

# HOLY LAND KEY

UNLOCKING END-TIMES PROPHECY

THROUGH THE LIVES OF

GOD'S PEOPLE IN ISRAEL

### RAY BENTLEY

WITH GENEVIEVE GILLESPIE



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THE HOLY LAND KEY
PUBLISHED BY WATERBROOK PRESS
12265 Oracle Boulevard, Suite 200
Colorado Springs, Colorado 80921

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Trade Paperback ISBN 978-0-307-73206-4 eBook ISBN 978-0-307-73207-1

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Cover design by Faceout Studio | Tim Green

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Published in the United States by WaterBrook Multnomah, an imprint of the Crown Publishing Group, a division of Random House LLC, New York, a Penguin Random House Company.

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The Cataloging-in-Publication Data is on file with the Library of Congress.

Printed in the United States of America 2014—First Edition

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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THE SPRING FEASTS WERE PROPHECIES COMMUNICATED through required religious observances, foretelling the fulfillment of God's promise to send a Messiah. For thousands of years the spring feasts of the Lord drove home the promise and its fulfillment: the Messiah is coming. Look for Him.

Now we will look at the fall feasts, observances that prophesy God's work still to come. Yet we anticipate them with great hope. As the Feast of Trumpets shows, the summer harvest will end with the sound of a trumpet. And with that sound, the fall feasts begin. These feasts of the Lord are vivid pictures of the events that the church eagerly awaits.

#### The Feast of Trumpets (Yom Teruah)

In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall have a sabbathrest, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation. (Leviticus 23:24)

The sound of a trumpet is a powerful and recurring symbol in Scripture. When the Lord instituted the Feast of Trumpets, He was letting us know that something

significant would happen. The Feast of Trumpets is also called Rosh Hashanah (Yom Teruah in Hebrew). Teruah, traditionally understood as the blowing of a ram's horn, is also translated as joyful noise or sound, as in Psalm 89: "Blessed are the people who know the joyful sound!" (verse 15).

I love what Zola Levitt, a Jewish believer who is now with the Lord, wrote:

The High Priest actually stood on the southwestern parapet of the Temple and blew the trumpet so that it could be heard in the surrounding fields. At that instant, the faithful would stop harvesting, even if there were more crops to bring in, and leave immediately for the worship services.<sup>1</sup>

The Feast of Trumpets foreshadows the end of an era and the rapture of the church:

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the *trumpet of God*. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words. (1 Thessalonians 4:16–18)

When that trumpet sounds, the greatest miracle since Jesus rose from the dead will take place:

We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. (1 Corinthians 15:51–53)

#### Why the Feast of Trumpets Is Unique

The Feast of Trumpets is the only Jewish celebration that occurs on the first day of the month, at the new moon, when the moon is dark except for a thin crescent. All other Jewish holidays occur later in their respective months, when the moon is bright. In ancient Israel the new moon was normally celebrated by short trumpet blasts, but the New Moon of Tishri was celebrated by long trumpet blasts, signifying the uniqueness and sacredness of the seventh month.<sup>2</sup>

After the Diaspora, when Jews were scattered all over the world, Rosh Hashanah began to be celebrated over a two-day period so that the Jews living in different time zones could be included. They began to call it "one long day." The Feast of Trumpets became a mystery. *No one could say the exact day or hour it began.* 

#### Blowing the Shofar

God instructed Moses to "make two silver trumpets for yourself;...you shall use them for calling the congregation and for directing the movement of the camps" (Numbers 10:2). By Solomon's time, 120 priests were sounding silver trumpets in the temple (see 2 Chronicles 5:12). But the shofar is the trumpet used for the Feast of Trumpets. The sound of the shofar carries memories for Jews of their origins and history.

When Abraham, in obedience to God, took his son Isaac to the top of Mount Moriah to offer him as a sacrifice, an angel held him back. A ram caught in the bushes became the substitute offering. That is why a ram's horn is a powerful reminder of Isaac's deliverance and Abraham's obedience—and how their story foreshadowed the sacrifice of our heavenly Father's own Son (see Genesis 22:10–14).

The ram's horn has since trumpeted momentous Jewish events from war to celebrations, from Joshua's victory at Jericho to "proclaim liberty throughout all the land to all its inhabitants" in the Year of Jubilee (Leviticus 25:10).

Perhaps one year very soon, on a Feast of Trumpets, the Lord will descend with a shout, blow the shofar of God, and take the church home in a glorious instant. And we will be spared as Isaac was!

#### The Next Event

The dress rehearsal known as the Feast of Trumpets is the next event to be fulfilled on the prophetic calendar. This feast tells us about the fulfillment of the ancient prophets' visions surrounding the rapture of the church. The trumpet is poised, ready to herald the end of the summer harvest.

Rosh Hashanah, which in Hebrew means "head of the year," is known by various Hebrew idioms in addition to the Feast of Trumpets: the Wedding of the Messiah, the Hidden Day, the Time of Jacob's Trouble, the Day of the Awakening Blast, the Day of Judgment, and the Coronation of the Messiah. Even these alternate names for the observance tell us something about this feast and what it means. Let's look at a few.

#### The Wedding of Messiah

"Blow the trumpet in Jerusalem!... [C] all the people together.... Call the bridegroom from his quarters and the bride from her private room" (Joel 2:15–16, NLT). A royal wedding is announced by the sound of trumpets, and the wedding is blessed under the traditional canopy.<sup>3</sup>

Marriages in ancient Israel were arranged by parents, like Abraham did for his son Isaac. Typically the bridegroom would go to the house of the bride-to-be (sometimes their first meeting) and bring three things: the wedding contract, a skin of wine, and the bride price. After the father approved the bride price, the young man would present his vows of love. A glass of wine would be poured, and the betrothal contract then became a legal document, a *ketubah*. The couple's status changed to betrothed, and they were legally married, though the wedding ceremony was still some time away.

With all the transactions completed, the groom took his betrothed aside to tell her that he was going away to build their bridal chamber. When the chamber was finished, he would return for her. Who decides when the chamber is ready? The groom tells his bride that he does not know exactly when the wedding will begin. Only his *father* determines the day and hour (see Mark 13:32).

This is when the bride begins the wait for the day when her groom will come to

capture her. She is confident of his return for two reasons: the vows he pledged and the price he paid. Meanwhile, she wears a veil to signify that she is taken.

She receives regular progress reports about her new home. The foundation is laid. The walls are up. The doors are hung. Now the roof! Her excitement grows. Any day her beloved will come. She gathers her closest friends, and they begin watching through the night, two by two, waiting to hear the shouts of young men as they race toward her father's home (see Matthew 25:6–7). This gives her just minutes to wake up, ready to be "raptured" from her own home.

Traditionally the Jewish father waited until the middle of the night, when his son was fast asleep and tired from all his hard work. I can picture the proud father gently shaking his son and whispering, "It's time." Time to claim his bride.

When Jesus told His disciples, "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself" (John 14:3), He was giving the speech of a Jewish bridegroom. He paid the ultimate bride price. "Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold,…but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:18–19).

He gave us our ketubah (our contract) through the promises in His Word, and He invites us to the most glorious wedding that will ever take place (Revelation 19:7–9). "Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!" (verse 9).

#### The Hidden Day

Because no one could know the exact day of Rosh Hashanah (remember, it was celebrated over a two-day period), it was also called the Hidden Day (*Yom HaKeseh*). The term *keseh* or *keceh* is derived from the Hebrew root *kacah*, which means "to conceal, cover, or hide."

When Jesus said, "No one knows about that day or hour" (Matthew 24:36, NIV), He meant the day of His return is unknown. But in another layer of meaning, to the Jewish mind, He was also using an idiom for Rosh Hashanah, the "hidden day."

Four times in the New Testament we read, "I am coming as a thief," "I will come

upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you," "the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night," "the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night" (Revelation 16:15; 3:3; 2 Peter 3:10; 1 Thessalonians 5:2). A thief does not arrive when you expect him. Instead, it's indefinite, just like a Jewish wedding! An unexpected arrival at an unknown time.

Alfred Edersheim, a nineteenth-century Jewish believer, wrote a number of wonderful books connecting the Scriptures to their Jewish background. In one he explained why the high priest was called a thief in the night. Originally, God supernaturally ignited the holy fire on the temple altar. Afterward, at least two priests were to constantly mind the flame to make sure it never went out. The high priest would occasionally make rounds during the night to ensure the priests had not fallen asleep. If they did, God forbid, the high priest would take fire from the altar and light the sleeping priests' garments; they would awaken with a fright, tearing their burning clothes off, exposing their nakedness.<sup>5</sup>

Now read Jesus's words: "Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame" (Revelation 16:15). We do not know the day or hour of His return, but we can hold fast and tend the flame of our faith, that it may never die.

#### The Time of Jacob's Trouble

Remember that Rosh Hashanah falls in the darkest part of the lunar cycle. The fulfillment of the Feast of Trumpets sets the stage for the tribulation on earth, the Day of the Lord, when God's wrath will be poured out on Israel's enemies and the world will be brought to judgment.

Zephaniah and Amos described days of darkness and gloominess (Zephaniah 1:15; Amos 5:20). Further, the dark moon of Rosh Hashanah augurs Joel's prophecy:

The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood,

Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD.

And it shall come to pass

That whoever calls on the name of the LORD

Shall be saved. (Joel 2:31–32)

Oh, the hope that last line gives! Judgment will bring redemption and a fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant when, as Paul prophesied, "All Israel will be saved" (Romans 11:26).

#### The Coronation of Messiah

The custom regarding new kings of Israel and Judah required that they be enthroned on the first day of Tishri, the seventh month—the Feast of Trumpets. This feast foreshadows the coronation of the Messiah. Daniel wrote, "I watched till thrones were put in place.... The court was seated, and the books were opened" (7:9–10). Judgment day had come, just as Rosh Hashanah warns. But look what follows:

One like the Son of Man,
Coming with the clouds of heaven!...
Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom,
That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him.
(verses 13–14)

In Revelation 4:1–11, John described the ultimate coronation after judgment. He heard a voice "like a trumpet" just before he was taken up "in the Spirit" and brought before a throne illuminated by a rainbow of jewels and a crystal sea. The One who sat upon the throne shone like jasper and sardius. Four living creatures (the ones we met in the Mazzaroth with the faces of a lion, ox, eagle, and man) and twenty-four elders fell before Him, worshiping, casting their crowns, and giving glory and honor and thanks, saying:

You are worthy, O Lord,
To receive glory and honor and power;
For You created all things,
And by Your will they exist and were created.
(Revelation 4:11)

The Feast of Trumpets is the dress rehearsal for the glorious commencement of the kingdom of God on earth.

#### The Feast of Atonement (Yom Kippur)

Also the tenth day of this seventh month shall be the Day of Atonement. It shall be a holy convocation for you; you shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire to the LORD. (Leviticus 23:27)

Moses came down from Mount Sinai, his arms wrapped around two large clay tablets. He'd spent forty days in God's presence. Forty days on holy ground, receiving the Law, seeing the words miraculously inscribed on the tablets.

He must have been horrified to see the decadent, rebellious scene in the Hebrew camp. His people were dancing and worshiping a golden calf, indulging in food and drink. Furious, Moses threw the tablets down, smashing them into pieces. But in spite of his anger, Moses returned to the Lord to seek atonement for his people. He pleaded, "Forgive their sin—but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book which You have written" (Exodus 32:32).

That dash between "forgive their sin" and "but if not" is a long pause, the like of which occurs nowhere else in Scripture. Understand what Moses was saying. He begged the Lord to forgive the people. But if not...

Moses's willingness to be stricken from God's book is a powerful foreshadowing of the sacrifice of Jesus and the story behind the Day of Atonement. This day, also known as Yom Kippur, is the sixth feast and occurs on the tenth day of Tishri,

ten days after the Feast of Trumpets. *Kippur* is from the Hebrew word *kaphar*, meaning "to cover." This is the most sacred and solemn day in the Jewish year. It is designated as a day of confession, a day to "afflict your souls" (Leviticus 23:27). Prior to AD 70, the people fasted and repented while the high priest entered the Holy of Holies, first to make a sacrifice on his own behalf, and then on behalf of the nation (see Leviticus 16:1–34; 23:27). Today, the main focus of Yom Kippur centers around synagogue services, often decorated in white to symbolize purity and cleansing from transgression.<sup>6</sup>

The blood of bulls sacrificed on Yom Kippur covered sins. In contrast, the promised Messiah, Yeshua, took sins away forever: "He took blood into that Most Holy Place, but not the blood of goats and calves. He took his own blood, and with it he secured our salvation forever" (Hebrews 9:12, NLT).

The Day of Atonement will be fulfilled by the second coming of Jesus the Messiah, when He returns to establish His kingdom. It will be an emotional day for the Jewish people when they see their Messiah *and know him* for the first time:

And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn....

In that day a fountain shall be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness. (Zechariah 12:10; 13:1)

According to Zechariah 14:4–5, on that day, the Lord's feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, and the mount will be split from east to west, creating a large valley. Half the mountain will move north, half south, and people will run through the valley as if fleeing an earthquake. "Thus the LORD my God will come" (verse 5). Christ will touch down on the Mount of Olives for all to see. This is the day that "all Israel will be saved" (Romans 11:26).

#### The Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot)

The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the Feast of Tabernacles for seven days to the LORD. On the first day there shall be a holy convocation. (Leviticus 23:34–35)

The trumpet has called us home. The Messiah returns and sits on the throne. What's next? What God has always desired. God has intended all along to dwell or *tabernacle* with His people.

On the first Day of Atonement, the children of Israel wondered if they could be forgiven—until Moses came down from the mountain after another forty days, his face shining with God's glory. Atonement had been made. God declared His desire to tabernacle among them: "And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them. According to all that I show you, that is, the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings, just so you shall make it" (Exodus 25:8–9).

The first Day of Atonement was the tenth day of the month Tishri. Overflowing with joy and thanksgiving, the nation for the next five days gathered all the materials needed to build the tabernacle, which would house the ark of the covenant and God's divine presence. Moses asked those with willing hearts to bring an offering; the people gave abundantly, beyond what was needed, until Moses had to ask them to stop (see Exodus 36:6–7).

Each year during the Feast of Tabernacles, the fifteenth day of the seventh month, the seventh full moon of the year, devout Jews build shelters outside their homes in which to worship the Lord for seven days. They do this to remember that God *tabernacled* among the people in the wilderness. Leviticus 23:39–40 describes the feast: "Also on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the fruit of the land, you shall keep the feast of the LORD for seven days; on the first day there shall be a sabbath-rest, and on the eighth day a sabbath-rest. And you shall take for yourselves on the first day the fruit of beautiful trees, branches of palm trees, the boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook; and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God for seven days."

God intended this feast to help future generations "know that I made the children of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God" (verse 43).

This last feast of the year, celebrated with great joy, was also called the Feast of Ingathering, because it was observed after all the crops had been harvested and gathered.<sup>7</sup>

Passover saw the barley harvest in the spring. Pentecost ushered in the summer harvest of wheat. The fall feasts encompassed the fruit harvests of grapes, pomegranates, and olives. This is recorded in the book of Revelation: "Thrust in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe" (14:18). The book of Revelation is actually about the fulfillment of the fall feasts. We cannot fully appreciate or understand Revelation without a knowledge of the fall feasts.

This harvest is both a time of judgment and of salvation. The tribulation described in the book of Revelation will see the greatest harvest of souls in history.

After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" (Revelation 7:9–10)

The Feast of Tabernacles is a dress rehearsal, anticipating and foreshadowing the day when the world can rejoice as the prophets foretold:

And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. (Zechariah 14:16)

Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. (Revelation 21:3)

We see in the feast a prophecy of the thousand-year reign of the Messiah on earth. Now His Kingdom begins. Glorious!

The feasts are not a law for Christians. We are not obligated to observe them. But oh what we are missing! If you are invited to the dress rehearsal of a special event, you might want to attend if the practice will help you participate in a more meaningful way.

When Jesus comes again, He is coming for His bride, the church. He is planning the marriage supper of the Lamb in heaven (see Revelation 19:7–10). You don't want to miss the dress rehearsal—especially if you are in the wedding party.



THE FEASTS OF THE LORD, WHILE STILL OBSERVED by observant Jews, also coincide with events that shake the world. For instance, in 2008 on the day of the Feast of Trumpets, we heard a trumpet call that set off alarms around the world. The Dow Jones Industrial Average plunged 777 points, putting stock markets around the world under great stress. During that week of financial upset, we saw the beginning of a slide into economic decline that set the stage for what I call the Season of Destiny.

I consider the 2008 stock market crash an important signal. It was the beginning of a period of anxiety, uncertainty, and worldwide financial insecurity. I find the repeated occurrence of the number seven in the timing of this economic reversal interesting in view of its biblical significance.

Professor Nicholas Boyle, president of Magdalene College, Cambridge University, wrote a book titled *2014: How to Survive the Next World Crisis*. His theory is that every century is defined by what happens in the first twenty years. He believes another dramatic event will occur in 2014 or 2015 that will determine the course of this century. Over the last five hundred years, a cataclysmic event of international significance has occurred in the middle of the second decade of each century, sparking wars, religious conflict, or peace.<sup>1</sup>

"So what will be the great event that...will both symbolize and determine the character of the twenty-first century?" Boyle wrote. "It is likely that the present

turmoil in world economics is leading up to that Great Event which will either resolve the crisis of the next seven years or so or mark its catastrophic conclusion."<sup>2</sup>

Also, four significant celestial events—signals—have been predicted by NASA for 2014 and 2015. They involve the appearance of four blood moons (total lunar eclipses) on feast days. We will look at their importance in chapter 20.

#### Today, God Is Building an Ark

As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man. (Luke 17:26)

God established a pattern with the story of the great flood and Noah's ark. In those events He gave us a striking example of first seeing the natural event and then the spiritual application. This is true of the prophetic revelations throughout Scripture.

Remember the earlier discussion of patterns? God establishes patterns of events to help us understand the past and the future. And the apostle Paul reiterated the principle in 1 Corinthians 15:46 that one of the most consistent divine patterns is the natural first and then the spiritual: "The spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual." The account of Noah's ark is told in some form in almost every ancient culture's history and literature. This suggests that God wanted to warn not just the Jews, who would receive the Hebrew Scriptures, but also the Gentiles.

Noah's name in Hebrew means "rest" or "comfort." On the surface his life seemed far from restful or comfortable. He received a terrible word from the Lord, decrying the wickedness of humanity and vowing destruction of the earth. Noah and his family would be the exception. In a world filled with hatred and violence, he stood out as a "just man" who "walked with God" (Genesis 6:9).

He spent 120 years building an ark of gopher wood according to the specific instructions the Lord gave him. The ark's dimensions and design were mandated. There is no doubt that Noah was jeered, questioned, and ridiculed as he built this huge ship. When he warned the people of impending judgment, they likely saw nothing more than a victim of deception or possibly a madman. But Noah's years of

obedience and hard work were rewarded when the Lord called to him, "Come into the ark, you and your household" (Genesis 7:1). The ark's one door opened to Noah's family and his zoo. Shortly afterward the rain began to fall.

Noah witnessed the flooding of the earth, riding out a storm of, well, biblical proportions. He was aware that the rest of humanity was lost in the churning waters. He and his family eventually faced the task of rebuilding and repopulating the earth.

Jesus connected His coming Kingdom to the flood and used the story of Noah to warn us of God's judgment and to give us a picture of His mercy and grace. The story points the way to salvation: through a door. Do you see the pattern and yet another example of "first the natural and afterward the spiritual"?

Since God "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4), He established a pattern for salvation. Noah's family entered the ark through one door. Thousands of years later the pattern was repeated in the gospel of John when Jesus said, "I am the door" and "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 10:9; 14:6).

Noah's name, in spite of the tumultuous life he lived, also foreshadowed what Jesus came to offer: "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). The arrival of His Kingdom will finally bring rest to a weary world.

#### The New Ark of Israel

In 1897 in Basel, Switzerland, Theodor Herzl, known as the father of Zionism, began to build a new "ark" by organizing the first Zionist Congress. Herzl was not a religious man, but God used him to begin the fulfillment of prophecy: the rebirth of Israel after nearly two thousand years.

With approximately two hundred delegates from seventeen countries in agreement, Herzl defined their primary goal: "Zionism aims at establishing for the Jewish people a publically and assured home in Palestine." The word *Zion* is the ancient spiritual name for Jerusalem: "Therefore thus says the Lord God: 'Behold, I lay in

Zion a stone for a foundation, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation'" (Isaiah 28:16).

Herzl wrote in his diary, "In Basel I founded the Jewish State...maybe in five years, certainly in fifty, everyone will realize it." The fulfillment of Ezekiel 36–37 had begun. Fifty years later, on November 29, 1947, the United Nations approved Resolution 181, which called for partitioning Palestine into two states: one for the Jewish people and one for Palestinians. The next year the independent state of Israel was born on May 14, 1948.

God is building an ark for His chosen people through the nation of Israel. He continues to call His people back to the Promised Land, but in this regathering they are not coming just from Babylon, as they did centuries ago. This time they are coming from all over the world.

Israel is an ark, offering a homeland for a weary people. As Noah's ark was a sign of judgment and salvation, so the rebirth of Israel is a sign to the world that the Lord's kingdom is coming soon.

"For the LORD shall build up Zion; He shall appear in His glory.... This will be written for the generation to come, that a people yet to be created may praise the LORD" (Psalm 102:16, 18). The phrase "generation to come" in Hebrew means the last generation. Who will be the last generation? Those who see Zion being built up, which we are witnessing today. You and I could be part of the last generation.

#### The End of the Age Begins

Many years ago a friend introduced me to Arnold Fruchtenbaum. A graduate of Dallas Theological Seminary, he has written a number of books that bring us a rich new understanding of the Jewish roots of Christianity. In *Footsteps of the Messiah*, Fruchtenbaum discusses the Olivet discourse and the signs of Jesus's return. Every Christian is eager to know the signs of Christ's coming. This was true as well of his first followers.

"What will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?" His disciples

had asked Jesus. He answered with one specific sign: "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains" (Matthew 24:3, 7–8, NIV).

Earlier, Jesus spoke of wars between various nations, but this alone was not the sign of the end of the age. He defined exactly when the end would begin, saying, "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom." This has a specific meaning.

Fruchtenbaum writes: "This expression is a Hebrew idiom for a world war. What Jesus stated here is that when there is a world war, rather than merely a local war, that world war would signal that the end of the age had begun." 5

That could make World War I (1914–1918) the beginning of the end of the age, the first of many "birth pains." During that war something miraculous happened in Jerusalem (in 1917). The British general Edmund Allenby marched with his army into Jerusalem on December 9, 1917, the eve of Hanukkah. The general dismounted and entered the city on foot out of respect for the holy city. After four hundred years of Turkish rule, the Turks fled Jerusalem, surrendering the city in a bloodless battle.

Liberating Jerusalem from the Turks was another step toward building the new ark of Israel. While Hanukkah is not one of the seven ordained feasts, it is the most historically documented Jewish holiday. Called the Feast of Lights, Hanukkah celebrates the rededication of the temple and independence from oppression in 165 BC.<sup>6</sup> Jesus celebrated Hanukkah as the Feast of Dedication (see John 10:22). The symbolism of General Allenby's victory on the eve of Hanukkah was not lost on the Jewish people.

#### Predictions and Patterns

Many prophecies in the Bible have multiple fulfillments. God establishes patterns to help us understand and learn from the past. The events and prophecies of the past also are prophecies for the future. For instance, Noah's ark looks ahead to Israel as

the ark in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The near-sacrifice of Isaac fore-shadows Jesus's death on a cross. In Israel's long history of scattering and regathering, each cycle brings us closer to the Messiah's appearance.

Like my history book with the overlaying transparencies, in which I turn pages to flesh out the past, we can lay down some transparencies of the future and try to get an idea of what is coming.

#### The Fifty-Years Pattern

Patterns give us a window to the future. One of the patterns revolves around the concept of fifty years and the Jewish year of Jubilee. "For six years you may plant your fields and prune your vineyards and harvest your crops, but during the seventh year the land will enjoy a Sabbath year of rest to the LORD," God told His people. "Count off seven Sabbath years, seven years times seven, adding up to forty-nine years in all. Then on the Day of Atonement of the fiftieth year, blow the trumpets loud and long throughout the land" (Leviticus 25:3–4, 8–9, NLT).

The fiftieth year became the Year of Jubilee, when all hired workers were set free and all bond slaves released. All land was restored to its original owner, and all debts were forgiven. This holy, life-giving year was ushered in with celebration.

Think back to Theodor Herzl and his 1897 proclamation of a Jewish state. Fifty years later, in 1947, the United Nations ratified Israel's statehood.

We talked about the miracle of General Allenby's liberation of Jerusalem in 1917. Exactly fifty years later, in 1967, the Six-Day War put East Jerusalem and the Temple Mount back into the hands of the Jewish people. Soldiers wept as they prayed freely for the first time at the Western Wall, the closest they could come to worshiping where the temple once stood.

What will we see fifty years into the future?

#### Revival

God promised Abraham, "In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Genesis 12:3). This is an amazing promise that propels the blessings of Abraham far into

the future. The prophecies and patterns of Abraham's life set into motion the plan to bless the world through the Abrahamic Covenant. Every time God visibly fulfills prophecy concerning the Jewish people and Israel, He pours out His Holy Spirit on the church, and the church is renewed and reawakened. Within seven years of the first Zionist Congress, God began to move in a powerful way, by His Holy Spirit, in and through the church.

When the Spirit falls, we see renewed hearts, changed and blessed lives. Reading a history of revivals gives one the sense of a great pattern designed to impact not just the church but the secular world as well.

#### The Welsh Revival

The 1904 revival that broke out in Wales changed that small nation. Evan Roberts was a young coal miner who prayed fervently for revival. He was given a vision: a check endorsed to him in the amount of one hundred thousand souls.

Roberts and a handful of people began meeting in a tiny church, praying together for the vision to be fulfilled. As they waited on the Lord, the Holy Spirit was poured out, and a great revival swept through Wales. Taverns and brothels were closed for lack of business. Meetings were held almost every evening for more than a year. More than 150,000 souls made commitments to follow Jesus. Relationships were healed. Drunkenness and theft diminished. People worked more diligently, paid their bills more regularly. The whole society was changed.<sup>7</sup>

#### Azusa Street

Two years later William J. Seymour, an African American preacher and the son of former slaves, became an answer to prayer. In 1906 a small and faithful group of women gathered to petition the Lord for revival in Los Angeles. While they prayed one day, Pastor Seymour—a man blind in one eye—knocked on their door. Wondering what this stranger wanted, they opened the door a crack. With quiet confidence, Seymour told them he had come in response to their prayers.

Seymour and a small band of followers began meeting in a home on Bonnie Brea Street. As he preached on the power and manifestation of the Holy Spirit, revival broke out and their numbers grew. They leased a rundown building at 312 Azusa Street. Originally built as an African Methodist Episcopal church in a poor section of town, it had since served as a wholesale house, a lumberyard, a tombstone shop, and a stable with rooms for rent upstairs. Seymour and his wife, Jennie, cleaned and prepared the building for services, installing benches of simple planks set on nail kegs. These were humble circumstances, but it didn't stop people from every level of society from coming to hear Seymour preach. They were experiencing the presence of God's Spirit.

God's glory would appear as a cloud or mist that would fill the room and glow. Meetings went on around the clock. Some people came with great faith and a desire to participate. Others came with skepticism—until they were unable to resist what they saw. The blind could see, the deaf could hear, and the lame could walk. For more than seven years, God manifested His glory through healings, salvation, and great miracles.

#### Spiritual Explosion

Two strong church movements grew out of that revival: the Pentecostal and charismatic churches that are credited with spearheading the fastest-growing segment of Christianity around the world. Remember, just a few years before these revivals broke out, the first Zionist Congress in 1897 initiated plans for the state of Israel. As God began gathering His people to the homeland He had promised to Abraham, so He also called His church back to Pentecost of the first-century, to salvation, to holiness, to the power of the Holy Spirit, and looking for the imminent return of Jesus.

The twentieth century progressed through two world wars, reinforcing the great sign of the end of the age: nation against nation. The prophet Isaiah's question, "Can a country be born in a day?" (66:8, NIV), was answered when Israel was recognized as a sovereign nation on May 14, 1948.

In the natural world we saw a new nation. The result? A spiritual explosion, as God raised up voices and ministries that began to impact the world. In 1949, the year after the rebirth of Israel, twenty-nine-year-old Billy Graham launched a crusade in Los Angeles that vaulted him into the public eye. He was known universally as a powerful evangelist who ultimately preached to more people in person than anyone else in history. Two years later, in 1951, another twenty-nine-year-old—Bill Bright—launched a worldwide ministry on the campus of UCLA, energizing thousands of young volunteers with a passion for evangelism and discipleship. Those are just two of many who answered God's call.

Right after the Six-Day War in 1967, the Jesus People revival of the late sixties and seventies captured many hearts—including mine—and gave birth to the modern messianic movement as thousands of Jews accepted Jesus as their Messiah.

We are living in a time of unprecedented growth for Christianity. According to statistics provided by the Center for the Study of Global Christianity, some 2.3 billion Christians were alive in 2010. The largest single block, some 588 million, is still found in Europe. Latin America, however, is already close behind with 544 million. Africa has more than 493 million. And Asia has 352 million. One estimate is that by 2025 there will be 2.6 billion believers in the world.<sup>8</sup>

The Muslim world, too, is experiencing a surge of faith as reports of Jesus revealing Himself through supernatural dreams and visions emerge. During the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979, there were barely five hundred known Christian believers in the country. By the 1980s there were a few thousand. Now, Christian workers in Iran believe there are a few million Iranian believers. God's work in the lives of Muslims is fascinating. Remember, He made a promise to Ishmael when Abraham sent his first son into the desert. We are hearing reports of dreams and visions that reveal Jesus to Muslims in the Arab world and in nations such as Iran. For more information, I recommend Tom Doyle's book *Dreams and Visions* and his account of how Jesus is awakening the Muslim world.

I recently visited Iraq, where I met Muslims who shared their miraculous stories of coming to Christ and the high cost of following the beloved Savior they call Isa.

The outpouring of God's Spirit will continue to reach deeper and wider into populations of people who are hungry for the truth. "I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions" (Joel 2:28), the Lord promised.

Peter repeated those words on Pentecost in the first century. But remember, the promise hinges on an era—the last days.



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