

Red Sky at Morning Matthew 16:1-4

"Can you not discern the signs of the times?" Matthew 16:3

For Becca and me this has been a very joyful month of catching up with our friends and seeing the progress of the gospel at COD. We have been happy to see and hear about progress on the campus, and it has been even better to meet new people and to get to know the ministry teams. But the best part has been to reconnect with prayer partners and to hear the stories of grace, how the Lord has answered our prayers for the children and young people of COD. We have no greater joy than to see our children walking in the truth.

To get to Glendora from Dallas we had to pass through Phoenix. No matter how many times I have done it, the city keeps changing and the roads keep proliferating. We might still be trying to find our way out of Phoenix if it were not for the road signs, given to us with just enough time to change direction so that we could keep in the right way. A good road sign, well lit, and planted far enough in advance—how helpful it is!

God is a master of signage. Here is what Jesus said in Matthew 16:2, "When it is evening you say, 'It will be clear weather, because the sky is red.' And in the morning, 'There will be a storm today, because the sky is red and threatening.'" In English we say, "Red sky at night is a sailor's delight; red sky at morning, good sailors take warning." God puts up a brightly lit sign every morning and evening so we can prepare for the weather He is sending. He also lights up a sign for certain generations in world history.

My question today is: do you know the signs for our times?

Some generations that missed the signs

1. Moses' generation in Egypt: God gave ten plagues as a sign that they should release the Israelite people, but Pharaoh rejected the signs.
2. The exile generation in Judah: God sent the ten northern tribes into exile as an example, and He sent prophets like Elijah and Elisha to Israel and Hosea and Jeremiah to Judah, but the people rejected the signs.
3. The Second Temple Generation; the Flood Generation; the Wilderness Generation
4. Another example is the one here in Matthew 16, the Messiah's generation in Judea: after seeing all the miracles including the two miraculous feedings, they were not satisfied with the signs and wanted further confirmation.

**Former generations rejected the signs of the times at their peril.
Are we rejecting or neglecting the two signs of our times?**

The first sign of our times is Jesus' promise in Matthew 24:14 – "all nations"

1. Matthew 24 is the chapter in the gospel account where Jesus tells His Jewish disciples what will be the signs of the generation that will witness His coming and the Tribulation. He had told the Pharisees and the unbelievers that they would receive no further sign. Matthew 24 is a special gift to Jewish believers.
2. Much of Matthew 24 is specifically for those Jews who will believe on Jesus in the last days. They will lay hold on these signs for comfort in the day of their Great Tribulation. Luke's Gospel account written for Gentile audiences does not

include most of this information, and this causes me to believe that this information is of particular help to Jewish believers during the Tribulation.

3. But in the midst of all the pain and tribulation, Jesus inserts a promise at verse 14: "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come."
4. Let me be careful to state that this promise does not mean Jesus cannot rapture His Church today.
5. "All nations" does not mean every government represented in the UN; it means all ethnic groups, all people groups.
 - a. Until 1989 much of Europe was cut off from the gospel. Now the wall is down.
 - b. There are now tens of millions of gospel believers in China and China has become a missionary sending nation, even to East Africa.
 - c. South Korea is open to the gospel and is preparing to carry the gospel into the North as soon as the Lord breaks through the DMZ, one way or another.
 - d. In our generation and in the past 10-15 years the Muslim world has come open to the gospel, and in spite of repressive laws and governments, Muslims are coming to faith in Jesus, including among the Matumbi.

Second Sign: there will first be a Great Falling Away (2 Thess. 2:2-3)

1. The Thessalonian letters were not written primarily to Jewish believers but to Gentiles. These signs are for us to recognize so that we won't be deceived into thinking that Jesus has already come and we are now living in the Kingdom.
2. The sign of our times is the Apostasy or the Great Falling Away from the faith.
3. The deception of the last days will be so great that if possible even born again redeemed Christians will be deceived. Don't imagine that you can stand against that level of satanic deception in your own wisdom and integrity.
4. The Apostasy in its final form is characterized in general by a breakdown of marriage and in particular by homosexuality to the extent that God will give up on them (Romans 1:24-32).

Conclusion

From my perspective I can see that in the past 10-20 years the two signs of our times are becoming clear and the lights are flashing. Study this for yourself and see if it is not true. But once you recognize that these are the signs Jesus has given us and that the intensity and clarity of the pattern is increasing, what should we do?

Regarding the Falling Away, I recommend that we arm ourselves and our children with the truth and we refuse to be intimidated by the culture and we refuse to just try to get along. But while we are speaking the truth into an apostate culture, let's continue to remember that we are all sinners saved by grace and that this grace is for everyone.

Regarding the incredibly rapid spread of the gospel to all nations as Jesus promised, I recommend that you do all you can while you can to participate with Him in the gospel ministry, especially to the peoples who have never heard.

And now unto Him who is powerful to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that has been kept secret for long ages past but is now revealed. This gospel has been made known by the Scriptures of the prophets and by the commandment of the eternal God to all the nations for the obedience of faith. To the only wise God through Jesus Christ be the glory forever. Amen.