

I. INTRODUCTION

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen." (Mt. 28:19-20)

- A. The Church is at critical juncture in history. Both positive and negative sign trends are emerging in the nations of the earth. God has a very definite plan to the disciple the nations of the earth. He has a very specific strategy in His heart concerning His purpose to disciple the nations to love Him. The redeemed are a central part of His plan.
- B. Throughout Scripture and Church history, there were men and women who had radical encounters with God that would change the trajectory of their lives forever. The revelation of Jesus pierced their hearts, a divine wounding occurred, and drastically altered the way they lived their lives to be radically oriented around God's purposes in their generation.

"For David...served the purpose of God in his own generation..." (Acts 13:36)

II. A TRANSITIONAL GENERATION

- A. Matthew 23-25 is Jesus' roadmap to the massive transition that will take place on earth and in the Church, prior to His return.
- B. During a transitional generation, God moves with power and revelation, in an accelerated focused manner, to accomplish His divine purposes in that generation. Transitional generations are usually marked by great outpourings of the Holy Spirit, accompanied by great conflict in the nations and leadership of the earth.
- C. To those living in a transitional generation, lines were drawn in the sand. If they did not radically reorient their lives (time, money, energy, resources, family, etc.) around God's purposes in the transitional generation, they would suffer great loss. In many instances it was even a matter of life and death.

24 "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. 26 And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. 27 And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it." (Matt. 7:24-27)

- D. Every generation will be held accountable to how they discerned and *responded* to the word of the Lord in their generation. Did they follow Jesus' leadership and drastically reorient their lives around the purposes the Father wanted to accomplish in their generation for His glory?

- E. Jesus, in love, rebuked the Pharisees for not understanding the signs of the times of which they lived and emphasized the responsibility to hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church. It is not enough to merely live by biblical principles on the fringes of a religious system, without being connected to a clear understanding of the season we live in.

56 You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky, but why do you not know how to interpret the present time? (Luke 12:56)

"Take care then how you hear, for to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he thinks he has will be taken away." (Luke 8:18)

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." (Rev.2:7)

- F. Jesus declared that there will be *one generation* on the earth that will witness all of the sign trends spoken of in Matthew 24, and that this one generation "***will by no means pass away***" (Mt. 24:34) until Jesus physically returns to the earth at the Second Coming.

III. SIGN TRENDS OF THE GENERATION OF THE LORD'S RETURN

- A. Jesus gave ***12 negative sign trends*** that bring distress to the nations and indicate the generation of His return (Mt. 24:4-14; Lk. 21:11, 25). Matthew described nine and Luke added three more (fearful sights, signs in the sky affecting the sun, moon and stars, and disturbances in the sea).
- B. The 12 negative sign trends that bring distress to the nations are ***deception*** and false prophets (Mt. 24:4-5, 11, 24), ***ethnic conflict*** (Mt. 24:7), ***economic warfare*** (Mt. 24:7), ***famines, pestilences***, and ***earthquakes*** (Mt. 24:8), ***hatred of believers*** (Mt. 24:9), ***relational breakdown*** in society (Mt. 24:10), ***lawlessness (violence and immorality)*** causing love to grow cold (Mt. 24:12), ***fearful sights*** (Lk. 21:11), signs in the ***sky*** and disturbances in the ***sea*** (Lk. 21:11, 25).
- C. In Mathew 23-24, Jesus spoke of two requirements that must come to pass before His return.
1. ***Fulfillment of the Great Commission (Matthew 24:14)*** - the Call2All missions summits: the leaders of the world's largest missions organizations estimate that, for the first time in the history of the church, we are approaching the fulfillment of the Great Commission. By their calculations, this is a very real probability within the next 15-20 years.
 2. ***The Salvation of Israel (Mt. 23:37-39)*** - Jesus will not return until the Jewish people declare "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord." Israel will respond to the beauty of Jesus! God's plans are directly tied to Israel loving His Son Jesus. This means *your* plans are directly tied to Israel as well.
 3. Two major events that impacted end-time prophecy related to Israel:

- a. ***The establishment of the state of Israel (1948)*** - The state of Israel had to be reestablished to fulfill many end-time prophecies related to Jerusalem. Israel was scattered to the nations in AD 70. On May 14, 1948, Israel became a nation in one day after almost 2,000 years without a homeland. (Is. 66:8)

(1) No end-time sign event is more dramatic or convincing than the return of Israel to her homeland. Ten years before Israel became a nation, it would have seemed impossible to anyone. Suddenly, out of the burning ashes of the Holocaust, Israel became a nation. Over 5 million Israelites are back in their homeland, making it the largest return to Israel, surpassing the exodus from Egypt.

- b. ***The City of Jerusalem under control of the Jewish people (1967)*** - Jerusalem being under the control of the State of Israel fulfills many biblical OT prophecies (Joel 3:1-2; Zech. 12:3; 14:2; Lk. 21:24). For the first time in 2,000 years, the Jewish people gained control of Jerusalem as a result of the Six Day War in June 1967.

(1) God's end-times purposes are tied directly to Israel. These events which fulfilled biblical prophecy are of the utmost importance. Something shifted on God's "prophetic timetable" when these events occurred. Watch and wait!

- D. ***The Bridal revelation of Jesus operating in the Church*** - The Spirit and the Bride say come Lord Jesus! (Rev. 22:17-20; Jn. 3:29)
- E. ***The End-Time Prayer Movement*** - the "incense ministry" arising throughout the earth (Mal. 1:11), restoration of the tabernacle of David (Amos 9:11; Acts 15:16-17), identity of the redeemed as a house of prayer (how the redeemed will operate in the Spirit) (Is. 56:7; Lk. 18).
- F. ***Globalization*** - the end of the age will have a global expression of political, cultural, technological, and economic systems that will affect the entire earth as one false world religion is established during the Antichrist's reign.

Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. (Matthew 24:34)

- G. Jesus declared that there will be only ***one generation*** who witnesses all these trends and events occurring at the same time, increasing in severity and frequency. This is the only generation in which it has been possible to see the fulfillment of all the sign trends, events, and prophecies mentioned. Jesus ***commanded*** believers in that final generation to ***know*** that His coming was near.

- H. It is this *one generation* that will witness the unique dynamics of the full expression of man's wickedness, Satan's rage, and God's righteous judgments on earth in partnership with the Bride, culminating in the physical return of the God Man, Jesus Christ to wage war against the ungodly and establish His Millennial reign. This will be the victorious Church's finest hour.
- I. God will use the least severe means possible to reach the greatest amount of people at the deepest level of love in the generation of the Lord's return. Humanity will be confronted with the pre-eminent beauty, glory, and terror of the LORD as the only worthy to take the reigns of leadership on earth (Is. 2; Rev. 5).
- J. The scoffing spirit is the Church's greatest enemy to understanding the hour.

"...scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. 4 They will say, "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation." 5 For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, 6 and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished...." (2 Pt. 3:3-10)

IV. NEW WINESKINS IN TRANSITIONAL GENERATIONS

- A. During transitional generations, the Spirit would raise up new wineskins--forerunners--whose lifestyles embody the lifestyle and message of what God was going to release in their generation. They were a prophetic signpost to their generation of the coming shifting in the seasons and a change in how God would relate to His people. This was God's "mercy strategy" to His people.
- B. The Father so cherishes partnership with humanity that He chooses to announce coming transitions in His redemptive story to weak vessels in the wilderness of prayer, fasting, and intimacy with God. When these weak vessels intentionally respond to God, living life by His value system, they become the embodiment of the transition itself, i.e. John the Baptist.
- C. Forerunners come ahead of the transition as prophetic voices to prepare the earth and God's people to reorient their lives to be found in agreement with God and His purposes when the transition begins to unfold. They proclaim the Gospel of repentance and salvation, and warn the earth of the coming of Jesus as Bridegroom, King, Judge, and High Priest.
- D. To be a voice requires a lifestyle -- there is abandonment to God in lifestyles of prayer, fasting, and going deep in the knowledge of God now that will prepare us, to prepare others, to prepare nations in that day.
- E. Examples of new wineskins in transitional generations:
 - 1. Noah

- a. ***"By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith." (Heb. 11:7)***
 2. John the Baptist
 - a. ***"...a voice of one crying in the wilderness" of prayer, fasting, encountering God, "preparing the way of the Lord". Jesus said John was "more than a prophet" (Mt. 11:9)***
 3. The Apostles and the early church
 - a. ***"...they devoted themselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word." (Acts 6:4) ... "they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and...prayer." (Acts:2:42-47)***
- F. The Father took these forerunners and trained them in His nature, character, and wisdom in the context of "the wilderness", standing in the council of the Lord and hearing His voice. All resistance must be removed from new wineskins. They emerge from this place with clarity, cleansed from:
1. The fear of man -- by receiving the fear of the Lord (Ps. 19)
 2. Independence and self-reliance -- by cultivating weakness and dependance upon God (Song of Songs 8:5; Mt.5)
 3. Selfish ambition and desire for fame -- by walking in humility and meekness.
 4. The seduction of the spirit of the age -- by being filled with the eternal pleasures of God
 5. The Orphan Spirit -- by an encounter with the infinite fatherliness of God
- G. The predominant fight in the generation of the Lord's return will be for the influence of the heart. The prayer movement will emerge as a processional of incense in every place, as forerunners will stand and declare, from the place of encounter, that Jesus is the only worthy One deserving of worship.

"Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. 3 He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power." (Hebrews 1:1-3)