

The Signs of the Times

Are there certain signs which have to happen before the 2nd coming of Christ? We believe there are, and that we need to discern the signs of the times.

Matthew 16:2b-3: "...When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather to day: for the sky is red and lowring. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times."

Let's remember:

1. The signs of the times have always been present through the history of the world / church.
2. In a certain sense God is always at work, and showing in the world & church signs of His work, His judgments, and His coming kingdom.
3. We should not think of the signs of the times as referring only to the end time and immediately preceding Christ's 2nd coming.
4. We should not just think of the spectacular and catastrophic events.
5. We should not use these signs to try and give an exact timetable.

The signs of the times confirm that Christ will return and that the end will come! (Matt. 24:14, 29, 30; cf. 2 Thess. 2:3). They also remind us of the struggle between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. That there is apostasy, lawlessness, wars and rumours of war means the presence of the power of evil.

The signs of the times call us to

1. **Discernment** (Matt. 16:2b-3).
Unbelievers ignore the signs of the times to their peril, while believers pay attention to them because they remind them that the Lord is on His throne and that His return is near. Even when he witnesses unpleasant signs (apostasy, persecution, tribulation, false prophets), the believer need not be discouraged because he is persuaded that all this is under God's control.
2. **Watchfulness**
Matthew 24:42-44: "Watch therefore, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the good man of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh."
1 Thessalonian 5:4,6: "But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober."
3. **Holiness**
Romans 13:11-14: "And that knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the

day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts therefore.
Ephesians 5:16: "Redeeming the time, because the days are evil."

Signs of the Grace of God

- **The preaching of the gospel to all nations**

Matthew 24:14: "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come."

The end will not come apart from the preaching of the gospel throughout the world. Through it the elect are brought to salvation and the reprobate are left without excuse.

Individuals, families, towns, cities, nations need to hear the gospel!

- **Salvation of the fullness of Israel**

Romans 11:25-26a: "For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part has happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved."

2 main interpretations:

1. Toward the end of the world, God will pour out His Spirit upon the people of Israel and convert many of them.
2. Throughout the whole history of the world, Jews will be converted along with Gentiles.

God has not forgotten His people Israel and neither should we!

Signs of the Opposition to God

- **Tribulation**

Daniel 12:1b: "... and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book."

Matthew 24:9: "Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake."

Matthew 24:21-22: "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened."

- **Apostasy**

Prediction of apostasy

1 Timothy 4:1-2: "In the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils: speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron."

2 Timothy 4:3-4: "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine: but after their own lusts shall heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables."

Explanation of apostasy (John Owen)

- 1) Ignorance of the truth
- 2) Love of the world
- 3) Fear of man

Prevention of apostasy

Jude 20-21: "But ye, beloved, building yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."

- **Antichrist**

2 Thessalonians 2:3: "Let no man deceive you by any means, for that day of the Lord shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition."

Signs of the Judgment of God

- **Wars**
- **Earthquakes**
- **Famines**

Matthew 24:6-8: "And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginnings of sorrows."

Questions for Discussion

1. What do you think is the one thing we should remember in light of the signs of Christ's 2nd coming?
2. Why can these signs make us afraid? What should we do with these fears?
3. What does the world do in light of these signs? What should mark the church instead?