

Understanding the Times (1 Chr 12.32)

Building a House for God's Name: Studies in 1 & 2 Chronicles

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. We live in an hour of human history that is tumultuous. All around us we are witnessing an increased full-frontal assault against the things of God and against his natural order for creation. We experience this in our generation through the maturation of cultural and societal revolutions that have been at work within society for several generations.
- B. We live in times marked by the widespread decay of public morality, the death of institutions, and the growing acceptance of immorality and deception on a global scale.
- C. The primary need for the church in this hour of human history is to be *filled with the knowledge of God* (relationship with him) and *wisdom* (a life ordered by what God defines as good).
- D. The prophet Daniel prophesied that in times of extreme trouble, it would be those who *know God* who are able to stand firm and take action. These people will also possess the grace necessary to bring others into understanding.

³²He shall seduce with flattery those who violate the covenant, but the people who know their God shall stand firm and take action. ³³And the wise among the people shall make many understand (Dan 11.32-33)

- E. The Scripture warns of days when a society casts off the ways of God and exchanges them wholesale for evil.

²The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his Anointed, saying, ³“Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us.” (Ps 2.2-3)

²⁰Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter! (Isa 5.20)

⁹The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, ¹⁰and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they have refused to love the truth and so be saved. ¹¹Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false (2 Thes 2.9-11)

¹Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, ²through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared (1 Tim 4.1-2)

II. THE SONS OF ISSACHAR (1 CHR 12.32)

³²Of Issachar, men who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do (1 Chr 12.32)

- A. 1 Chronicles 11-12 gives a portrait of the events surrounding David's coronation as king over all of Israel. These chapters highlight several theological realities that went into David's growing favor as king, as well as demonstrating how the Lord showed *strong support* to David by setting around him courageous, gifted, and faithful leaders to provide help.
- B. These chapters give us many thematic insights into living in transitional, or even liminal times. They speak to theological perspectives of navigating (both among leaders and among the people) of navigating “in-between” seasons when the old way is dying but the new way is not yet established. In these kinds of moments, God often leads in similar ways, and these chapters provide us with many insights into God's leadership and our response in such moments.
- C. In 1 Chronicles 12.23-40, the author narrates the tidal wave of support that came to David from the tribes as he established his reign in Jerusalem.

- D. The striking thing about this passage is that in the midst of narrating the multitudes of warriors and armies that came to David, the author *highlights* this seeming small number of men from Issachar. The break from the narrative emphasizes the importance of these 200 men. The Chronicler makes two observations about them.
1. ***Had understanding of the times***: This means that these men from Issachar had a pulse on what was going on in their day. Yes, they understood the cultural, political, and societal landscape of Israel and its significance — but even more than that, they understood what *God was doing* in their season.
 2. ***Knew what Israel ought to do***: The value of their understanding of the times was not merely academic, analytic, or critical. Rather, their understanding led to *action*, as they perceived the implications of the times and how Israel was to respond in real life.

III. BECOMING A SON OF ISSACHAR

- A. **Worship**: The most important aspect of our lives as followers of Jesus is *gathering for worship* (1 Cor 12-14; Eph 5.15-20; Col 3.16; Heb 10.24-25). The entire life of our spiritual family is to be ordered around *worship rightly given to the King* upon the throne (1 Chr 16.8; 2 Chr 7.14; Hos 6.1-3; Joel 2.12-17; Matt 22.37).
- B. **Prayer**: We will not have the understanding and knowledge of what to do in our times apart from *consistent and focused prayer* (2 Chr 20.12; Isa 30.18; Matt 17.21; Col 1.9-12). We must call upon the Lord to bring supernatural revelation and discernment of what it means to walk through the days we live in.
- C. **Knowledge of God**: Growing in the knowledge of God is the only way to guarantee standing firm in the day of deception and trial (cf. Dan 11.32-33; Matt 7.24-27). Knowing God means encountering him *through his word*. As we grow in the knowledge of God, we grow to love the things that he loves and hate the things that he hates.
- D. **Strengthen communal ties**: In a moment where severing all relational and familial ties is seen as virtuous and dignified, we must be *intentional to strengthen ties within our families* — both our natural families (Ps 127-128; Eph 5.22-6.4) and our spiritual family (Rom 15.5-7; Phil 1.9-11; Col 3.12-15). We must make real (costly) decisions to put down roots and commit ourselves within a community (membership, travel less!, vocation, etc.).
- E. **Wake up and get sober**: One of the most common exhortations in the New Testament related to living through days of deception and darkness is to *be alert* (Matt 24.44; 25.13; Mark 13.23, 33; Luke 12.40; 21.34; Eph 5.15-20; 2 John 1.8), *sober-minded* (Rom 12.3; 1 Thes 5.6-8; 1 Tim 3.2, 11; 2 Tim 4.5; 1 Pet 1.13; 4.7; 5.8), or *awake* (Matt 24.42-43; Mark 13.33-37; Luke 12.37-38; 21.36; Eph 5.14; 1 Thes 5.6-10; Rev 16.16). We come awake by a posture of repentance, seeking to cut ties with the things of the world, and run wholeheartedly toward Jesus with a spirit of obedience.
- F. **Put on your armor**: We must realize that *we are at war* (2 Cor 10.4-6). Soldiers must live in a posture of alertness (1 Pet 5.8-10) and are not permitted to get entangled in civilian affairs (2 Tim 2.3-4). We must *take up the whole armor of God* in order to wage war in the present evil age (Eph 6.10-20).
- G. **Take a stand**: The spirit of this age is designed to incite a spirit of fearful submission that leads to silence and capitulation. Ask God for ways to *stand firm in the truth* (Gal 5.1; Eph 6.13; Phil 4.1; 2 Thes 2.15) and *refuse to receive a spirit of fear* (2 Tim 1.7). We must ask God for revelation of areas where our love for the world has caused us to compromise his truth (Mark 4.19; 1 John 2.15-17; Rev 18.4).
- H. **Reclaim the gospel**: We have subtly exchanged the missional strategy of the Bible for one that is more defined by the spirit of our age. We are called to *announce the coming of God's kingdom* and the *good news of salvation made known in Christ* (Matt 10.7; Rom 1.16-18).