

THE RETURN OF JESUS: SIGNS OF THE TIMES

Luke 21:28 *And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.*

In the Book of I Chronicles 12, we read about the various tribes that joined ranks with David to fight against King Saul. All of them are mentioned in their thousands along with their bravery, except one tribe – Issachar. “And of the children of Issachar, which were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do; the heads of them were two hundred; and all their brethren were at their commandment” (I Chron 12:32). They numbered just 200, but they had a unique gift which no other tribe seemed to have: they “had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do”. They may have been very few compared to the other tribes, but their gift of knowing the times and what to do compensated for their numbers. May God give us a tribe of Issachar which can discern the times we live in and what we ought to do for the glory of the Lord Jesus!

The more we look around in this world and see prophecies being fulfilled, the more steadfastly we should look up to the heavens and expect the imminent return of the Lord. It is as if the events that we hear in the news and the course that worldwide developments seem to follow, are preaching that Jesus is about to return soon. One Bible study cannot exhaust the many contemporary signs pointing to the Lord’s return, but we will consider just one today. Since we are flooded with technology on every side, let us consider what the Bible says about this incredible invention that has revolutionized human history.

Daniel 12:4 *But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.*

Nothing much changed significantly throughout human history until roughly the last 200 years, and especially the last 100. The steam engine, airplane, telecommunications, and internet all appeared in recent history. In 2020, almost 60% of the world’s 7.8 billion were connected to the internet. At the click of a computer key one can access information about the weather, banking details, purchase almost any item from cars to food, follow a university course, purchase a plane ticket, watch films, documentaries etc., and the list goes on and on. “...many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased” is certainly fulfilled every day. What is important is to remember where all this is heading. Are these developments just random acts of uncoordinated human actions or is there an invisible hand pointing them in a certain direction? There are scriptures that give the answer.

***2Th 2:7** For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.*

***2Th 2:8** And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:*

***2Th 2:9** Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders,*

***2Th 2:10** And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.*

***2Th 2:11** And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:*

The Apostle Paul through revelation called this arrow of directionality in world history “the mystery of iniquity”. In other words, while the world may consider these modern technological developments a triumph of human creativity, the Bible calls it the “mystery of iniquity”. This does not mean that modern inventions are of the Devil, evil and to be avoided by Christians, but that the unrepentant, sinful human condition will ultimately lead the world into a new rebellion against God quite similar to the Tower of Babel incident. “And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do” (Gen 11:6). Unity that is not in the name and will of the Jesus will lead to rebellion against the Lord Jesus! When Christians enjoy the benefits of the modern world, which they should, we also ought to be wary and discern the spirit behind these inventions. “Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (James 4:4). There is one more scripture that underscores even more clearly that God himself permits and enables the world to successfully unite so he can finally judge the nations of the world.

***Rev 17:17** For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled.*

Allow me to speculate briefly on what Artificial Intelligence (AI) may lead to in the time of the antichrist. The Bible states, “And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed” (Rev 13:15). The internet is basically computers speaking one to another. Remember that more and more of our lives are being linked and lived on the internet. Could it be that one day Satan himself possesses the internet and thus will control every aspect of our lives? This could be one possible scenario of how the

explosion of knowledge, learning and invention will lead to a world which comes under the spell and control of Satan before the Lord returns.

Rev 13:8 *And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.*

Rev 13:16 *And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads:*

Rev 13:17 *And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.*

Rev 13:18 *Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.*

Now, in conclusion, here is the good news for the church. While the above may look pessimistic, God also told Daniel, “And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries: but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits” (Dan 11:32). Great people of God such as Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Daniel and others were surrounded by a sea of wickedness. Yet God gave them strength that was equal to the challenge. “And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me” (2 Cor 12:9). We first need to be brave enough to separate ourselves from the world. “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you” (2 Cor 6:17). Many Christians may not physically join the world but they are heavily involved with the world through the internet. There are people who have no confidence anymore to share their own independent opinions before they read through the comments section in the online media or blogs. “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Rom 12:2). Rather, we need to spend more time with the Lord Jesus in these last days as we discern the return of the Lord is imminent. Let us join with the children of Issachar for then we shall discern the times that we live and will know what to do.

Act 4:13 *Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.*