

ET 01 **From CHRIST to ETERNITY –**

“5 Reasons to Study End Times”

For two thousand years, students of the Bible have pondered the teachings of JESUS along with those of OLD and NEW Testament writers, concerning what is generally referred to as END TIMES! Here we are talking about a specific series of events that the Bible teaches will bring the present Age to an end and establish the physical, visible REIGN OF CHRIST upon the Earth.

Many have tried over the centuries, to pin point the exact time, the specific events and even the people involved in fulfilment of these prophecies, but this has proved to be an unprofitable, unnecessary and even confusing exercise.

While it is true that the Bible does give certain SIGNS which must precede the Lord's return (*and we'll be looking at some of these soon*), we must be careful not to try to guess at God's exact timetable and become dogmatic about details!

Jesus Himself said of this time, [Mat 24:36-39]

"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be."

Some Churches have chosen to **avoid** this area of BIBLICAL TEACHING for a range of reasons:

- Some have done this, at least in part, because of **patently wrong claims** made by over-zealous Christians especially over the last Century
- Some say it is **too hard to understand**
- Others say **it doesn't matter**
- Still others have tried to **avoid possible controversy** because of differing interpretations.

However, as you will see during the series we are about to enter, reference to END TIMES events is found in a very **significant number of places** in the Scriptures and to avoid study of this area of teaching is simply **to deny the full counsel of the word of God!**

So today, as we start to consider the Bible's teaching with regard to Future events, I want to share with you a simple message titled, "5 REASONS TO STUDY END TIMES"

Reason 1: The Sheer Volume of Prophecy yet to be fulfilled

Some conservative estimates suggest that at least 1/4 of all SCRIPTURE is PROPHECY.

- In the OLD Testament alone, there are over 330 (333) prophecies concerning Christ and more than 1/2 of these are yet to be fulfilled.
- One source suggests that 1 in every 25 vs of N.T. refer directly to the SECOND COMING.

READ: 1 Thess. (end of each Chapter)

THIS IS A MAJOR THEME OF SCRIPTURE!

Reason 2: God says He will FULFIL HIS OWN WORD

READ: Isa. 46: 9-11

2 Pet. 3:3-4; 8-9

Reason 3: We are urged throughout the N.T. to WATCH FOR CHRIST'S COMING.

READ: Matt. 24: 42-44

Phil. 3: 20

**We could also read from Matt. 25: 13;
Luke 12: 35-40; Rom. 8: 23; 1 Cor. 1: 7;
1 Thess. 5:1-11; Heb. 9: 28; James 5: 7-8;
Rev. 16:15**

Reason 4: A Knowledge of Bible PROPHECY can bring both COMFORT AND CHALLENGE for living in the light of Christ's return.

FUNERALS: 1 Thess. 4: 13-18

CHALLENGE: Titus 2:11-14

Reason 5: This last reason is perhaps the most compelling of all. While we do not presume to set times or assign specific meaning to events or people, there are CERTAIN WORLD EVENTS, happening in our own life-time, which are necessary for END TIMES prophecy to be fulfilled. Many students of the Bible refer to these as SIGNS OF THE TIMES.

I want to camp on this area for a few minutes.

SIGN 1: Return of JEWS to that little strip of LAND that has been the most fought over real estate on planet earth

You may ask, "Why is this significant?"

Let me remind you briefly of some of the history of the JEWS and their relationship to that particular area of LAND.

You'll remember that Abraham and his descendants were promised this LAND by God as an ever-lasting possession.

[See Gen 15:18-21; 17:8 and others.]

But, in the year 70 AD, Jerusalem was sacked by the Romans, hundreds of thousands of JEWS were massacred and it seemed this little nation that had been troublesome to the Romans had finally been destroyed.

★ Herod's temple was torn down and those still alive were progressively expelled from the land and forbidden by Roman law from entering Jerusalem again.

★ Minor skirmishes continued for another 60 odd years but with the final desolation of Judah by Rome in the year 135 AD, the whole countryside was in ruins and except for a few scattered families, Israel, as a nation, had ceased to exist!

In one sense, it could be seen as the original “final solution” to the Jewish problem of the 1st Century. In another, it set the conditions for a future restoration which was to become

the clearest and most exciting sign of Christ's imminent return.

Following their exile from the land of Israel, pockets of Jews lived for almost 1900 years outside the Land, scattered among the nations of the world.

During all the time of their long dispersion, the JEWS NEVER GAVE UP THE HOPE of returning to their homeland one day, and generation after generation ended Passover with the dream, “Next year in Jerusalem!”

The land itself over the centuries came under the control of various different people groups and Empires:

Arabs in 8th Century

Crusaders for a brief time in 12th Century, until they were defeated by Saladin in 1187

Marmalukes – 1250 -1517

Ottoman Turks from 1517 until 1917

Now, during the closing years of 19th Century, there had been a stirring among Jews in Europe. The dream of returning to Israel was strong and from among the dreamers, the Zionist movement was formed under the leadership of Theodor Herzl to reclaim what was commonly known as PALESTINE, for the Jewish people.

- By the outbreak of WW 1, it is estimated there were some **80-90,000 Jews** in the land.

It was not until 1917 when **Britain's General Allenby entered Jerusalem**, that things really started to develop that would culminate in the most incredible re-birth of a nation in all human history.

Nov. 2, 1917, British Foreign Secretary Arthur **Balfour** issued this declaration:

“His Majesty’s Government views with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people.”

From the end of WW1, the British controlled the land as a *mandated territory* under the League of Nations

★ The way was hard and changes in British foreign policy in the 1920's and 30's limited progress

★ By the outbreak of WW 2 some 400,000 **Jews** were in the land

★ But it was **NOT UNTIL** in the aftermath of the holocaust in WW 2 that, under a **UNITED NATIONS** plan to partition the land, that Jews started to return to the land in great numbers.

★ 14th May 1948 – Jews declared the establishment of **THE STATE OF ISRAEL** and that same day recognition was given to the “New” nation by USA. (See Isa 66:8)

Their Arab neighbours did not want them and little Israel had to fight against countries much bigger that wanted to get rid of them

★ 15th May, 1948 war broke out!

- ★ 1956
- ★ 1967 – possession of Jerusalem
- ★ 1973
- ★ FIGHTING STILL TODAY

Never in the history of mankind has a nation which has been dispossessed for nearly 2 millennia, hated, hunted and despised, been able to maintain its identity in exile and return so quickly and decisively to their original homeland.

WE SHOULD NOT BE SURPRISED!!

There are many OT prophecies concerning the return of Israel to their homeland

READ: Isa. 43:5-6

Ezek. 11:16-17

Ezek. 36: 24

Isa. 11: 11-12

Hosea 3: 4-5

Zech. 8: 7-8

Now the fullness of restoration has NOT YET taken place.

Israel is in the LAND but not yet right with God. That will come at the end section of the time described as the GREAT TRIBULATION

READ: Jer. 31: 35-37 [See also vv 31-34]

Why is this so significant in a study on END TIMES?

1. **God is NOT finished with the Nation of Israel**
READ: Rom. 11: 2-5, 25-27
2. **Israel is pictured as being in the land just before the Second Coming of Christ**
READ: Matt 24:15-27
3. **Prophecy concerning the time of the end requires the building of a 3rd TEMPLE in Jerusalem**

READ: Dan. 9: 27

Sacrifice required a TEMPLE

READ: 2 Thess. 2: 4

Antichrist stands in the TEMPLE

READ: Matt. 24: 15

Abomination in the TEMPLE

The re-formed nation of Israel back in the land is the most significant SIGN of the approach of the END TIMES

In Israel itself:

- The call for a new TEMPLE has come from the YESHIVA (Jewish rabbinic training school)
- Plans have been drawn up to build the Temple and materials including blocks have been prepared
- Temple furniture, implements and Priestly clothes have been prepared
- A HERD OF RED HEIFER has been prepared for sacrifice for ritual cleansing of such a temple

These are all incredible details concerning the future of Israel.

There are OTHER SIGNS

SIGN 2: KNOWLEDGE will INCREASE

READ: Daniel 12: 4

When? Time of the END

What? Travel increasing KNOWLEDGE?

SIGN 3: APOSTASY will INCREASE

READ: Matt. 24: 4-5; 1Tim. 4: 1

SIGN 4: MORAL DECLINE

READ: 2 Tim. 3: 1-5

SIGN 5: SEXUAL IMMORALITY/VIOLENCE

READ: Luke 17: 26-30

[Compare with Gen. 13: 13; 19: 5, Jude 1: 7, Gen. 6: 5, 11]

SIGN 6: The QUEST for WORLD PEACE

At Brussels in May, 1989, NATO leaders ended their summit with a challenge to the Soviet bloc to “*create a new political order in Europe.*” They went on to say. “*We want to overcome the painful division of Europe, which we have never accepted. We want to move beyond the post-war period.....we seek to shape a new world order of peace in Europe.*”

At the United Nations Assembly in December, 1988, Mikhail Gorbachev called for ‘*a New World Order for the 21st Century.*’

‘One of the most convincing arguments in favour of the creation of a **One World Government** has been that the governments of individual nations are no longer able to deal with the growing number of problems that have become **global in scale ...**’

We could go on to speak of

★ **WARS**

★ **FAMINE**

★ **EARTHQUAKES**

★ **WEATHER CHANGES**

And other more general signs which the Lord calls “**the beginning of birth pangs**”

What can we take from this message?

1. God has made **PROPHECY** a very significant part of the Bible
2. God says **HE WILL FULFIL HIS OWN WORD**
3. We are urged throughout the N.T. to **WATCH FOR CHRIST’S COMING**
4. We receive **COMFORT AND CHALLENGE** from the reality that Jesus is coming again and we need to be ready
5. **WORLD EVENTS** point us to End Times possibilities