



"...the sons of Issachar who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do..." -1 Chron.12:32 **This text refers to one of the greatest prophetic shifts in Israel's history.*

1. We are in a time of great change in our nation and, in fact, in the nations of the earth. There is a shift taking place on many levels and consequently there is great confusion in our society regarding how we go forward. There is even confusion in the church about how we embrace this moment in our history. There are a number of emerging narratives in both culture and the church which seek to offer perspectives and solutions, some widely differing from one another. Yet the Lord has something to say in the midst of all that is going on that is quite different from our current national perspectives (Dan.7:1).
2. Jesus spoke often about times and seasons. Times and seasons often reflect the ebb and flow of the purposes of God. Jesus' own birth inaugurated a great shift in Israel's prophetic story.

*"Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, "Behold, **this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against ...that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.**"* -Lk.2:34-35

“Pilate therefore said to Him, “Are You a king then?” Jesus answered, “You say rightly that I am a king. For this [reason] I was born, and for this [reason] I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth...” -Jn.18:37

3. Jesus spoke about one particular season in world history more than any other. The Jews of Jesus’ day lived in a culture that was actively seeking its redemption at the hands of its long-awaited King. Many expected Jesus to fulfill ancient prophecies concerning Israel’s Messiah, the Son of David, who was both a political and military leader.
4. The national government of Israel was intertwined with its religion. But just like our nation today there were many different “political parties” working their own unique angles for their own reasons. Within the religious community there was stark disagreement about how to lead. Society itself was divided by wide ranging idealisms, from zealous nationalist like the Sicarii to compromising tax collectors like Matthew.
5. Racism was rampant in Israel, especially between the Jew and the Samaritan and the gentile Romans who hated the Jews. Even within the religious system of the day a perversion of the command to be holy resulted in a distinct racial superiority being prevalent in temple worship traditions.
6. The generation in which Jesus lived was ripe with what we might call a *Messianic consciousness*. That is, mixed with the supporting cast of political, national and societal tension, was an overall feeling that something was about to change -*that God was about to move*. **And He was, just not in the way that many people were expecting Him to.*
7. These volatile tensions and the belief that God was about to move created the optimum scenario for Jesus’ ministry. His words and works were like adding fuel to fire. He seemed to many as the answer to a perfect storm while to others He was dangerous and needed to be controlled. His message about another Kingdom seemed subversive to Roman authority while His healings and miracles lent to his overall credibility and popularity with the people.
8. The challenge for those that followed Jesus was somewhat mysterious. While they could sense that He was God’s answer to Israel’s national, spiritual and societal problems, they misunderstood both the timing and methods of God for Israel’s redemption.
9. Jesus came to judge sin, not Rome. Jesus came to expose and purify the hearts of His listeners, not to eradicate the wicked and set up His throne. Jesus came that He might die and give the Holy Spirit. Jesus promised His followers that there would be great trouble for them in the world because of Him but He would help them to stand up under it, to overcome the evil one and to be His witnesses in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.

10. The Bible makes two great promises regarding the end of the age. Sin and wickedness will increase in the nations and the Kingdom of God will shine with great glory in the nations.

“For 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.” -Is. 60:2

11. It is true that many are expecting God to move in this current hour of history but the way in which God moves and the goal of His movements are often very different than what we would expect. God desires to touch all nations and bring the work of His transformation to society. First, though, He promises to cleanse the heart of His people and bring them into agreement with His leadership.

“For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?” -1 Pt.4:17

“...for when Your judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.” – Is.26:9

12. The mercy of God is going to allow the culture of nations who persist in their wickedness to experience the consequences of their own sinful actions. Some will harden their hearts, and some will realize their need for a savior, and turn to Jesus. God is going to bring a corrective discipline to His people in order to reset the priorities of our hearts so that we may reflect His beauty and be fully usable to Him in this hour of history.

13. Jesus gives both an exhortation and a prophetic promise to the church in this hour.

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” -Rev.3:22

“Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness Like the stars forever and ever.” -Dan.12:3

Closing Prayer:

“that... the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what [He is doing]...” -Eph.1:17-18

