1. **Know The Signs and the Times**

In Matthew 24 the disciples ask Jesus if they could enroll in His Introduction and Overview of the End Times class. Jesus, of course says yes and commences class right then and there.

Matthew 24 is a broad overview of the events and trends that lead up to the return of Jesus.

Jesus starts by describing “the beginnings of birth pangs” (verses 4-8). These are trends that are meant to get our attention and they anticipate that greater pain and glory are on the horizon.

Verses 9-14 speak of the beginning – and first 3½ years of the tribulation.

Verses 15-28 speak of the Great Tribulation – the second 3½ years of the 7-year tribulation.

Verses 29-31 speak of the 2nd coming of Jesus.

Finally, verses 32-51 are a charge to pay attention, get understanding, know the signs and seasons, watch and pray!

**God is looking for a people who will long for and understand the signs that point to the return of His Son.**

**(II Tim. 4:8)***, Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on the Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.*

**(Ecc. 3:11)***, He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also He has put eternity in their* [sons of men] *hearts…*

There is a deep and abiding desire for eternity written on the hearts of men – a longing for the inauguration of a new age. However, this desire lays dormant in many of us in the church. I believe **it is time for the church to stir ourselves awake, anticipate, and participate in the hastening of the Day of the Lord’s return.**

Jesus urged his disciples to know the times and the seasons of His coming.

**(Matt. 24:32-34)***,* **32** *Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near.* **33** *So you also when you see all these things, know that it is near – at the doors!* **34** *Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place.*

Jesus even weeps over Jerusalem because they, the Jewish people, did not know the signs of their times and the coming of the Son of Man.

**(Lk. 19:41-44), 41** *Now as He drew near* [to Jerusalem] *He saw the city and wept over it,* **42** *saying, “If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace…***44** *you did not know the time of your visitation.”*

1. **Israel and God’s Prophetic Signs**

Signs – signs point us towards where we are going. Signs inform us of our progress in getting to where we’re going. Signs let us know when we are nearing our destination so that we can make the proper adjustments and preparations. Understanding signs also helps us give proper direction to others who are trying to get to their destination. Signs are important!

**Since Jesus beckons us to** watch, be aware, and seek to **understand the signs of the times related to His return, we need to familiarize ourselves with these signs.**

When we look at the prophetic signs and trends that point us towards His coming, we find Israel – and specifically Jerusalem – at the center.

**If the prophetic church is going to be a true witness and light in the coming storm, it is vital that we grounded in a “Jerusalem-centric” eschatology. After all, Jerusalem is the city of the Great King.**

 **(Matt. 5:35)***, …Jerusalem…is the city of the great King*

Jerusalem will be the capital city of Jesus’ government.

**(Jer. 3:17)***, At that time Jerusalem shall be called The Throne of the Lord, and all the nations shall be gathered to it, to the name of the Lord, to Jerusalem…*

 **(Is. 24:23)***, For the Lord of hosts will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem…*

The Israel/Jerusalem signs are leading us to Israel/Jerusalem. This road leads us to Jerusalem.

**(Is 2:2)***, Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it.*

1. **End-time Sign Events and Trends Pertaining to Israel**
2. The Establishment of the State of Israel

In 70 AD Jerusalem fell. The temple was completely destroyed, and Israel was scattered to the nations. For 1,878 years – nearly 2 millennia – until May 14th, 1948, there was no “nation of Israel.”

Consider how the following prophetic passages must have sounded to those who lived during the 1,878 years where there was no such thing as “Israel.”

**(Is. 11:12)***, He will set up a banner for the nations, and will assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.*

**(Ez. 36:24)***, For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land.*

And what about Jesus when He said to the Jewish leaders of His day:

**(Matt. 23:39)***, for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!”*

Writers, pastors, preachers, teachers, and theologians had to find another meaning for verses like these – and many others – because never before in history had a nation ceased to be a nation for nearly 2,000 years only to become a nation again.

Then **in one day, Israel was reestablished. On May 13th 1948 there was no Israel. On May 14th 1948 there was Israel.**

**(Is. 66:8)***, Who has ever seen or heard of such a wonder? Could a country be born in a day? Can a nation be birthed so suddenly?*

So **the “re-birth” of the nation of Israel made possible many prophetic words spoken by the prophets – and by Jesus Himself.** Some of these words have been fulfilled, others not yet.

1. The Rebuilding of the Temple In Jerusalem

In 70AD, just as Jesus and the prophets had predicted, the temple in Jerusalem was utterly destroyed. Not one stone was left up another. To this day there is no temple in Jerusalem. But the Bible seems clear that one day there will be.

Jesus speaks of it. Paul speaks of it. John speaks of it. Daniel speaks of it.

**(II. Thes. 2:3,4)***, 3 Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, 4 who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.*

Also see Matt. 24:15, Rev. 11:1-2, Rev. 13:12-18, Dan. 9:26-27

The Jewish people are ready to build “The third Temple” (the first, Solomon’s, was destroyed in 586BC; the second, Zerubbabel’s or Herod’s, was destroyed in 70AD). Most of the sacred items have already been made according the biblical standards – this includes the menorah, the altar of incense, the table of showbread, the high priest’s breastplate, ephod, etc.

Priests have been chosen. And even a high priest has been selected.

<pic of menorah>

1. Peace in the Middle East

The Bible talks about a time of peace in the land. This peace, however will be a “false” peace, or “counterfeit” peace, and will be temporary.

The antichrist will strike a deal, a peace treaty, that will shock the world – especially the Middle East. He will come as a “man of peace.”

**(Dan. 9:27)***, Then he* [the antichrist] *shall confirm a treaty with many for one week; but in the middle of the week he shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering…*

**(I Thes. 5:2,3) 2** *For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. 3 For when they say, “Peace and safety!” then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape.*

The Antichrist will strike a peace treaty in Israel and Jerusalem that will cause the nations to say, “Ah, finally, peace and safety.” The Bible tells us that this is a sign. Jesus warns that this treaty and its “man of peace” are not what they seem.

1. The Abomination of Desolation

**The abomination of desolation refers to the antichrist placing an image of himself in the temple of the Lord and demanding to be worshiped as God.**

**(Matt. 24:15-18)***, 15 Therefore, when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place 16 then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. 17 Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house, 18 And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes.*

Jesus is saying that this sign-event in Jerusalem, on the temple mount, is a major, flashing, neon sign for the Jewish people. *“When you see this event happen, RUN!”*

The Antichrist will be in Jerusalem on the temple mount, IN the temple. He will have been known as the man of peace – the one who strikes a miraculous peace accord bringing long-awaited peace in the region.

Then, marking the last 3½ years of the tribulation (called the Great Tribulation), the Antichrist shows his true colors by placing an image of himself in the temple, ending the sacrifices (Dan. 11:31), and demanding to be worshiped. Anyone who does not worship him as God will become the target of his fury and wrath.

This is an abomination on two fronts: 1 that he would desecrate the temple and demand to be worshiped as God while standing in the Holy Place, and 2 that there will be many in Jerusalem and even around the earth that will go along with him.

1. Establishing the Sabbath in Israel

Jesus encourages those who witness the abomination of desolation to “flee to the mountains.” Then He says, *“pray that your flight does not take place on the Sabbath…”*

So we can deduce that there will come a day when the Sabbath is recognized and practiced in Israel before the Lord returns.

This happened in 1951 when the Hours of Work and Rest law in Israel. This law established the basis for Shabbat (Sabbath) in the legal code of the land.

<examples from our trip>

1. **Overview and Purpose of The Israel Signs**

Jesus admonishes people in His day that did not pay attention to signs – the signs of His first coming. He goes on to encourage His followers to know the signs, times, and seasons of His second coming.

Since Israel, the Jewish people, and the city of Jerusalem are one of God’s main prophetic signs of His second coming, the church must at the very least pay attention to Israel.

**We are living in a generation that has witnessed some of the most miraculous and dynamic prophetic fulfillments in history.**

We are also living in the first generation in history who could personally witness fulfilments of some of the major prophecies that have yet to be fulfilled.

There are many who believe that there are people alive on the earth today that will be alive when the Lord returns. If that is true, then that means that some of the darkest, most intense days the world has ever known are right around the corner.

Not only that, but some of the most glorious days the church has ever experience are also right around the corner. We must be a people who are alert, watchful, full of understanding, and engaged in prayer.

How can we be a light to the Jewish people in their hour of need if we don’t understand what is going on with God’s kingdom plans and purposes?

It is time for the church to gain a Jerusalem-centric eschatology and cultivate a compassionate heart for the Jewish people.

It is time for the church to begin raising up, teaching, and discipling the emerging generation – not to do the things we’ve done, or experience the things we have. But rather to perhaps be the generation who both endures the greatest hardships the world has ever known, but to also experience and release the greatest glory the church has ever known.

Regardless of when it happens, there will be a generation who ushers in the Messiah back to the planet. The most crucial thing about that generation will be, “are they ready?” If so, who will have discipled them, prepared them, taught them to read the signs, sown into them a heart for Israel and the Jewish people, and cheered them on?

Even so, Lord come!