highlighted four issues that will challenge many people's faith at the end of the age. Fear, Offense, Lust, & Deception (**F-O-L-D**).

(Luke 21:26, 34 NASB), “26 people fainting from fear and the expectation of the things that are coming upon the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken... 34 But be on your guard, so that your hearts will not be weighed down with dissipation (over indulgence in sensual pleasures) and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that this day will not come on you suddenly, like a trap”

(Matthew 24:10-11 NASB), “And at that time many will fall away, and they will betray one another and hate one another (Offense). 11 And many false prophets will rise up and mislead (deceive) many people.

- ii. Scripture teaches that at the end of the age, there will be a massive “falling away”. The combination of escalating fear, offense, lust, and deception will result in believers falling away from the faith (*2 Thessalonians 2:3; 1 Timothy 4:1-2; 2 Timothy 3:1-7; 4:3-5; Hebrew 6:4-6; 10:26-31; 2 Peter 2:1-3, 20-22; 3:17*).

(2 Thessalonians 2:3 NASB), “No one is to deceive you in any way! For it (the return of the Lord) will not come unless the apostasy (Gk. “apostasia” – A desertion or departure from the faith) comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction,”

- b. The book of Revelation promises a blessing to those who read, hear, and keep the words of its prophecy. The Prophet Daniel talked about the people who “know their God” as being strong and carrying out great exploits while having understanding to instruct many in the last days. The point is, there are benefits to studying the end-times. Lets look at four of those benefits:

(Revelation 1:3 NASB), “Blessed is the one who reads, and those who hear the words of the prophecy and keep the things which are written in it; for the time is near.”

(Daniel 11:22-23 NASB), “But the people who know their God will be strong and take action. 33 And those who have insight among the people will give understanding to the many”

- i. We will have confidence in the hour of trial.
 - ii. We will be a people of understanding who prepare others.
 - iii. We will understand the continuity of our labors in this age and the age to come.
 - iv. We will become fascinated with Jesus and His leadership.
- c. God is raising up forerunner messengers who will prepare the way for His return by having a right understanding of God's coming plans and purposes, while declaring in advance what Jesus is about to do. The prophet Isaiah set this forerunner calling in an end-time context when every nation will see the glory of God at His return. John the Baptist's ministry was a prototype and prophetic example of the forerunner calling.

The forerunner message prepares people (through speaking, singing, writing, sharing, social media, acting, etc.) to walk in whole-hearted agreement with Jesus, under any circumstance, on the spiritual highway of holiness and understanding.

(Isaiah 40:3-5 NASB), “The voice of one calling out, “Clear the way for the Lord in the wilderness; Make straight in the desert a highway for our God. 4 Let every valley be lifted up, And every mountain and hill be made low; And let the uneven ground become a plain, And the rugged terrain a broad valley; 5 Then the glory of the Lord will be revealed, And all flesh will see it together; For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”

II. Two Common Objections To Studying The End Times

- a. **Irrelevance** – This common objection is that end-time prophecy is only for the “curious”. There are over 150 chapters that speak about the end of the age (that’s more than the 89 chapters in the Gospels telling of His first coming). Gaining understanding about the end times is a key to preparing the Church to be victorious in the most extreme glory and pressure in history.
 - i. This is often a reaction to the popular belief that most of the end-time events take place after the Church has been removed from the earth. We believe the Bible clearly teaches that the Church will go through Great Tribulation with great victory and power. If a pre-Tribulation Rapture were true, then almost all end-time Scripture would be entirely irrelevant to our lives today.
 - ii. How we choose to live our lives is determined by our theology (What we believe about God). When we think rightly about what is to come, we will be fiercely determined us live whole-hearted in agreement with God right now.
- b. **Difficult To Understand** – This common objection to studying the end times is a belief that end time passages are either too symbolic for the normal reader, or that they are exclusively for Bible scholars to interpret. In truth the end time scriptures are meant to be understood by all of God’s people (*throughout history the Church has mostly been uneducated*). The Bible should be taken literally, at face value. It means what it says and says what it means (*all symbology is to be interpreted by scripture*). If the plain sense makes sense, seek no other sense.
 - i. Scripture requires those alive in the generation of the Lord’s return to know the prophetic signs and to respond appropriately. Both Jesus and Paul emphasized actually knowing the prophetic signs of the end times (***Matthew 24:32-33; Luke 21:25-28***).

(1 Thessalonians 5:1-2, 4-6), “Now as to the periods and times, brothers and sisters, you have no need of anything to be written to you. 2 For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord is coming just like a thief in the night. 4 But you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness, so that the day would overtake you like a thief; 5 for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness; 6 so then, let’s not sleep as others do, but let’s be alert and sober.”

III. Overview of The Generation of The Lord’s Return

- a. God has given common men and women the ability of knowing His mysteries, His will, and the secrets of His heart (***Proverbs 25:2***). Daniel tells us that in the end times, God is going to release understanding of His plans to those who have insight (are wise). Studying the end times is not about intellectual exercise (with a debating spirit), it’s about becoming a people of spiritual insight and understanding.

(Proverbs 25:2 NASB), “It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, But the glory of kings is to search out a matter.”

(Daniel 12:9-10 NASB), “And he said, “Go your way, Daniel, for these words will be kept secret and sealed up until the end time. 10 Many will be purged, cleansed, and refined, but the wicked will act wickedly; and none of the wicked will understand, but those who have insight will understand.”

- b. Though we do not know the day or hour of the Lord’s return, we can know the times, seasons, and generation of His return based on the unfolding of clear biblical signs. God promised to give these prophetic signs, so

that people can make the necessary preparations for what is to come in order to be ready to partner fully with Him without offense.

(Matthew 24:36-44 NASB), “But about that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. 37 For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. 38 For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, 39 and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be. 40 At that time there will be two men in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. 41 Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one will be left. 42 Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming. 43 But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. 44 For this reason you must be ready as well; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will.”

(Matthew 24:32-35 NASB), “32 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 (the signs about which He had spoken earlier), recognize that He is near, right at the door. 34 Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. 35 Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.

(Amos 3:7-8 NASB), “Certainly the Lord GOD does nothing unless He reveals His secret plan To His servants the prophets.”

- i. Jesus rebuked the leaders of Israel for being unable to discern the prophetic signs at His first coming.

(Matthew 16:2-3 NASB), “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?”

(Luke 19:43-44 NASB), “For the days will come upon you when your enemies will put up a barricade against you, and surround you and hem you in on every side, 44 and they will level you to the ground, and throw down your children within you, and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation.”

- c. Jesus taught that there would be one generation in history in which the wheat and the tares would mature together which would culminate in a great harvest (*Matt. 13:24-30*). It will be a day of great fruitfulness for the kingdom and also a day of the fullness of sin and the fullness of Satan’s rage. There are four unique dynamics that will be present in the generation of the Lord’s return that have not been present in any other generation in history:
 - i. The Fullness of God’s Power – The Spirit will be poured upon the Church resulting in an increase of prophetic activity among the Church (*Acts 2*), the Church will also walk in the greater works characterized by the power and authority of Jesus (*John 14:12*), and witness a great harvest of souls (*Revelation 7:9-17*).
 - ii. The Fullness of Sin – Scripture tells us that the last generation will see the greatest demonstration of wickedness and corruption as the fullness of man’s sin is expressed openly (*Daniel 8:23; 12:10; Revelation 9:21; 14:18-19*).
 - iii. The Fullness of Deception – Jesus warned that deception would be one of the enemy’s main strategies at the end of the age. Through the spirit of the antichrist, and false prophets, Satan will deceive many to believe God’s Word is irrelevant, false, or dangerous. Satan’s purpose is to lead humans into compromise (*Matthew 24:4-5; 2 Thessalonians 2:9-10; 1 Timothy 4:1*).

1. There will also be a delusion sent by God. When people reject God and willfully choose a life of compromise over righteousness, God will give them over to what they choose.

(2 Thessalonians 2:10-12 NASB), “and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not accept the love of the truth so as to be saved. 11 For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, 12 in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.”

- iv. The Fullness of Tribulation – Jesus prophesied of a time of unprecedented trouble, hardship, and suffering that would come (He called it “Great Tribulation” in *Matthew 24:21*). This Great Tribulation will be the culmination of; Man’s Sin (*Psalms 2:1-3; Zechariah 14:1-2; Matthew 24:9*), Satan’s Rage (*Daniel 7:21,25; Revelation 12:12-13; 13:1-18*), God’s Judgments (*Isaiah 63:1-6; Revelation 14:10; 15:7*), and Creation’s Groan (*Matthew 24:29; Romans 8:19-22*).

IV. Eschatology Overview

- a. Over the centuries there have been different views on how to approach the book of Revelation and end time prophecies. There are four main approaches to interpreting these scriptures:
 - i. Preterist Approach – Preterists believe that the book of Revelation was fulfilled in first or early second century conditions and was written to bring hope to persecuted believers at that time.
 - ii. Idealist Approach – Idealists set aside all literal, chronological, and predictive issues in order to treat the book as an artistic exposition of the ongoing battle between good and evil. They believe Revelation is a drama that speaks to the longings of the human heart.
 - iii. Historicist Approach – Historicists believe that Revelation contains a prophetic overview of the entire church age. They find fulfillments in past, present, and future events.
 - iv. Futurist Approach – Futurists believe that Revelation’s prophecies are scheduled to occur in the future.
- b. There are also three main views related to the millennium (1,000 year reign of Christ) that interpreters may hold to:
 - i. Amillennialists (no-millennialists) – A figurative interpretation of Revelation 20 that was popularized after the 5th century. The “millennium”, a spiritual kingdom characterized by Christ’s reign began with the resurrection and will continue to expand on earth until Christ’s return.
 - ii. Postmillennialists – The second coming will follow the Christianization of the whole world and the rise of a “Christian golden age”.
 - iii. Premillennialists – A literal millennial age following Christ’s return.
 - 1. Historical Premillennialism – The rapture of the Church takes place after the Great Tribulation
 - 2. Dispensational Premillennialism – The rapture of the Church takes place before the Great Tribulation
- c. The leadership team of the Pueblo Incense House of Prayer holds to a Historic premillennialist view with a victorious Church. We believe the scriptures clearly teach of a literal second coming of Christ at the end of this age where He will reign over the nations in His millennial kingdom. The Bible is clear that the Church will go through the Great Tribulation in great power and victory as a mature bride that is in whole-hearted agreement with the end time battle plans of God. The Great Tribulation will be the darkest hour of history but the finest hour for the Church.