

**Remnant Life Church**  
August 7, 2022  
What is Happening All Around Us?  
**Matthew 16:1-4**

The phrase “sign of the times” is a familiar one

- In 1966 Petula Clark sang “It’s a sign of the times that your love for me is getting so much stronger”
  - Every smart phone, that none of us apparently can live without, might be considered a “sign of the times” due to the change of technology
  - The vast cultural and societal changes we see every day are a “sign of the times”
    - In that regard it is the things that are widely accepted today that would have not been tolerated in years past
    - In other words, the sign of the times always points to or coincides with change in our world
- The English New Testament scholar N.T. Wright considered by many to be the preeminent theologian of this generation wrote, *Jesus has all kinds of projects up his sleeve and is simply waiting for faithful people to say their prayers, to read the signs of the times, and to get busy.*
- In that same way, there are signs foretelling the coming of Jesus
  - (Rom 8:22-23) Paul writes of the groaning of creation longing for the return of Jesus
  - It will be a physical return accompanied by believers both dead and alive coming up to meet Him
  - You must be careful to not stray from this truth
    - More and more evangelical Christians are beginning to side with a thinking, that is not new by the way, that there will be no physical rapture of the church
    - They claim that it is not explicitly stated that we will be raptured by a returning Jesus – I disagree
    - Their belief is that the Holy Spirit of Pentecost was the return that Jesus was speaking of
    - This cannot be true, however, especially when you simply examine the words of Jesus to say nothing of what Paul writes in **I Thessalonians**.
      - We read in **Matt 24** that He is teaching His disciples on the Mount of Olives just outside of Jerusalem about the signs of the end of the age
        - He answers an important question the disciples bring to Him - when will this happen, what will be the sign of your coming?
        - He goes through many of the physical signs such as wars and rumors of wars, an increase in earthquakes and famines, as well as the direct and increased persecution of those who call Jesus Christ Lord.
        - But the first thing He says to them in verse 4 is, *Watch out the no one deceives you.*

- Then in **Matt 24:30-31** He tells them that after all these things have taken place
  - *Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. And then all the peoples of the earth will mourn when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.*
- Yet in **Acts 1:4-5**, Jesus tells the disciples
  - *On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."*
  - The physical coming of Jesus that we all watch for and anticipate is not the same thing as the giving of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost as recorded in **Acts**
- But Jesus had been saying these things all along

#### READ – **Matthew 16:1-4**

- In **Matthew 16** Jesus is dealing with the Pharisees and Sadducees
  - He tells them that their priorities and their focus is all wrong (not the first time)
  - He said they know when a storm is coming because they have learned to recognize the signs of nature
  - But they could not recognize the coming of the Savior of the world
  - My friends, please hear me, Jesus is coming again!
- Now there are three primary camps of how that will impact Christians based on the time of His return
  - They are known as Pretribulationists, the Midtribulationists, and the Posttribulationists
    - This all has to do with what amount of the tribulation the church will need endure.
    - Each group produces multiple Scripture verses to support their positions
    - But this is an argument that I believe is of no real value
    - In fact, I believe that is primarily driven by satan in an effort to divide God's people
    - The reason I say this is because regardless of how it effects the church, Jesus said we need to do two things, watch and be ready!
- Four signs today that are pointing us to the coming of Jesus:
  1. The Formation and Regathering of Israel
    - In 586 BC Nebuchadnezzar II captured and destroyed Jerusalem taking the people into exile

- This was 136 years after the fall of Israel to the Assyrians in 722 BC
  - God gave Judah 136 more years of freedom than Israel
- In 70 AD the Roman General Titus captured Jerusalem and destroyed the Temple and in the process quelled the great Jewish uprising that had been simmering since the time of Jesus
- The people scattered and for nearly 1900 years they were all around the globe with no home of their own
- In 1948 the UN declared Israel a nation unto itself free from the British/Palestinian rule it had been under
- From that time on Israeli Jews have been returning to their homeland even though there continues to be dispute over the land itself
- But the Bible told us this would happen:
  - The prophet **Amos 9:14-15** - *...and I will bring my people Israel back from exile. They will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them. They will plant vineyards and drink their wine; they will make gardens and eat their fruit. I will plant Israel in their own land, never again to be uprooted from the land I have given them,*” says the **LORD your God**
  - Certainly the prophet is speaking of the return from captivity by the Babylonians and Persians some 300 years later
    - But the return of God’s people has been ongoing
    - Amos’s words were true for the return in the OT as well as the return of God’s people to their land in the 20<sup>th</sup> century
  - Then Jesus said, *“Truly I tell you, this generation (geh-neh-AH) will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened.”* (**Luke 21:32**)
    - Jesus is not speaking of a period of time (generation) but a people (geh-neh-AH) who would survive though until the end.
- The survival of the Jews is a miracle of history
  - Consider how many people groups have been exterminated down through the centuries
  - Know any Moabites? Perizzites? Edomites, Ammonites or Philistines?
  - We read about them throughout the Bible as well as historical records yet they are gone now
  - But not the chosen people of God even though nations and leaders have tried to exterminate them for thousands of years
    - It began with the Babylonians in 586 BC
    - Then around 165 BC the Seleucid Empire decreed the Hellenization of the people meaning the Greek way of life, and worship would be enforced by law
    - The Roman Empire, before and after the time of Jesus, sought to integrate the Jewish people into their society and culture
    - In the High Middle Ages antisemitism was a religion as the Jews were blamed for the death of Jesus
      - This furor and desire to eradicate the Jews took on a physical form in the First and Second Crusades of 1096 and

1147 that massacred the Jewish communities all along the Rhine and Danube rivers

- This was followed by the great expulsions of 1396 when 100,000 Jews were banished from France as well as thousands thrown out of Austria in 1421
- A large percentage of them fled to and settled in Poland, targeting that country as the first invaded by the German/Soviet Union armies initiating WWII
- It was, of course, the overwhelming goal of the Nazi regime under Adolf Hitler's vision, to eradicate the entire Jewish race
- And from 1066 well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Muslims have massacred Jewish groups, families, and whole communities with virtual impunity
- Every one of these efforts, however, failed
  - Israel is only about the size of New Jersey yet we hear about them in the news almost every day – why?
- **Duet 7:6** - *For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession.*
- One of the most important events that needed to occur to usher in the return of Jesus was the reestablishment of Israel as a nation
  - It has been 74 years since that took place
  - But remember – the passage of time is not the same to God as it is to us

## 2. The Spread of Militant Islam

- This is not a call for hatred but a need to be aware of those who desire war and the spread of terror
- Regardless of what we are told of their political beliefs or goals all Islamic nations share one thing in common: their hatred of Israel
- You may be thinking that I am overstating this and we should overlook what only a portion of Muslims believe
  - But it was Mahmoud Ah-mah-din-ashad – former president of Iran in 2005 said, “Israel is a disgraceful blot that should be wiped off the face of the earth.”
  - Once again, the Bible foretells this when it says that all nations will attack Israel in the end times
    - **Ezek 38:15-16** - *You will come from your place in the far north, you and many nations with you, all of them riding on horses, a great horde, a mighty army. You will advance against my people Israel like a cloud that covers the land. In days to come, Gog, I will bring you against my land, so that the nations may know me when I am proved holy through you before their eyes.*
    - John writes of his vision in **Rev 9:16** - *The number of the mounted troops was twice ten thousand times ten thousand. I heard their number.*

- 20,000 x 10,000 is 200 million
- John wrote this at a time when the entire population of the world was approximately 180 million
- Now, consider their committed opposition to the people of God and then recognize that Islam is the fastest growing religion in the world
  - An article written in 2019 regarding growth of major religions
  - States that between the years 2015 and 2060 Islam will have grown by 70%
  - That will nearly double the rate of the growth of Christianity
    - There are more mosques than churches in Britain
    - And it is estimated that four times as many Muslims pray on Friday than Christians who go to church on Sunday
- This is not a time to be afraid; bury your head in the sand; or embrace hatred or violent
- But it is the responsibility of every Christian to pray, speak the truth in love, and demonstrate the love of God every day

### 3. The Present and Coming Structure of a Global Government

- The Bible speaks of the Antichrist who will have authority over all the world; it also speaks of the 10 horns who are the kings who will give full control over to him (**Rev. 13:7; 17:13**)
  - Technology today makes the one-world global government and economy a very real possibility
  - **Rev 13** says that everyone will need a mark on their hand or forehead to buy and sell goods – are we that far away from that now?
  - Technology is not of the devil but the advancements we have made are now making **Rev 13** possible
  - American Airlines makes the statement on their flights – “Thank you for flying AA, a member of the one-world alliance”
- Unfortunately, if you speak to anyone who does not understand the Bible and what it has to say about the end times, you are shoved immediately into the camp of right-wing conspirators
  - God’s word has nothing to with the politics of the 21<sup>st</sup> century
  - Yet every conspiracy theory is just that, a theory, until it is proven to be a fact
  - The official stance is that JFK was shot by one man, from a sixth-floor window of a warehouse from behind
    - Until forensic evidence proved that was not true and the House Select Committee concluded in 1978 that more than one shooter was involved
- I do not put my trust in theories, I believe in fact
  - The Word of God is fact

- John's Revelation tells us, in pretty vivid detail, where our world is heading and we are seeing more and more evidence of that today

#### 4. The Gospel is Being Preached All Over the World

- Jesus said, "*And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.*" (Matt 24:14)
  - Again, nations is not about geographic boundaries, but every people-group (geh-neh-AH) with unique languages and cultures
  - So let me give you some hope and encouragement as I bring this to a close that also points to the coming of Jesus
    - James C. Denison, Ph.D., is a former pastor, an author and scholar and is a subject matter expert on cultural and contemporary issues.
      - Every day 32,000 people will accept Christ in Africa
      - Every day 25,000 people will accept Christ in China
      - Every day 17,000 people will accept Christ in Latin America
      - But every day only 6,000 people are coming to Christ in America and Europe combined
    - I realize that numbers can be used to say almost anything and support any position
      - The point is that the power of God through His son Jesus Christ is changing hearts and lives in this hour
  - And the power of God's love is also extending into the Muslim community
    - More are coming to know Jesus now than any other time in history
    - Reports are being received that every day tens of thousands of Muslims are converting and accepting Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior
- Missions organizations tell us that there are approximately 6000 known ethno-linguistic groups in the world
  - Jesus wants every one of these to have heard His Gospel
  - And as they do it is one of the most powerful signs of the times that Jesus is coming soon
- And so, what is your posture today?
  - Are we, like the Pharisees, only content with what we can see and understand or do we have the faith to believe and anticipate that Jesus will be coming soon?
  - Jesus told His disciples, watch and be ready!
  - Seven years ago, the Sunday following the day that my father-in-law passed away, I shared a sermon focusing on the fact that our time is not our own
  - We don't know how much time we have, or how much those in our lives have, or how much we have as a church until Jesus returns
  - What are you doing with that time?
    - Well, you must keep your spiritual eyes and ears open
    - Not to the words of the world, the government, or the media
    - But to what the Bible tells us is coming and what we should be doing during these times
      - The first, most important thing, is to pray

- The second, is to live every day for Jesus Christ
  - What you say
  - How you act
  - How you treat others
  - How you physically live out what Jesus not only taught His disciples, but what is still the truth for us today
- **John 3:16** – *For God so loved the world, that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him will not die, but will have everlasting life.*
- That is not a physical promise, we will all one day physically die, but as a child of God, you will never spiritually die but spend all of eternity in the magnificence of God's dwelling place, heaven
- What are doing until that time comes?
  - Are you seeing the signs of the times?
  - Are you watching?
  - Are you ready?