

Why Believers Must Have the Prophetic Discernment of the Sons of Issachar

Read Time: 5 Minutes 15 Seconds

There's a fascinating verse in 1 Chronicles 12 which lists the "the numbers of the men armed for battle who came to David at Hebron to turn Saul's kingdom over to him, as the LORD had said" (1 Chr. 12:23).

In the midst of impressive descriptions of large numbers of experienced warriors, we have this: "from Issachar, men who understood the times and knew what Israel should do—200 chiefs, with all their relatives under their command" (1 Chr. 12:32).

This was the smallest of all the groups listed, and there was no mention of their military prowess. But in many ways, they were among the most important elements of David's army. They "knew how to interpret the signs of the times, to determine how Israel should act" (NJPSV).

Today, more than ever, it is essential that we too understand the times and know what we as God's people should do. This is all the more true if we are spiritual leaders. We must know what time it is, understanding what God is doing, what Satan is doing, what the world is doing and what we should be doing.

Many Christians are fascinated with Bible prophecy, trying to match headlines with biblical verses as they attempt to calculate exactly when Jesus will return. (If this is your practice, I recommend using a pencil rather than a pen on your prophecy calendar.)

But are we asking the bigger question, namely, "How should we

be living? As God's people, what should we be doing?"

During the counterculture revolution of the 1960s, it was understandable that many church leaders thought we were in the time of final rebellion and apostasy. The decadence in our culture was unprecedented and the generation gap was never larger. Plus, Jerusalem had just returned to Jewish hands in the miraculous Six Day War in 1967. Surely this was a sign of the times.

The sexual revolution was sweeping the nation, leading not only to an exponential increase in heterosexual immorality, but also to the rise of gay activism. Coupled with this was the rise of militant feminism, along with things like the "God is dead" movement. Surely, we were near the end.

It was the era of sex, drugs, rock and roll and Eastern religion, and I was right in the thick of it, playing drums in a rock band and getting high day and night.

But there was something else going on at this time. There was a deep searching for God. We would get high and talk about spiritual things. We would speculate on the existence of the soul, on what happens after you die, on the meaning of life.

With so many young people dying for no reason in the war in Vietnam, with so much shaking going on in our country due to the assassinations of President Kennedy, Dr. King and Robert F. Kennedy, we were asking big questions and looking for something more than the American dream.

Unfortunately, most of the church did not recognize what was going on, looking at the outward signs rather than the inward search.

Even when God began to save a large number of hippies, radicals and rebels, bringing them into traditional churches (I was one of them, saved in 1971), most of the church still didn't realize what was happening.

As I have often commented (with pain in my heart), the church largely slept its way through the counterculture revolution and the Jesus Revolution. We failed to understand the times and, consequently, we failed to know what we as God's people should do.

And while other groups were mapping out long-term strategies—I'm speaking of gay liberationists and sexual anarchists and radical feminists and anti-religion nihilists and others—we were expecting the rapture. "We're out of here any moment now!"

The results of this have been catastrophic, morally and culturally and spiritually.

We cannot afford to make the same mistakes again today.

That means we need to see beyond the outward, beyond the rioting of Antifa and BLM; beyond the radical LGBTQ agenda; beyond the "Shout your abortion" movement; beyond the rise of the religious "none's" and "dones."

We need to understand what is driving these movements and ideologies, what is going on in the hearts and minds of those who are marching and protesting.

We need insight into why so many are dropping out of churches or what motivates those who are push for equal outcomes and not just equal opportunities.

We need to see past the rebellion. And the anger. And the extremism. And the immorality. We need to see into the spiritual realm and not just react to the natural realm.

As we do, we will recognize that many young people are passionate about justice, but they are misguided in the application of their zeal. They want to side with the underdog and the outcast, but they are being duped and misled in the process. They long for a Marxist type of utopia, but they are

leaning on the arm of the flesh and seeking to bring about what only the gospel can ultimately accomplish, partly in this world and fully in the world to come.

Having these spiritual insights doesn't change the way we vote, nor does it stop us from opposing destructive ideologies and mindsets and movements. And it doesn't make evil any less evil.

But it does help us take positive action rather than simply react. It does help us see the humanity of the people whose ideologies we reject. It does help us to find ways to reach out to them and point them to the only One who can bring justice, the only One who embodies mercy, who can truly transform.

The bottom line is that we cannot afford to sleep our way through another revolution.

Let the sons and daughters of Issachar arise and show us the way. {eoa}

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