

## UNDERSTANDING THE TIMES - Part 8: Interpreting What You See

Now these were the numbers of the divisions that were equipped for war, and came to David at Hebron to turn over the kingdom of Saul to him, according to the word of the LORD...of the sons of Issachar who had **understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do**, their chiefs were two hundred; and all their brethren were at their command. (1 Chr 12:23, 32 NKJV)

**Spiritual Maturity**...Knowing who you are, what you're here for, and how life in the kingdom of God works!

### Ten-Week Study on UNDERSTANDING THE TIMES

- Week 1: Seeing "The Big Picture" **DONE**
- Week 2: God's Kingdom vs. The Culture **DONE**
- Week 3: The Fear of the Lord Is The Beginning of Wisdom **DONE**
- Week 4: God's Word Is the Plumb Line For Everything **DONE**
- Week 5: God's Heart For Seers **DONE**
- Week 6: Desiring the Greater Gifts **DONE**
- Week 7: Old Testament vs. New Testament Prophets **DONE**
- Week 8: Interpreting What You See **TODAY**
- Week 9: Applying What You've Interpreted
- Week 10: Walking In Discernment

### Interpreting What You See

#### - Hope Changes Everything!

- **HOPE**: The active, confident expectation of good based upon the character of God.
  - What is the key to hope?
  - 25 God has given me the responsibility of serving his church by proclaiming his entire message to you. 26 This message was kept secret for centuries and generations past, but now it has been revealed to God's people. 27 For God wanted them to know that the riches and glory of Christ are for you Gentiles, too. And **this is the secret: Christ lives in you. This gives you assurance of sharing his glory** ("Christ in you, the hope of glory." NIV). (Col 1:25-27 NLT-SE)
- What are **YOU** hoping for?
  - <sup>5</sup> Let all that I am **wait quietly** before God, for my **hope** is in him. <sup>6</sup> He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress where I will not be shaken. <sup>7</sup> My victory and honor come from God alone. He is my refuge, a rock where no enemy can reach me. <sup>8</sup> O my people, **trust in him** at all times. **Pour out your heart to him**, for God is our refuge. (Psa 62:5-8 NLT-SE)
  - Through Christ you have come to trust in God. And **you have placed your faith and hope in God** because he raised Christ from the dead and gave him great glory. (1 Pet 1:21 NLT-SE)
- Meaning of the **Olive Tree**
  - I am **like a flourishing olive tree**, anointed in the house of God. I trust in the unending love of God, His passion toward me is forever and ever. (Ps 52:8 PASSION)
  - <sup>7</sup> "Blessed are those who trust in the LORD and have made the LORD their **hope and confidence**. <sup>8</sup> They are like trees planted along a riverbank, with roots that reach deep into the water. Such trees are not bothered by the heat or worried by long months of drought. Their leaves stay green, and they never stop producing fruit. (Jer 17:7-8 NLT-SE)
- "What are **YOU** hoping God will do?"

## - Interpreting Prophetic Revelation

- **Components of Prophetic Revelation:** Each prophetic word is comprised of three different components. These components are the revelation, the interpretation, and the application. Each of these is often a distinct ingredient, but they blend together to comprise a prophetic word.
  - **Revelation**...is knowledge or information we could not have known unless it was sealed to us by God.
  - **Interpretation**...is the, "What is God saying?" or "What does this mean?" portion of prophecy.
 

Interpretation is a pivotal component of prophetic ministry since it involves understanding what God is saying. Interpretation is also where most people make mistakes. ~ **You May All Prophecy**, by Steve Thompson
  - **Application**...is the, "What do we do with this?" portion of prophecy. Many times, the application is not our job. Rather, it is left to the person receiving the word to determine what he or she is supposed to do as a result of the prophetic word.
- **Interdependence and Dependence:** Why does God speak to us in unusual ways? He wants us to realize our need the Spirit's help and that we were created to function as a body, the Body of Christ, together.
  - <sup>12</sup> The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. <sup>13</sup> For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. <sup>14</sup> Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. <sup>15</sup> If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. <sup>16</sup> And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body...<sup>18</sup> But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. <sup>19</sup> If they were all one part, where would the body be? <sup>20</sup> As it is, there are many parts, but one body. <sup>21</sup> The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" ...God has combined the members of the body...so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. (1 Cor 12:12-16, 18-21, 25 NIV)
  - Many times the person who gets the revelation is least gifted to interpret what is seen. On the other hand, those to whom interpretation comes consistently, are those who rarely get revelation. Application is a whole other matter and it frequently requires wisdom beyond experience. **This leaves us desperately lacking if we don't learn to work together in a way that fosters interdependence.**
- **Levels of Revelation:** All revelation is valuable, but some types of revelation are of a higher order than others.
  - **Lower levels of revelation** include spiritual impressions or perceptions, internal visions, and the still, small voice of God that we hear in our spirits. Each of these is a valid type of revelation, although of a lower level.
  - **Higher level revelations** would be open visions, angelic visitations, visitations of the Lord, vivid dreams, trances, being caught up in the Spirit, and other prophetic experiences. As a general rule, the less subjective way in which a revelation comes, the higher level it is.

## - A Real Life Example: Interpreting the Resurrection

- <sup>8</sup> Then the disciple who had reached the tomb first also went in, and he saw and believed— <sup>9</sup> for until then they still hadn't understood the Scriptures that said Jesus must rise from the dead. (John 20:8–9 NLT-SE)
- It is interesting that Jesus' own disciples struggled with "Understanding the Times" as the resurrection unfolded.
- These were the same men who had traveled, studied and ministered along side Jesus. Still, they seemed confused at times as to what was happening.
- As they moved through the Easter week, we see numerous examples of his own disciples failing to understand what was happening around them. Note the disciples' reaction to Jesus telling them that Judas would betray him...
 

<sup>21</sup> Now Jesus was deeply troubled, and he exclaimed, "I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me!"

<sup>22</sup> **The disciples looked at each other, wondering whom he could mean.** <sup>23</sup> The disciple Jesus loved was sitting next to Jesus at the table. <sup>24</sup> Simon Peter motioned to him to ask, "Who's he talking about?" <sup>25</sup> So that disciple leaned over to Jesus and asked, "Lord, who is it?"

<sup>26</sup> Jesus responded, "It is the one to whom I give the bread I dip in the bowl." And when he had dipped it, he gave it to Judas, son of Simon Iscariot. <sup>27</sup> When Judas had eaten the bread, Satan entered into him. Then Jesus told him, "Hurry and do what you're going to do." <sup>28</sup> **None of the others at the table knew what Jesus meant.** <sup>29</sup> Since Judas was their treasurer, some thought Jesus was telling him to go and pay for the food or to give some money to the poor. (John 13:21–29 NLT-SE)

- Even after the resurrection, Jesus' disciples were unclear about what had really happened until Jesus explained it to them. Why did they struggle to believe and understand? Did Jesus forget to warn them in advance about what was going to happen to him?
- Jesus had actually been predicting his death and resurrection for some time. Granted, he often spoke in deliberately vague terms. You can see how in these cases the disciples might not pick up on Jesus' meaning without help. For example, Jesus predicted his death and resurrection early in the gospel of John using this metaphor...

<sup>18</sup> But the Jewish leaders demanded, "What are you doing? If God gave you authority to do this, show us a miraculous sign to prove it."

<sup>19</sup> "All right," Jesus replied. **"Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."** (John 2:18–19 NLT-SE)

- But, there are other places where Jesus speaks plainly and directly about his approaching arrest, death, and resurrection...

From then on Jesus began to tell his disciples plainly that it was necessary for him to go to Jerusalem, and that **he would suffer many terrible things** at the hands of the elders, the leading priests, and the teachers of religious law. He would be **killed, but on the third day he would be raised from the dead.** (Matt 16:21 NLT-SE)

<sup>17</sup> As Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples aside privately and told them what was going to happen to him. <sup>18</sup> "Listen," he said, "we're going up to Jerusalem, where **the Son of Man will be betrayed** to the leading priests and the teachers of religious law. **They will sentence him to die.** <sup>19</sup> Then they will hand him over to the Romans to be **mocked, flogged** with a whip, and **crucified**. But on the third day he will be **raised from the dead.**" (Matt 20:17–19 NLT-SE)

- They had been specifically warned that Jesus would rise from the dead. So, why were the disciples so confused and frightened as the events of Easter week unfold?
- It's difficult to really know why. They were human, sure. In their eyes, they most likely thought they had been a disappointment to Jesus. And much of the teaching they had grown up with had been radically challenged by Jesus' words and actions.
- Because Jesus taught plainly at times and on other occasions in parables, they may have had a hard time knowing when he was speaking literally and when metaphorically. They had seen him perform astounding healings and miracles. Perhaps they simply couldn't believe his most dramatic claim - that he would die and rise from the grave!
- There are other scripture passages that may shed some light here as well. When Jesus was speaking prophetically about his death and resurrection, it wasn't just a warning. Take a look at these passages...

<sup>7</sup> Jesus replied, "You don't understand now what I am doing, but someday you will..." <sup>19</sup> I tell you this beforehand, so that **when it happens you will believe that I AM the Messiah.** (John 13:7, 19 NLT-SE)

After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered he had said this, and **they believed** both the Scriptures and what Jesus had said. (John 2:22 NLT-SE)

<sup>25</sup> Then Jesus said to them, "You foolish people! You find it so hard to believe all that the prophets wrote in the Scriptures. <sup>26</sup> Wasn't it clearly predicted that the Messiah would have to suffer all these things before entering his glory?" <sup>27</sup> **Then Jesus took them through the writings of Moses and all the prophets, explaining from all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.** (Luke 24:25–27 NLT-SE)

<sup>44</sup> Then he said, "When I was with you before, I told you that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and in the Psalms must be fulfilled." <sup>45</sup> **Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.** (Luke 24:44–45 NLT-SE)

- Many prophecies Scripture can be a little tricky to understand. You have to remember that they had only seen what they had seen. Not only that, but all these writings came together from the recollections from men, inspired and empowered by the Holy Spirit.
- We have the advantage of seeing the “bigger picture,” so we tend to look at Jesus’ words as warnings to the disciples. But the verses above say specifically that they wouldn’t be fully understood until after the events had occurred. The prophecies were made so that when the disciples began to remember Jesus’ words, they would see them as confirmation of who Jesus claimed to be.
- It is a mistake to chide the disciples for “not getting it.” Their faith was not weak and they were not ignorant (*Look at Peter’s sermon in Acts 3:12-26*). We are no different. We not only have the Bible, but commentaries and writings by some of the most brilliant theologians to live available to us regarding the End Times. Not only do we struggle to understand the unfolding of these “last days,” the experts themselves don’t always agree!
- We search the Bible for the promises of God, yet we often get overtaken by fear and doubt when things get tough. Sometimes it isn’t until after God has brought us through a trial that we are able to look back at Scripture and understand that He was with us from the beginning.
- God wants us to “Understand the Times.” They are his times! They are our times! But it will not happen apart from the power of his Spirit at work in our lives and the prophetic encouragement, exhortation and comfort we get from others in the Body of Christ.
- **God wants us to believe and grow in faith.** He wants us to look back at the events in our lives, re-examine what his Word has to say, and see how **hope** in his promises for our lives is confirmed there. **Hope changes everything!**