

Why We Value Understanding the Biblical View of the End Times

I. THE GENERATION OF THE LORD'S RETURN

A. The primary calling of each ministry is to ***build the church*** and engage in the ***Great Commission*** (Mt. 16:18; 28:19). The Lord gives specific assignments related to this primary calling. Ours includes: 1) Keeping a 24/7 sanctuary of prayer with worship; 2) Calling people to intimacy with Jesus as our Bridegroom God and to the First Commandment; 3) Raising up messengers to prepare others for the unique dynamics of God's end-time plan; 4) Serving God's purposes for Israel.

B. ***Unique dynamics:*** The generation of Jesus' return will have 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]..." (Hag. 2:6-7)

C. There will be *more people* on earth than at any time in history (and, arguably, more of God's people on earth than in heaven, due to the harvest). It is the *most described* generation in the Word of God and is unique in being the generation that God will use to *transition planet earth* to the age to come.

D. ***Theological reasons:*** Scripture highlights this one generation *much more* than all the others. God's plan related to the generation the Lord returns is the main focus in over ***150 chapters in the Bible***. See mikebickle.org/resources/resource/2888 for a list of these chapters. Some of the prophecies in these chapters have been partially fulfilled, but await a complete fulfillment related to Jesus' return.

E. People must understand the *biblical narrative* for what will happen and why it will happen, or they will be left, by default, to embrace a secular narrative. Only through a biblical narrative will God's people be able to process the pressures in a way that helps them to grow in love and hope in God.

F. ***Pastoral reasons:*** The Lord's messengers are to equip people to stand strong so that they will not be overcome with *fear* or *compromise* (as lust greatly increases in the culture), nor be *offended* by people and especially by God's leadership, nor be *deceived* by the false voices in the culture.

²⁶...men's hearts failing them from fear...³⁴Take heed...lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing [immorality], drunkenness...and that Day come on you unexpectedly. (Lk. 21:26, 34)

¹⁰Then many will be offended...¹¹Many false prophets [reformers] will rise up and deceive many. (Mt. 24:10-11)

G. The combination of fear, offense, deception will result in believers falling away from the faith.

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)

³...knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days... (2 Pet. 3:3)

- H. ***Understanding God's end-time plans:*** The Lord promised to raise up “people of understanding” who will help others understand the biblical narrative related to the end times (Dan. 11:33). This promise is available to all believers. “Many” will be hungry for answers from God’s Word.

²⁰The anger of the LORD will not turn back until He has executed and performed the thoughts of His heart. In the latter days you will understand it perfectly. (Jer. 23:20)

³³And those of the people who understand shall instruct many. (Dan. 11:33)

- I. ***Prophetic reasons:*** The biblical signs of the times include events and trends that are predicted in Scripture. Jesus, the NT apostles, and the OT prophets all prophesied signs of the times; these signs alert God’s people who are alive in the generation of His return that His return is imminent. Jesus identified 17 trends that indicate the generation of His return (Mt. 24:4-14; Lk. 21:11, 25). Now, for the first time in history, most of these are increasing and making headline news on a global level.

- J. ***Gospel preached to all nations:*** Jesus connected the timing of His return to the preaching of the gospel to all nations (Mt. 24:14). Prominent missions leaders say that the gospel will be preached in all 12,000 ethnic or people groups by 2020. God promised to pour out His Spirit on all believers (Acts 2:17-21). The number of believers with “charismatic” theology and experience has grown in the last 100 years from about 1 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)

- K. ***Israel and Jerusalem:*** Two of the most striking fulfilments of prophecy are the return of the Jewish people to their ancient land to establish the state of Israel in 1948 and re-gaining control over all Jerusalem in 1967 (Isa. 11:11-12; 43:5-6; 66:8; Ezek. 20:34; 38:8; Joel 3:12; Zech. 12:3, 6; 14:2).

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

- A. Jesus commanded one generation of believers to “know” that His return was near—His command was for the generation that would be alive when all the signs He prophesied in Matthew 24:5-15 come to pass. The Lord indicated that a generation may last up to 100 years (Gen. 15:13-16).

³³When 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. When “all” these signs accelerate at the same time, God’s people are to know that they are living in the generation of His return. The first mention of “all of these things” (24:33) refers to the signs of the times before the Great Tribulation (Mt. 24:5-15). The second mention of “all of these things” (24:34) refers to what occurs after the Great Tribulation, at the time of Jesus’ return (Mt. 24:29-31).

- C. ***Misconception*s:** Some say that since no one knows the day or hour of Jesus' return, God's people alive in the generation of His return cannot know His return is near. However, Scripture emphasizes this generation can be identified (Mt. 24:32-34; Lk. 19:42-44; 21:25-29; 1 Thes. 5:1-6; 2 Thes. 2:1-11). 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.