

Knowing the Signs of the Times

INTRODUCTION

Matthew 24:5-8 is the first passage we'll be looking at. Well, in this conference, our real emphasis has been to call you to the real heart of Jesus—that you would be fascinated with Jesus, and that you would have a new resolve and a new confidence to grow in intimacy with Him and to know who you are in Christ. But we want to spend a little time in each of our conferences giving some understanding about the end times.

This is my conviction; I believe this: There are people in this room, many of you actually, who will see the coming of the Lord in your lifetime. I believe that with all my heart. I'm going to give you some of the reasons why I believe that. My goal and desire in doing that is that you would be able to give these answers to other people as well.

JESUS COMMANDS US TO KNOW THE GENERATION

Now, I don't know the day or the hour. The Scripture makes it clear that we don't know the day or the hour, but I'm going to point out in a minute that not only can we know the generation—now, listen carefully—but Jesus actually commands us to know the generation. Some folks hear the teaching about the end times and say, “Wow, that's neat. We might be able to know.”

I say, “No, it's not an option. If we're in that generation, we are commanded to see the signs and actually to have confidence and proclaim it.” Well, that brings it up a notch. That takes it out of the curiosity realm to a realm of, “Well, I want to be sure if it is or isn't because I don't want to say if it isn't, but I don't want to be silent if it is.” That's where my prayer is for you tonight: to be able to move in that direction and to be convinced either one way or the other, not just tonight, but that tonight would be a beginning point.

Now, is the Lord coming in five years or fifty years? I don't know. If I were guessing, I would guess it's closer to fifty years than five years, and I believe that to be true. I think we have some decades. I think we have two, three, four, five decades, maybe more, but maybe not. I don't know, and no one in heaven is asking my opinion.

TWELVE TRENDS IN THE NATIONS

But Jesus, here in Matthew 24, gives us signs. In paragraph A, He gives us twelve trends in society or in what is happening in the nations, or earthquakes and creation. He gives us twelve trends. We're not going to go through those trends, but I want you to know they exist. I'm going to challenge you to study these because, with the Internet today, you could take those twelve trends and have a significant amount of information in a few weeks if you and a few of your friends said, “We're going to find out everything we can about these twelve trends.” If you do that, you have to send me the information so I can put it in my handouts. So, if you get some good stuff, send it to me and Dave Sliker and we'll use it. We really will.

NATION WILL RISE AGAINST NATION

Now, here's how it works. We're going to look at seven of the trends here in Matthew. Jesus said, “Many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ’” (Mt. 24:5)—so there will be a lot of false Christs. “You will hear of wars and rumors of wars” (v. 6). “Nation will rise against nation” (v. 7). Now, it's interesting: The word *nation* is the word *ethnos*. Most of you know that the New Testament was written in Greek. It wasn't written in English, right? It was written in Greek 2,000 years ago. So in the English Bibles, they take the Greek word and

figure out what it means in English, and that word is *ethnos*, and it means *ethnic group*. So, it's ethnic group against ethnic group. There are approximately 6,000 ethnic groups, people groups in the earth right now. There are just under 250 nations—238 nations—but there are 6,000 people groups, ethnic groups, and Jesus said that ethnic group would rise against ethnic group. Of course, we see that on the rise on a global scale.

Although we're not really going to break down these twelve trends; I'm mentioning them a little on the way here. "Kingdom [will rise] against kingdom" (Mt. 24:7). Now, He's not saying the same thing two times. *Kingdom* is a reference to economic resources. "There will be famines, pestilences" (Mt. 24:7b) —which is the same word as disease. You could put the word *disease* in there if you want. And there will be earthquakes.

THE BEGINNING OF SORROWS

But notice that in verse 8 Jesus said, "All these are the beginning of sorrows" (v. 8). Most Bibles use the phrase *birth pains* or *birth pangs*. You can use either one you want. This is just the beginning of the birthing process that leads to the second coming of Christ and to the establishing of Jesus' 1,000-year kingdom on the earth.

Now, you know Jesus is coming soon, and again, it may be two or three decades. It may be four or five decades, maybe longer, maybe shorter, but when He comes, He isn't going to rapture us to go away. Yes, we will be raptured. He is coming to rapture us to give us resurrected bodies, to organize us, to mobilize us to take over the earth under His leadership. When the saints are raptured and Jesus has His resurrected body and we all have resurrected bodies, it's not so we can go away. Jesus is going to establish a 1,000-year reign on the earth, a literal physical kingdom on the earth.

I believe we're in the decades leading up to this right now. Those decades are called "birth pains" or "birth pangs" or *sorrows*. It's linked to a woman in the trauma of the childbirth process. What is being birthed is a new age, a new order for the earth. The new order isn't the new order that the politicians are talking about; the new order is Jesus taking over every government of the earth and the New Jerusalem coming down to the earth. We have resurrected bodies and all the earth is under His leadership. That is the new order that is being birthed through this birth canal process of turbulence and pain, and we are at the beginning of that birth canal process.

BIRTH PANGS, AS OF A WOMAN IN TRAVAIL

Now, Luke gives us five descriptions. So, if you take the seven in Matthew and the five in Luke, there are twelve trends that describe the birth pangs. What happens when a woman is giving birth, when the birth pangs start, is that they intensify and intensify and eventually a baby comes. Well, the baby is the second coming of Jesus and the millennial kingdom, the 1,000-year kingdom on the earth when Jesus comes.

"KNOW THAT THE END IS NEAR"

Paragraph B. We're still in Matthew 24. The passage we read in paragraph A was Matthew 24. We're in the same sermon; Jesus is still speaking. It's a few minutes later in the same setting. He's speaking to the twelve disciples, and He says this in verses 33 and 34: "When you see all these things" —what are "all these things"? It's these twelve trends. He said, "When you see these twelve trends," and you can write on your notes that all these things are things in verses 4-8. I don't have those in the notes. When you see those twelve trends that are mentioned in verses 4-8 that we read just a minute ago, Jesus said this, "Know that the second coming is near" (Mt. 24:33, paraphrased). He said, "I command you to know this."

Don't have false humility: "Well, no one can really know." It's true, we don't know the day or the hour, but we can know when those twelve trends are happening together at the same time on a global level. We can know the second coming is near, and it's not just that we can, but we're actually commanded to know the second coming is near. He didn't say, "Guess," or "Maybe." He said, "I want you to know with certainty that My appearing is in that generation."

"THAT GENERATION WILL BY NO MEANS PASS AWAY"

Jesus said, "Be sure of this, that when those twelve things happen, that generation will by no means pass away until all these things take place" (Mt. 24:34, paraphrased). All of them are happening on a global level. Never before have all twelve of them happened together on a global level at the same time. It has never happened, but they are all beginning to increase right now. Well, they're not all increasing, but most of them are increasing in a unique, measurable way.

Jesus said, "Know that this generation will by no means pass away until all these things take place." There is only one generation in history, and I believe you are in it. I believe that this age group will be the leaders globally. I believe you will be in your forties, fifties, sixties, and seventies. You will be the leaders in the Body of Christ as the moms and dads in the spirit when these things happen. That is my opinion. I'm not saying that by the Holy Spirit telling me, but I believe all twelve of these signs are increasing rapidly enough on a global level that I have a confidence in my heart that we are in the early days of that generation.

If this is true, then you must understand what Jesus says about that generation. You must prepare others for His coming, believers and unbelievers. You must prepare them because you are the ones who will know. When I say *you*, I mean millions of believers worldwide. I'm still in paragraph B. This will be the first time in history where all these trends happen in an unusual measure all at the same time. That's the unique thing. All of them are happening in an unusual measure simultaneously. That is the key. Jesus said, "When all of them happen, then you know." If three of the twelve are happening, we're not there yet; but when twelve out of twelve happen, Jesus said you can know.

THE LENGTH OF A GENERATION

Paragraph C. No one knows the day or the hour. That is clear, but we must know the generation if we're in it. Now, if we're not in the generation, then obviously, we're not supposed to have that confidence. But I believe we're in it. Now, a generation in the Bible can be anywhere from forty years to a hundred years. So, if we're in that generation, we have somewhere between forty years and a hundred years from after that generation started.

KNOWING THE TIMES AND THE SEASONS

Paragraph D. Now, Paul the apostle told us we should know the times and the seasons (1 Thess. 5:1). I won't read that verse; you can read it later. We should know the times and the seasons.

See, I regularly hear people say, "You cannot know the day or the hour."

I say, "That is absolutely biblical, but not knowing the day or the hour is not the same thing as not knowing the time and the season, which means the generation. We know the generation; we know the time and season. We don't know the day or the hour. Those are two separate pieces of information."

WATCH AND PRAY

Paragraph E. Now, the Bible tells us that as we are in that generation, we should watch and pray. Look up the word *watch* in the New Testament in your Bible program. Look up the word *watch*, and Jesus says this word more than anyone, and He says it in relationship to the end times. He says, “Watch; watch and pray.” Now, to *watch* means to pray as well, but to *watch* means more than praying. You could have a prayer life without watching for Jesus’ plans to unfold across the earth. Some people have a very strong prayer life, but they don’t have any thought of watching what the Spirit is doing in a global, end-time way. Others, they study the end times, they watch, but they don’t have a prayer life. So they gather a bunch of Bible information and it’s helpful, but their spirit is not engaged with Jesus in the plan. So when we watch and pray, number one, we’re reading what the Bible says about the end times. We’re figuring out, “What is the battle plan? What is His plan to confront Satan and the Antichrist?” We want to know it.

THE 150 CHAPTERS ON THE END TIMES

Now, this might be a surprising piece of information and I don’t have it in the notes, but you can write this down if you want. We have this documented on the Internet if you want it. There are 150 chapters in the Bible of which the primary subject is the end times. I want you to get that in your brain, 150.

Now, how many chapters do you have if you add up the four gospels? You have eighty-nine. So the four gospels have almost ninety chapters about Jesus’ first coming. Did you know there are 150 chapters describing Jesus’ second coming and the events related to it? There is more about Jesus and the events related to His return than there is about His coming the first time. It’s the same Jesus, the same Bible, the same Holy Spirit, and most of the Body of Christ is totally illiterate of those 150 chapters. They don’t know anything about them, but that’s not your story.

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

We’ll give you five or ten years, but you’re going to say, “I will go after these. I will know these 150 chapters about His second coming, and I will know the eighty-nine chapters about His first coming. If it’s Jesus and it’s in the Bible, I want to know the whole deal. Because, see, I love Jesus. I want to study the end times not because I want to know data; I want to study the end times because Jesus is leading it and I love Jesus. If He’s doing it, I want to know about it. I want to work with Him in it; I want to be a part of it.”

So we watch and pray. We watch by looking in the Bible. We search out, “What is Your plan? Tell me about it. What are the signs and the times?” That’s part of watching, to study. Part of watching is prayer and having your spirit prepared. Having your spirit prepared is prayer. It’s not enough just to get the information in the Bible; you want to have your spirit engaged with the Holy Spirit.

ANOINTED OBSERVATION

But, number three is what I call “anointed observers.” Because I’ve got a prayer life and because I’m connected to the Holy Spirit as you are, I want to have anointed observation, meaning that when events are happening in the nations, I don’t just want to look at them and say, “Oh wow, that’s really intense.” I want to say, “I know the Bible verse and the Holy Spirit is impressing on my heart that this is significant.” I don’t just want to be a casual observer; I want to be an anointed observer on what is unfolding in this generation.

Now, all of those three issues, the Bible study part, the prayer part, and the anointed observation, are a part of watching and praying, and that is what Jesus said to do. He said, “If you are in that generation, watch and pray.”

So I want to challenge you to do all three of those, the Bible study and the prayer, yes, but even the anointed observation, so that when you see events happening in the nations, you know the signs of the times well enough and the Spirit is touching you and you can say, “I can see that this is significant. I may not know how significant; I may not know all the details, but something registers in my spirit that this is an important event to pay attention to.”

That’s what I call being an anointed observer, but you’ve got to be an informed observer to be an anointed observer. We’ve got to have the Bible info first before the Spirit will make it alive in our hearts and tell us its significance.

“THEY DID NOT KNOW THE HOUR OF THEIR VISITATION”

Paragraph F. Jesus rebuked His generation because they did not know the signs of the times of the first coming. He said, “Here I am, the Messiah. I am fully God. I have stepped down out of heaven to the earth, and you didn’t even know I was coming.” Beloved, it is 2,000 years later, and millions of Christians aren’t even paying attention to the signs of the God-Man stepping out of heaven to come and take over the earth. Jesus rebuked His people. He said, “Why is it that you don’t have any information and you’re not at all alert? You are so un-alert, I could show up in your nation and you don’t even know what I’m doing.”

There are millions of believers around the world, and I’m not being critical of them, but they are so connected to their own lifestyle and what they’re doing, they’re unaware globally of what the Bible and the Spirit are saying about what God is doing on the earth. I think it’s important to be really involved in your ministry and in your life, but you don’t want to be so involved that you’re disconnected from the big picture, because, I tell you, something bigger is going on than what’s happening in your life. God, who is fully man, is stepping out of heaven; He’s about to take over the earth and drive evil off the planet, and He wants you to be involved in the plan with Him.

SOME COMMON LIES ABOUT THE END TIMES

Let’s go to the top of page two. Now, there are common lies that I hear. I’ve been teaching on this for some years now, and I hear these all the time. We’re not going to go through each of them, but we’ll go through a few of them.

LIE NUMBER 1: IT’S IMPOSSIBLE TO UNDERSTAND PROPHECY

Lie number one is, people say, “Well, you can’t really understand the end-times scriptures, those 150 chapters. You can’t understand them anyway, so why study them? I mean, no one really understands the book of Revelation, not really. You can’t really know the signs of the times; they’re too mysterious.”

Let me tell you this, the Bible was written for everyone; it wasn’t just written for the elite intellectuals of history. The Bible was written for the common man, and the majority of the planet has been uneducated peasants. The Bible was written so they could get it. You can understand these chapters; you can understand these signs of the times. The Bible was written so that you could get them if you were hungry to know them.

LIE NUMBER 2: WHY SHOULD WE EVEN TRY AND KNOW THE GENERATION?

Lie number two is, “Well, if we don’t know the day or the hour, why should we even try to know the generation?” No, it’s clear that we don’t know the day or the hour, but Jesus and Paul both told us that we must know the generation. We must know the times and the seasons of that generation.

LIE NUMBER 3: EVERY GENERATION IS THE SAME

Lie number three is one you hear all the time: “Every generation believed they were the last generation.” That is not true. Now, most of you have probably heard that. It is absolutely not a true statement. Let me tell you what might be a true statement: Less than one percent of the Body of Christ in that generation might have believed it. It might have been a little fringe group over on the side, but the majority of the Body of Christ has never believed they were in the end times in a global, sustained way.

In other words, there has never been a time in history, except for the first century, where the majority of God’s people believed they were in the end times in a sustained way. Yes, there is that one fringe group that’s less than one percent of the Body of Christ in the earth. Maybe they did and they were wrong, but ninety-nine percent of the Church didn’t believe it. It’s a new phenomenon in this generation that millions and millions are believing it. It’s not just that they’re believing it, but they’re believing it in a sustained way, meaning they’re staying with it decade after decade, and millions are waking up to this reality. It’s a phenomenon in itself. So when someone tells you, “Well, every generation said it,” say, “Well, that’s true, but only less than one percent, and ninety-nine percent didn’t believe it.”

This is a new thing. In the early Church, the majority believed it for decades. They were wrong; but now, 2,000 years later, there’s a new generation emerging. Right now, the numbers are growing fast. Millions and millions worldwide believe they will see the coming of the Lord in their lifetime, and they have believed it for a period of time, not just when a big crisis comes along. Sometimes when a crisis hits, people believe it for a year or two and then move on. I’m talking about the majority of God’s people believing in this in a sustained way. That has never happened in history before, apart from the first generation, and it’s beginning to happen in this generation for the first time in history since the first century.

THREE TIME FRAMES FOR THE END TIMES

OK, now I’m going to do this really briefly, so you’ll have to read it more if you’re interested in it. I’m giving you three general time frames so you can get the big picture of the overall story line of the end times. As you’re reading these signs of the times, the positive and the negative, you want to have the big picture story line. There are three very significant time frames.

TIME FRAME NUMBER 1: THE BEGINNING OF THE BIRTH PAINS

Paragraph B. Time frame number one is the one I believe we’re in right now, the beginning of the birth pains. Time frame number two is the first three-and-a-half years of that final seven-year period, and time frame number three is the last three-and-a-half years of that final seven-year time frame.

Now, most of you are aware that the Bible makes it clear that there’s a seven-year period right before Jesus appears that’s very significant. Well, the period before those seven years, I believe, is right now. Again, this is my opinion. God has not told me this. This is my opinion because I have read the signs of the times and looked across the earth and I want to be an anointed observer. Not only do I not want to read it with a skeptical heart of unbelief; I don’t want to be into hype and falsehood, either. I want to have a heart of faith that when something important is happening in the kingdom of God, I actually have the faith of a child to believe it. I’m not saying I’m there, but that’s what I’m going for.

But, the beginning of the birth pangs is period number one. I believe we’re in it now, and that period can last from fifty to a hundred years, or however long, a whole generation. But a generation goes up to a hundred years

in the Bible. We don't know how long the beginning of birth pains lasts. I believe we're in it, and I believe it is picking up.

TIME FRAME NUMBER 2: A COUNTERFEIT PEACE

This might be surprising, but the next time frame is when the Antichrist causes there to be a period of world peace. It will be a counterfeit piece. We won't believe it, but the nations will believe it, and they will be rejoicing. But the Antichrist will present himself as a man of peace, and he will bring world peace; however, it will only last for three-and-a-half years.

TIME FRAME NUMBER 3: THE GREAT TRIBULATION

Then he will pull his mask off and he will show he's not really a man of peace; he's really a man of sin. He's the most evil man that ever walked on the planet, and he will bring desolation to many people and many nations. That's the final three-and-a-half years.

A TIME FOR QUESTIONS

Those are the three time frames. You say, "I don't quite have those yet." Well, read those a few times and we're going to have a discussion group here at the end of this teaching. We're going to break into small groups. We have about seventy-five, eighty leaders, and we're going to give you a chance to ask questions. You don't have to be a part of that if you don't want, but if you want, we're going to do that for a little while, maybe a half-hour, thirty, forty minutes before Cory comes to the worship concert. Then, the volleyball and intramural stuff starts outside at 10:00 pm. But we're going to do that for a little while, so you can ask some questions if you have them to some of our leadership team here.

My goal isn't that you would grasp it all right now, but I want you alert to the fact. There are three time frames, the beginning of the birth pains. I believe we're in it now. Next is coming a counterfeit world peace. That's the next season that comes. Then, after that comes the Great Tribulation, where the judgment of God crushes the Antichrist kingdom. That's really what happens in the Great Tribulation.

THE IMPORTANCE OF STUDYING THE SCRIPTURES ON YOUR OWN

OK, let's turn to page three. Go all the way down to paragraph K. I'm going to skip those three time frames; I just wanted to give you a little on it. It might take you a few days reading over it and going back with a friend. Quiz each other and read the Bible verses.

By the way, I say this to our students all the time: make sure that everything you hear in this pulpit here, and anywhere that you hear it, you see it with your own eyes in the Bible before you believe it. Like I tell our IHOPU students and interns, "Don't believe anything because Mike Bickle said it, or Lou Engle said it, or Allen Hood, or Dave Sliker; don't believe anything because a Bible teacher said it. If you can't find it in the Bible with your own eyes, don't dare believe it." We have encouraged them and empowered them to challenge us every step of the way. I tell young students and first-year students, "If you can find anything, I will honor and reward you. I won't say, 'How dare you.' I will give you a five-dollar bill if you can find anything that's wrong, because I want to correct whatever is out of place, and all our teachers have that attitude."

So what I'm saying is, I want you to have that attitude, too. It's not enough for you to hear a Bible teaching and say, "Lou Engle says it, Allen Hood says it, Mike Bickle says it, Misty Edwards says it." That's not good

enough; you've got to say, "The Bible says," or don't say it. So these notes are to give you some Bible verses, and you get together with a few friends and debate them a bit. Have some fun with it; search them out.

I mean, some of these verses will be new to you, so don't email me right away with a suggestion of changing it. You might read a verse, and maybe it's new to you, and you say, "What? What is Bickle thinking here? That's not at all what it says." Well, go ask someone who's studied the passage a little. Get familiar with it first, because some of the things that I put in these handouts are at a secondary level of understanding. It may not be obvious when you first read it. You may read it and say, "Huh?" So, search it out, debate it out, talk it through, talk about it on the bus on the ride home, and work this thing through. Study it in your Bible studies in your high school, in your church ministries, and see if these things are really in the Bible, because if they're right, you need to know them. If they're wrong, throw them away. But if they're right, you need to know them, and you need to say them to other people.

A GREAT FALLING AWAY

OK, paragraph K. Now, this second time frame is the context I'm in here in the third page of the notes. There's going to be a great falling away from the faith. I'm talking about people who are professing that they love Jesus. They're going to deny Jesus. It will be a massive number, but not the majority of the Body of Christ, just so you know. They say there are a billion Christians in the earth right now. I don't know if that's an accurate number, but that's what some of the guys who do the demographic studies say, a billion. Some say that's a little high, but let's just work off a billion. It may be hundreds of millions, a billion or two or three, I don't know; a big number will fall away, but still six or seven hundred or eight hundred million will not. Who knows the numbers? I'm just throwing those numbers out there. The majority will not, but still, in my opinion, of the hundreds of millions, many will. It will be a significant thing.

"IN LATTER TIMES SOME WILL DEPART FROM THE FAITH"

Here's what Paul said: "The Spirit expressly" —explicitly—"says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits" —those are demons—"and doctrines of demons" (1 Tim. 4:1). That's saying the same thing two different ways. So, circle that word *expressly*. What Paul is saying is, "The Holy Spirit was really intense when He told me this one." When he says, "The Holy Spirit expressly says," he means the Holy Spirit emphasized this in a really intense way. So when the Spirit expressly says something, you had better pay double, triple attention to it.

He said, "Make sure you write this down and tell the saints that in the end times there will be a falling away of people who really have a relationship with Jesus." In other words, this isn't just people who went to church, but in their private life didn't care about Jesus. These are some people who really had a relationship with Jesus and ended up denying Him. It's real; it's a real issue. I'm not trying to scare you, but we need to be sober about this, not just for our own lives, but for the lives of the people we love. This is real. Loved ones will fall away. I don't mean your loved ones, but in the Body of Christ there will be loved ones who fall away, and I want to do everything in my power to prepare the Church, to be fascinated with Jesus, and to know the Word of God to where they aren't of those who fall away.

FOUR TYPES OF PROPHETIC SIGNS

OK, let's go down to IV. There are four types of prophetic sign. Now, we're only really focusing on two of them, number one and number two, because those are the ones that are written in the Bible clearly. They are

what I call sign events. They're main events that happen, like one of the big sign events, that Israel became a nation.

THE MIRACLE OF ISRAEL'S CREATION

Now, that may not mean anything to you right now. You may be saying, "So what? Israel became a nation. So did Germany, so did America, so did lots of nations." But, we'll get to that in a minute. It's a startling, stunning prophetic promise that came to pass in a most remarkable way and really shocked the world in 1948. I'm getting ahead of myself, but that's an example of a sign event: an event that happened that was prophesied, and it didn't look like it was going to happen. Then, after 2,000 years of Israel not being a nation, suddenly they became a nation in one day, in 1948.

It shocked the world; it really did. It was the greatest political turnaround of a nation in terms of its relationships to other nations in history. It was the most dramatic geopolitical turnaround in human history. It was prophesied by the prophets that this would happen; two thousand years went by and Israel wasn't a nation, and then suddenly in 1948 it shocked everyone. They became a nation in a way that was so remarkable, and now when that happened I believe that's when the beginning of the birth pains began. That's my personal conviction. I believe that's when the beginning of the birth pains began, and that generation will not pass away. Well, we're going on sixty, seventy years afterwards, but I believe a generation can be up to one hundred years. So, that generation will not pass away.

I may be wrong; that may not be the beginning of the birth pains. It may not be when Israel became a nation; it may be when Jerusalem came under the leadership of Israel. I have that in the notes; you can read it, if it interests you, at another time. But, I believe we are in that generation.

SIGN TRENDS OF THE END TIMES

So, the first thing is sign events; these are events that we can clearly measure. The next thing is sign trends. These aren't events; they're trends, like sin increasing in the nations. One of the clear Bible prophecies is that immorality would increase dramatically. We can see a trend in the earth: Immorality is exploding, both the amount of perversion and the number of people participating in it. That's a trend. It's not a one-time event; it's a trend.

SIGNS IN THE HEAVENS

Then, number three, cosmic signs. That's a fancy word for sky. These are signs in the heavens. Jesus said there will be traumatic signs in the heavens. We don't know exactly what those look like, so those are hard to study. We're paying attention, but we don't know quite what to do with that just yet. I know it's real because Jesus said it a number of times.

PERSONAL SIGNS OF THE END

Then, we have personal experiences, personal signs. Misty talked this morning about how she had a prophetic dream where the Lord spoke to her about preparing her life. Like she emphasized this morning, "I don't go and put all my weight on a dream," and it's personal because dreams can be fallible; they can be mistaken. So you don't make dreams more important than the Bible, but God will pour out His Spirit, and He will give many people personal assignments, and He will speak to them about issues in that generation.

I'm assuming, and I don't really know the number, but I'm thinking that in the IHOP-KC community, we've had hundreds of people who have had dreams related to the end-times drama. There may be trends that will happen, or something they will do, or something the nations will do. We've never really counted them all or had them stand up and say, "One, two, three, four," but it's so many. We ask the Lord for dreams, for anything that's on His heart, and the end times is on His heart. But that's not the only thing on His heart. Many things are on His heart besides the end times. We want dreams for the Spirit to awaken our heart to what is on the Spirit's heart, or what is on Jesus' heart. Then we want to back it up with the Word of God. But, what I'm saying is that there is such a thing as personal signs; however, those are the least convincing and the least reliable of these four signs. Number one and number two are the ones we're most focused on, because those are the ones that are in the Bible.

A FEW POSITIVE SPIRITUAL TRENDS

OK, page four. Let's look at a few positive spiritual trends. These aren't signs, per se; these are trends. They're broad-stroke trends that are increasing. Number one is remarkable. Paragraph A. We'll just spend a minute on some of these. We won't finish the notes here because there's so much information, but I want you stirred up. I want you to say, "You know, I don't really get all this; I know there's a lot I don't get, and I'm going to study it." If I or the Holy Spirit convinces you to study this, then this is a successful evening. If you leave here and say, "I don't get all these signs, but I know one thing, in these next six to twelve months I'm going to take my free time and figure this stuff out, because if I'm in this generation, I want to know; and if I'm not in that generation, then I want to know why I believe I'm not when millions of people around the world believe we are in that generation." Millions of believers think we are.

"THIS GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM WILL BE PREACHED IN ALL THE WORLD"

The number one positive trend. Jesus says in Matthew 24:14, "This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world, as a witness to all the nations"—remember, *nations* means *ethnae*—every single ethnic group. There are 6,000 of them—"And then the end will come" (Mt. 24:14). Now, Jesus said this 2,000 years ago. They were right there in Jerusalem, and He told them, "You've got one group down here. You have to reach the other 6,000 now; you have to reach the rest of them. So, 2,000 years later, the top missions organizations in the world have put out a paper. We're friends with a number of them, so we've talked to them in person and we've read their material. Look at this; it's staggering.

Paragraph A. They say that by the year 2015, all 6,000 people groups will have the gospel preached to them for the first time ever in history. Beloved, I'm talking about like in five years from now. Jesus said that when that happens, the end is right around the corner. That is one of the biggest signs imaginable. It is impossible to reach all 6,000 of them until you do, and it's 2,000 years later and it's speeding up so fast. I mean, with the ground the Body of Christ has gained in the last hundred years, it's remarkable how it's sped up.

So, that is sign number one. We're five years away from every single people group—now remember, there are 238 nations, but 6,000 *ethnae*, or nations, people groups. All 6,000 will have the gospel preached in their area within five years. That is a remarkable reality; it's a sign of the times in itself.

THE SALVATION OF ISRAEL

Paragraph B. The salvation of Israel. Now, Israel is the nation most hostile towards Jesus; Israel is the nation that's hardest to reach, and Jesus said, "Mark My Word, I will not come back until the people in the land of Israel say to me, 'We want You back.'" Jesus told them that 2,000 years ago, here in Matthew 23. He was

talking to the leaders of Israel, who were going to crucify Him really soon, in the next few days. He said, “Let Me tell you something that you won’t believe: I won’t come back to the earth until the nation of Israel says to Me, ‘Blessed are You, Jesus of Nazareth. We want You to come back’” (Mt. 23:39, paraphrased).

Of course, the leaders of Israel said, “You can be sure of this thing: It is never going to happen. You are never coming back.” And Jesus said, “We will see.”

There is a massive increase of evangelism, a 500-percent increase of people coming to Jesus right now in Israel, beyond any time in history. I mean, it’s exploding in Israel and in the Jewish communities around the world. Now, there are still many who are saying no, but the numbers who are saying yes have increased by 500 percent. That in itself is a sign of the times. For 2,000 years, you could hardly get one Jew here and one Jew there. Now there are thousands of Jews; they’re saying 15,000 in the land of Israel. Ten years ago, the number was really, really small. I was interacting with the leaders in Israel ten years ago and they said, “Almost no one is saved in the land.” And suddenly an increase is coming so fast. It is a sign of the times.

“THE SPIRIT AND THE BRIDE SAY ‘COME’”

Paragraph C. The book of Revelation says, “The Spirit and the Bride will say, ‘Come’” (Rev. 22:17, paraphrased). Before Jesus comes back to the earth, the Holy Spirit will be moving on the Church. The Church won’t just be the army of God, though we are the army of God; the Church won’t just be the family of God, though we are the family of God. We won’t be just the Body of Christ or the kingdom of God, but the Church, individual believers, will see themselves as a cherished bride. The Spirit will be on the Church, a billion believers worldwide, and the vast majority of the Church will understand for the first time in history that they’re not just the army of God, or the family of God, or the kingdom of God, or the Body of Christ, but they’re actually the Bride of Christ as well.

THE REVELATION OF THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

Now, in 2,000 years the Church has never universally seen this revelation of the Church as the Bride of Christ. But John prophesied and said, “Before Jesus returns, they’ll cry out with understanding of intimacy with God that they’re a cherished bride and He is a passionate bridegroom with great love in His heart for His people.” He prophesied that this understanding would fill the Body of Christ.

Now, I’ve been preaching on the Bride of Christ now for twenty years. Some of you older ones here in the room undoubtedly were aware of it in your own ministry, and were preaching on it. But when I began twenty years ago, I hardly heard a whisper of anyone saying the phrase, “Bride of Christ.” There was one guy here, one guy there, one ministry over there, and in the last twenty years, millions are getting the message of the Bride of Christ overnight. It’s amazing, the amount of people who have even had dreams and visions about this reality of the Church as the Bride of Christ. For 2,000 years almost ninety-nine percent of the Church has not understood this, and for the first time, millions of people are getting it for the first time, even in the last five and ten years. It’s growing so fast. Worship songs about the bride and the Bridegroom are exploding on a global level.

It doesn’t say, “The Spirit and the army are saying, ‘Come, Lord Jesus.’” It says, “When you know who you are, and when you know who I am, that I am the Bridegroom, and you are My cherished bride, when you know that, then I will come, and I will not come until then.” So, even this subject is, in itself, a sign of the times—the very fact that you are interested in this subject, and not all of you are yet, but you all will be before it’s over. Before the Lord returns, the whole Church will be focused on this subject, on the Bride of Christ.

Now, I remember when the Lord first told me and called me to preach on the Bride of Christ. I was troubled by this. It was 1988, twenty-one years ago; it happened in a very dramatic way, and I won't go through the details, but He told me to do this. My father was a world-champion boxer. He beat people up and got money for it on TV. I grew up in a boxing home; all his friends were boxers and tough guys, and the Lord told me to talk on the Bride of Christ, and I said, "Lord, I don't really think this is going to work for me. I'm the son of a boxer. This isn't going to work." I said, "Give that to the women's ministry; they will love this." I really did. And He called me to spend my life teaching on the Song of Solomon. I told Him, "This is impossible. I cannot do this." I read the Song of Solomon, and it was horrible. It was psalms and flowers, perfume and body parts. I said, "There's not a chance I'm going to preach on this. It's not going to happen. Not me." And I was shocked that over a short time the Lord began to tenderize my heart. It was a miracle when I bought into this, but it's a miracle that's happening to millions worldwide. It's exploding on a global level; it's a sign of the times.

THE SIGN OF THE GLOBAL PRAYER MOVEMENT

Paragraph D. Another sign of the times is the global prayer movement. Now, we have been doing IHOP–KC for ten years, so we're really focused on the global prayer movement. We're doing it hard with all of our energy here, and we're interacting with prayer ministries throughout Asia and Africa and Latin America. Ten years ago there were a few, and I was blessed. But ten years later, beloved, there are houses of prayer, and I don't mean they all have to look like the one we're doing here. They all look different, they all have different names, they all have different styles, different emphases, different models. I'm not talking about how they do it. Houses of prayer are springing up so fast across the earth that even people who aren't in the prayer movement, who aren't really excited about it, are acknowledging that it's a global phenomenon that's a sudden thing.

Now, when you study the verses, and I don't have many of them here, but on the twelve-page handout, the extended notes of this document you can get on the Internet, I have a lot more verses on it. There are so many verses that make this point. They don't say it this precisely, but it's very clear that there will be a worldwide prayer movement before Jesus returns, and it will grow rapidly. There are stadium events where fifty and one hundred thousand people are meeting in the cities across the earth. They're all day events to worship and pray, and that has never happened in history. It's a brand new reality in the last ten years. Now, maybe there was an exception twenty years ago, one group here and another there, but it's exploding.

FOUR HUNDRED THOUSAND HOUSES OF PRAYER IN ASIA

Now, the mission leaders came back and gave us a report. Mark Anderson with YWAM, Youth With a Mission, is one of our dear friends and one of the main mission leaders in the world. He came back from a group of 3,000 leaders in the kingdom of God in Hong Kong. Allen Hood was there, and some of the others. It was a major meeting. These 3,000 national leaders from China, Korea, mostly from Asia, although they were from a hundred countries, committed to start, in the next ten to fifteen years, 400,000 houses of prayer in Asia.

Now, we were on the platform up here and Mark was telling me this the other day. I said, "Do you mean 4,000? Three thousand leaders and 4,000 prayer meetings; that sounds good!" He said, "No, not 3,000 leaders," because a lot of these leaders have hundreds of churches under them. There are 3,000 top leaders and they want to start 400,000 houses of prayer throughout these hundred countries. He was just in Kenya, and a few thousand leaders were doing the same thing. I can't remember the number, but it was some staggering number, like they committed to 200,000 houses of prayer. It was some huge number; I'll have to get the exact number down. But the Body of Christ across the nations is excited about prayer. The numbers are staggering right now like no other time in history.

THE END-TIME WORSHIP MOVEMENT

We're only going to make it to 'H,' and then you can read the rest on your own. It's two or three more points and then we're going to have a small group discussion. Paragraph E. The worship movement. Now, you say the worship movement and the prayer movement are the same thing. Well, from heaven's point of view it is, but in the last fifty years you've had the worship movement; however, the worship leaders don't really do prayer meetings. And you've got the prayer leaders from the last fifty years, and they don't really do worship.

But recently, in the last ten years, the worship and prayer leaders are doing worship and prayer in the same meetings, and this is a new phenomenon that's happening all across the globe. So, you might say it seems pretty obvious to go ahead and throw in the worship leaders. But for 2,000 years, mostly the worship leaders weren't leading the prayer meetings. However, the Bible says that in the end times they'll come together. I've been involved in the prayer movement just over thirty years, and I've been actively involved in leading prayer meetings on a regular basis, and talking, and studying, and I never saw a worship leader lead a prayer meeting for many years. Now it's so common. As a matter of fact, there are almost no prayer meetings that don't have worship involved. It has changed so dramatically in the last five years, and it's going global.

“I WILL POUR OUT MY SPIRIT ON ALL FLESH”

Paragraph F. The great outpouring of the Holy Spirit. It's not just an outpouring of power; it's a spirit of prophecy. You read the verse; this is going to happen before Jesus returns. Dreams and visions will be poured out on every single believer worldwide. There's an explosion of the prophetic ministry that's taking place in the earth right now, but the greatest revival is yet to come.

Now, look at the numbers I have there in paragraph F. In the year 1900, a hundred years ago, there were only one million Pentecostal charismatics, people who believed in the gifts of the Holy Spirit. After 1,900 years of Church history, only one million believed that dreams and visions and healing the sick and casting out devils was something that the Church was supposed to do. The vast majority of the Church said it wasn't for today. One hundred years later, now 500 million people believe this. For the first time in history since the early Church, the guys who do the demographic studies reported about three years ago that now there are more believers on the earth who believe in the gifts of the Spirit than believers who don't believe in it. It's the first time this has happened, and it changed three years ago.

“IN THE LATTER DAYS YOU SHALL UNDERSTAND IT PERFECTLY”

Paragraph G. Now, I don't see this happening yet, but it's going to happen. I see an interest, but I don't see insight. There is an explosion of interest in the end times. However, the Lord told Jeremiah, “In the last days, My people aren't just going to have an interest in end-time prophecy, they're actually going to understand it perfectly” (Jer. 30:24, paraphrased). Now, I don't think that means everyone has 100-percent insight, but He means in a mature way. The Lord told Jeremiah, “In the latter days, the people of God aren't just going to be hungry about the end times; they will have understanding of the end times.” That's actually a sign of the times.

The hunger is what's happening now. Millions and millions are interested and believe this is that generation, but those millions who are hungry are translating it into Bible study and prayer and are gaining biblical understanding about the end times. The Lord told Jeremiah that that would happen, and He told David and He told John and He told others as well.

“I WILL SEND YOU ELIJAH THE PROPHET”

This is one of my favorite ones; we’ll end with this. The global youth focus. The Lord told Malachi, “I will send you Elijah the prophet before the second coming” (Mal. 4:5, paraphrased). Beloved, Elijah is coming back before the second coming.

People say, “That is figurative.”

I say, “No, it is real.” I’ve been saying this for a while, that I’m going to ask him to come speak at IHOP–KC. I’ll say, “Elijah, I’ve told everyone I believed that verse.”

He’ll say, “You know what, I’m really busy right now, but since you held the line for so long, I’ll come one afternoon and give you one session.” It probably won’t work that way, but he’s coming before the second coming.

“HE WILL TURN THE HEARTS OF THE FATHERS TO THE CHILDREN”

But look what he’s going to do: There will be an outpouring of power, and it will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children. There’s a powerful move right now in the Body of Christ where fathers, male and female, people with the spirit of a father, which is on men and women, are turning to young people. It’s an amazing reality.

Now, I’m an old guy, so I can see it. Maybe you’re fifteen and you think, “I don’t really see that.” But I’ve been watching this for years, and there’s a turning that’s happening right now of the attention of the Body of Christ to the younger generation and the fatherless. It’s not just to the young people, though it is, but it’s also to the fatherless, the whole issue of abortion and orphans and human trafficking. There’s a turning of the hearts of fathers to children.

Now, young people, if you’re twenty-one years old or older, you are qualified to be a spiritual father. I mean that. Meaning, I have had twenty-five year-old people say, “I want a spiritual father.”

I said, “Forget it, you are one.”

They said, “What? I’m still looking for one?”

I said, “It’s too late! Forget it. Turn your twenty-five year-old heart down to twelve-year olds and go be a spiritual father and raise up people and start discipling them.” If you’re eighteen or nineteen, start taking care of and discipling fourteen-year olds. That is the beginning of the spiritual fathering. Don’t read that verse and say, “Where is my dad?” Read the verse and say, “Where are my kids?” Ask a different question. There are some of you who are fifteen, and you’re going to go after the children’s church. You’re going to say, “I will start discipling those little eight-year olds right now. I will take Malachi 4:5-6 and cash in on it right now.”

Well, let’s stand.



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