

Keep Watch! Positive Signs of Jesus' Return, Mark 13.34-37

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. My experience with the End Time studies – Movie, *A Thief in the Night*; the book, *Late Great Planet Earth* by Hal Lindsey; Larry Norman's song, "I wish we'd all been ready", (Huge societal changes – free love, drugs, Woodstock, campus riots, Vietnam war protests, etc) *European Common Market*, *Gulf War*, *Left Behind* series by Tim LaHaye.
1. People got disenchanted b/c the "events" didn't lead to the return. We need to be cognizant of "events" but it's the "trends" we really need to watch.
- B. Many today neglect the subject of the biblical signs of the times despite many Scriptures that emphasize how important these signs are. Jesus, more than any of the apostles, emphasized the need to discern the times (Mt. 24:32-44).
1. Lk. 21:34-36: Watch out! Don't let your hearts be dulled by carousing and drunkenness and by the worries of this life. Don't let that day catch you unaware like a trap. For that day will come upon everyone living on the earth. Keep alert at all times. And pray that you might be strong enough to escape these coming horrors and stand before the Son of Man.
 2. **Mk.13.36 – I say to you what I say to everyone: Watch for him!**
 3. Jesus strongly rebuked those who did not pay attention to the prophetic signs that pointed to His first coming.
- C. **Big Idea: Open your eyes and see what God is doing!** My purpose is to encourage you to open your eyes and look around. Get out of your drama and look at the world stage. Jesus, Paul & John tells us repeatedly to be awake, watchful, stand ready and be aware of what is happening around us. Live in the light of Jesus' return.

II. SIGN EVENTS AND SIGN TRENDS

- A. **Sign events:** These are actual events predicted in Scripture that alert us to the timing of Jesus' return. They include events like the rebirth of the state of Israel, the abomination of desolation, the revealing of the Antichrist on the world stage, and his confirming a covenant of peace with many nations. Sign events are the most faith-building. I think they are also most discouraging when the projected event doesn't occur.

- B. **Sign trends:** Both positive and negative sign trends signal the generation of Jesus' return. Trends are not as overt or faith-building as sign events because the way they occur is not as clearly defined as a dramatic event. Trends are measured in decades. You can step back over 30, 50 or 100 years and see this progressive movement for good or negative.

III. POSITIVE SIGN TRENDS DURING THE END TIMES

- A. **Gospel preached to all nations:** Jesus connected the timing of His return to the preaching of the gospel to all nations (10K – 20K people groups). Leading mission leaders project that the gospel will be preached to every people group by 2020. The greatest harvest of souls in history is occurring now.
1. *"But the Good News must be preached to all nations."* Mk.13.10
 2. Many are asking for over one billion new souls to come Jesus (Rom. 11:12-15, 26; cf. Mt. 24:14; Rev. 7:9; 14:6; 15:4; Ps. 66:4; Zeph. 2:11; 3:8-10; Amos 9:11-12)
⁹*A multitude...no one could number of all nations...¹⁴ out of the tribulation... (Rev. 7:9, 14)*
⁶*I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth--to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people... (Rev. 14:6)*
 3. The Bible/NT has been translated into 2,000+ languages (used by 98% of the world's population).
- B. **God's Work Among the Jews:** I'll talk about that in a couple of weeks.
- C. **Unity of the Church:** Jesus prayed for the Church to walk in *oneness* leading to global witness of the gospel with a greater release of God's glory. The Father is determined to have the Church function in unity across cities and nations. We can do so much more together that we cannot do separately. Different parts of body of Christ are to honor other parts of the body and embrace those with a different calling.
1. ²²And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: ²³I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me. (Jn. 17:22-23)

2. Jesus said that the world will know He is truly from God when they see unity in the church. The world coming to know Jesus is directly related to the unity of the church across denominational and theological boundaries. It's a true unity based on loyalty to Jesus and His Word. There is a false unity the enemy pushes which isn't based on truth and you're called a bigot if you hold onto it.
3. 50 years ago we could never imagine different denominations working together so cooperatively. There was very little cooperation outside of denominational walls, but now it's just second nature. We don't think twice about working together – 1 Ch 1 Day; Brazos River Flooding; pooling our resources for common benevolent efforts; mission projects.

D. **Prayer and worship movement**: Before Jesus returns, the Spirit will raise up the greatest prayer movement in history.

⁷***"Shall God not avenge [bring justice to] His own elect who cry out day and night to Him... ? (Lk. 18:7)***

⁶***I have set watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem; they shall never hold their peace [be silent, NAS] day or night. You who make mention of the LORD, do not keep silent, and give Him no rest till He...makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth [at Jesus' return]. (Isa. 62:6-7)***

1. In 1984, the number of 24/7 houses of prayer in the world was fewer than twenty-five. Today there are more than ten thousand, and most of the growth has occurred in the last ten years. Prayer initiatives are springing up all over the globe at a staggering rate. Such momentum in prayer must be attributed to the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit, not to human ingenuity.
 - a. A # from this church who were called to this lifestyle; some joined Houses of Prayers
2. Call2All hosted a congress in Orlando (Jan. 2008) and 170 CEOs of most of the top missions organizations made a commitment to start 70,000 new houses of prayer by 2020. In the Hong Kong Congress (June 2009) 3,000 leaders committed to start 400,000 house of prayer by 2020. In Nairobi (August 2008) leaders committed to start 75,000 new houses of prayer. In Call2All congresses, leaders have committed to start over 500,000 houses of prayer.
3. 1 Ch 1 Day – 39 churches in Southern Brazoria Cty, 1000 intercessors, 24/7 prayer. This is happening here and other places around the nation.

4. Isaiah prophesied 24/7 prayer ministries continuing until Jesus returns (Isa. 62:6-7). Only one generation will see the fulfillment of God's promise to "set" intercessors in place worldwide to cry out night and day until Jerusalem becomes a praise in the earth, which happens when Jesus returns.
- E. **Outpouring of the Spirit**: The Lord promised to pour out His Spirit on all believers (Acts 2:17-21). The increase of the number of believers with "charismatic" theology and experience has grown from *one million* (1920) to *60 million* (1970) to over *600 million* today—this is a sign of the times.
1. The spirit of prophecy will increase in the Church (Isa. 26:9; Jer. 31:9; 23:20; Dan. 9:22; 11:33-35; 12:3, 10; Joel 2:28-29; Mal. 4:5; Mt. 17:11; Acts 2:17; Rev. 11:3-6; 18:20).
¹⁷ It shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy...¹⁹ I will show wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath...²⁰ The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great...day of the LORD. (Acts 2:17-20)
 2. In this revival, the Spirit will release the miracles seen in the book of Acts and the book of Exodus combined and multiplied on a global scale (Mic. 7:15; Jn. 14:12; Rev. 11:3-6).
"...the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do..." (Jn. 14:12)
 3. The whole Transformation movement and the places God is transforming by His Spirit as chronicled by George Otis & others.
- F. **Many walking in righteousness**: This includes "many" *believers* repenting of compromise to walk in righteousness and purity with great victory (Dan. 11:35; 12:3, 10; Rev. 12:11; 15:2; 19:7). The Bride of Jesus making herself pure and the many good works that she is doing.
³ "...those who turn many to righteousness...¹⁰ ...many shall be purified..." (Dan. 12:3, 10)
⁷ Let us be glad...for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready."⁸ And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. (Rev. 19:7-8)
- G. **Disciples impacting every sphere of society**. Jesus called His people to make disciples that impact every sphere of society—family, education, government (politics, law, and military), economy (marketplace, business, science, and technology), arts (entertainment and sports), media, etc. Grace with understanding to walk this out is increasing in a dramatic way in this hour in the body of Christ.

¹⁹***“Go...and make disciples of all the nations...”***²⁰***teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you...” (Mt. 28:19-20)***

H. **Malachi 4.5-6 fulfillment.** Malachi prophesied that God would turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to the fathers. Mal.4.5-6

1. Literal: God is raise up many who would turn their hearts to children (orphans, the fatherless, sex trafficking, etc.). This will result in the largest orphan outreach in history.
2. Spiritual: God’s children are encountering the heart of their Heavenly Father. The Father’s heart message is everywhere. It used to be the angry Father who was disappointed with us. Good cop (Jesus)/bad cop (Father).

I. **Increased knowledge and understanding to know God and His end-time plans:** The Lord will raise up “people of understanding” who will *know God* and make His heart and plans known to “many” (11:32-33; 12.4). Their wisdom will be related to understanding more of Jesus’ glory and beauty, as well as His plans, including what the Bible says about the unique events and trends occurring in His end-time plan.

³²***“...but the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits. ³³And those of the people who understand shall instruct many.” (Dan. 11:32-33); 12.3f – Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens and those who lead many to righteousness like the stars for ever and ever. But you Daniel chose up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end. Many will go here and there to increase knowledge.***

IV. Conclusion

A. Look at the trends! These things were not happening to the degree they are now. There were pockets, but now they are movements.