

"The Signs of the Times"

by Wayne Goff

"He answered and said to them, 'When it is evening you say, "It will be fair weather, for the sky is red"; and in the morning, "It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening." Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times.'" Matthew 16:2-3

Jesus severely rebuked the Jewish religious leaders because of their inability to see the horrific spiritual condition the nation of Israel was in at this time. Jesus described the Jewish people as "*a wicked and adulterous generation*" (v. 4). Within about forty years the nation of Israel and its capital city, Jerusalem, would be destroyed from off the face of the earth! The religious leaders were so evil and corrupt that they could not discern "*the signs of the times*"!

John the Baptist preceded Jesus and prepared the Jewish people for the reception of Christ by preaching a baptism of repentance (Matt. 3). When these same Pharisees and Sadducees came to see what was happening, John scathingly said, "*Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance . . . And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees.* *Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire*" (Matt. 3:7-8, 10). Sadly, most of these pompous religious leaders had no intention of submitting to the authority of John the Baptist or of Jesus Christ when He came! They believed that both John and Jesus were **the problem** — and both died a violent death for daring to challenge the status quo. In doing so, the rulers had no idea that they were signing the death certificate for their own nation! They could not discern the "*signs of the times*." Indeed, John warned them that "*the ax is laid to the root of the trees*" and Jesus wept over Jerusalem because they would **not** return to the Lord (Matt. 23:37). His final pronouncement at the end of His earthly ministry — "*See! Your house is left to you desolate!*" (v. 38). Perhaps the most horrific destruction of any city is described in the annals of Josephus as he personally viewed the end of the nation of Israel and the city of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.

Can You Discern The Signs?

The sailor's adage comes from Jesus' words in the New Testament: "Red sky at night, sailor's delight; red sky at morning, sailors take warning!"

If you look at the moral decay in America, you must be appalled!! One can only wonder how much longer America can wallow in the muck and mire of wickedness and sin and survive! I have been preaching for forty years now and the *rejection of God and Christianity* has **gradually, steadily** increased during that time. History is repeating itself. The nation of Israel was destroyed in the sixth century B.C. because the people would no longer listen to God's prophets and preachers (2 Chron. 36:15-16). The final destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. was a repeat of what had happened six centuries before! And now, two thousand years later, America is making the same mistake! In the name of "freedom" and "shackle-releasing," young men and women are mocking the messengers of God, despising His words, and scoffing at His gospel — **until there is no remedy**. When our nation collapses, it will be too late to repent and say "I am sorry!"

Some Signs of Bad Times

1. False prophets and preachers, Jer. 5:30-31
2. Oppressing the poor and downtrodden, Jer. 5:6
3. Innocent blood is violently shed, Jer. 5:6
4. Stealing, murder, adultery, and idolatry become rampant, Jer. 5:9
5. No respect for civil or religious authority, Jer. 13:10
6. Wickedness becomes *habitual and customary*, Jer. 13:23.
7. Men trust in themselves, Jer. 17:5.

For further enlightenment, read the **reasons** for God's judgment upon other nations, Jeremiah 46-51; Isaiah 13-24. You will begin to see a pattern emerge which America is duplicating today. Sadly, I do not hear too many preachers expounding on these texts and warning our poor citizens.