

Remnant Life Church

October 13, 2024

The Signs of the Times

Matthew 16:1-4

- The phrase “sign of the times” is a familiar one
 - The British singer Harry Styles sings a song called “Signs of the Times”
 - So did Petula Clark in 1966 –.
 - Everyone texting is a “sign of the times” because of the change and our growing dependence on technology
 - IOW, the sign of the times always points to or coincides with a change
 - It is also both secular and spiritual in its meaning
- The most important aspect of this to a Christian are signs that foretell the coming of Jesus
 - (Rom 8:22-23) Paul writes of the groaning of creation longing for the return of Jesus
 - And make no mistake, it will be a physical return
 - There are those who insist that on His next coming, it will be the third time
 - They claim that the Holy Spirit of Pentecost was Jesus
 - This is not supported anywhere in the Scriptures as even Jesus said in John 15:26 - *When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father—he will testify about me.*
- Jesus also referenced the sign of the times
 - In Matthew 16 Jesus is dealing with the Pharisees and Sadducees
 - He tells them that their priorities and their focus are all wrong (certainly not the first time He said this to them)
 - He said they know when a storm is coming but not the savior of the world
 - He says that only an adulterous generation (meaning sinful or without God) would need a miraculous sign
 - IOW, they were forsaking faith and wanting proof in the natural
 - They would only know God if they could confirm it for themselves in their own way
 - Jesus told them that the only sign they would get would be the sign of Jonah
 - This is a reference to his three days in the earth, just like Jonah’s three days in the fish (Matt 12:40)
 - Directly addresses the question of the Jonah account
 - Metaphor or event?
 - If Jesus spoke of it as an event than we should as well
 - Today, it is also much easier for people to interpret things like the weather than for them to interpret the spiritual signs that are coming up all around us – even in the church
- Jesus said many times to His disciples and the writers of the NT books did the same, that there would be indications Jesus was coming soon
 - If we watched and knew what to look for we would see them
 - They are happening right now

READ – Matthew 16:1-4

Four visible signs or indicators that are pointing us to the coming of Jesus:

1. The Formation and Regathering of Israel

- In 732 BC the forcible deportation of the Hebrews in the 10 northern tribes began
 - o It was as a result of the wickedness of the people and the kings that this began
 - o God still gave them 12 more years to repent but they refused
- In 720 BC the Assyrian army invaded and conquered the nation of Israel
- Because of the godly kings that followed God in the midst of the evil ones, God gave the southern kingdom of Judah 134 more years of freedom
 - o Nebuchadnezzar II captured and destroyed Jerusalem in 586 BC taking the people into exile
 - o The people returned when the Medes and Persians conquered Babylon under King Cyrus in 538 BC
- In 70 BC the Roman General Titus captured Jerusalem and destroyed the Temple
 - o The people scattered and for over 2000 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
 - o From that time on, Israeli Jews have been returning to their homeland even though there continues to be dispute over the land itself
- The Bible told us that this would happen:
 - o 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*
 - o Then Jesus said in **Luke 21:32**, *"Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened."*
- Jesus was not speaking of a period of time (generation) but a people who would survive through until the end.
 - o The survival of the Jews is a miracle of history and time
 - Many people groups have been exterminated down through the centuries
 - Know any Moabites? Perrizites? Edomites, Ammonites or Philistines?
 - o We read about them all in the Bible and throughout history but they are gone now
 - o But not the chosen people of God even though nations and leaders have tried to exterminate them for thousands of years
- You know the nation of Israel is only about the size of New Jersey yet we hear about them in the news almost every day – why?
 - o **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.*
- Jesus would not return until His people had come home again

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
- Many would have you believe that this is an overstatement
 - 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.”
- The Bible 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 of the vast army coming against the world in **Rev 9:16** - *The number of the mounted troops was twice ten thousand times ten thousand. I heard their number.*
 - That total number is 200 million
 - Written at a time when the entire population of the world was estimated to be only 180 million
- 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, at its current rate of growth, 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
 - Four times as many Muslims pray on Friday than Christians who go to church on Sunday
- There are now estimated to be well over 3 million Muslims living in America
 - That is more than those who call themselves Presbyterians, Episcopalians, and Assemblies of God
 - The concern should not just be the number but the plan to eradicate Christianity and, in particular, the Jewish people and nation
- Shamim Siddiqi is an author committed to the spread of Islam and considered to be a moderate Muslim who has written a book entitled “The Need to Convert Americans to Islam”
 - In his book he writes of his vision of the entirety of the American culture replaced with the laws of the Koran
 - This is not a time to be afraid; bury your head in the sand; or become violent
 - Jesus said to His disciples that we are to love those who hate us
- But it is the responsibility of every Christian to speak the truth in love – the truth of God’s Word, and pray for the church and the nation of Israel

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 of the nations of the world 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?
 - All technology is not of the devil, but the advancements we have made are making **Rev 13** now possible
 - We know that there have been efforts to convert the major nations of the world to one currency – that time is coming
 - Military alliances
 - Marketing
 - Cultural blendings are all part of our moving toward a unified global community
 - But it will not be a community of godly righteousness
 - The change of thinking is a subtle one in many cases
 - American Airlines makes the statement on their flights – “Thank you for flying American Airlines, a member of the one-world alliance”

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 boundaries, but every people-group with unique languages and cultures; the same word used to describe the people of Israel; God’s people
 - So let me give you some hope and encouragement that also point to the coming of Jesus
 - James C. Denison, Ph.D., is a former mega-church pastor and now a subject matter expert on cultural and contemporary issues based in Dallas, Tx
 - 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
 - Every day (only) 6,000 people are coming to Christ in America and Europe
 - What is happening in the Muslim community
 - More are coming to know Jesus now than any time in history
 - They are reporting that every day 16,000 Muslim’s convert and 6 million a year are converting
- 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 will continue to be one of the most powerful signs of the times that Jesus is coming soon
- What is your posture today?
 - Not your physical posture but your spiritual one
 - 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?
- Several years ago I preached a message that our time is not our own
 - We don't know how much we have, 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?
 - Encourage you to remain vigilant but also active
 - Pray for one another
 - Pray for our church and the church at large
 - Pray that your life will lead others to know Jesus before it is too late