

Pastor's Column
November/December 2020

And He (Jesus) was also saying to the crowds, "When you see a cloud rising in the west, immediately you say, 'A shower is coming,' and so it turns out. And when you see a south wind blowing, you say, 'It will be a hot day,' and it turns out that way... You know how to analyze the appearance of the earth and the sky, but why do you not analyze this present time?" (Luke 12:54-36 NASB)

The weather services are predicting that we will see la nina conditions this winter. That could mean that cooler ocean waters will generate a colder, wetter season than our usual mild Northwest temperatures and rain. The most recent strong la nina effect was in the winter of 2017-2018. If I remember correctly, we had about seven inches of snow at one point. We can often look at the sky and predict whether we should take a raincoat that day or not. Personally, I look at the weather forecast often during the day. I want to know the predicted high temperature and the air quality as the day wears on. In Palestine, it is just as Jesus told the crowds in the Scripture passage here: When the wind is from the south, it is blowing from the Sinai Peninsula — always warmer than wind from the north. Moisture most often reaches the Holy Land from the Mediterranean coast, so a cloud in the west means it will rain.

But, Jesus is not speaking about air temperature or rain. He is discussing the signs of the time in which the people of Palestine find themselves. In the larger context of this chapter of the Gospel of Luke, He is describing the coming of the kingdom when all things and all peoples will be judged. He points out in an earlier verses (35-53) that His faithful followers must be ready to rise and meet the Master at any hour of the day or night. He speaks of the urgency of putting our affairs in order, getting rid of surplus belongings, and laying up treasure in heaven, not on earth. Jesus' teaching about "analyzing the present time" applies to us as much as to his hearers then in the 1st century. He has told them that the fact of Christ coming into the world causes divisions among societies, groups and even families. As Jesus faces his own execution, He is concerned for his disciples. He wants us to be prepared for the sudden fulfillment of His kingdom. He accurately predicts that His ultimate sacrifice will be like "casting fire upon the earth." It was the greatest turning point in the history of our world — even in the history of the universe.

Just as many of us packed a "go" bag during the smokey days of the west coast forest fires, we are to be spiritually prepared to move when the Lord calls us. He lovingly warns us to watch for signs of the culmination of history at His return. We can easily grow drowsy and forget that all things are moving toward a meaningful end. Our lives have purpose in Jesus Christ.

Year-end is often a time when we step aside and ponder larger issues. As we sit by the fire, let us read the story at the end of the Bible. It is St John's vision of the fulfillment of the Kingdom of Christ. We each have a place in that scene. We will go out to meet the Master, and He will establish His eternal rule immediately. Come, Lord Jesus.

Blessings,
Pastor Margot