

THE LAST DAYS---2 TIMOTHY 3:1-9

This passage was written during Paul's final days on this earth. We have since progressed almost 2000 years and this could well have been written today. All of the details set forth can be seen running rampant in our time. Surely it is the last days. God's longsuffering and patience with mankind will run out as it did in the days of Noah. Lately we are hearing of fuel shortages, food shortages, housing foreclosures, and all kinds of distressing news comes each day from the newscasts. Men's hearts are failing them for fear. Therefore let us look at the prophetic truths concerning the last days, a description of them, what we as believers are to do, and God's promises to us in these last days.

(1) Prophetic truth and warnings concerning the last days. What are we to look for prior to Christ's appearing with His Body, and His coming in glory?

Whatever your view of the end of time may be, these things are going to take place. There are two words used to describe the the return of Christ. (1) The word for coming is "parousia," and means an advent, or arrival and presence with, unveiling, or manifestation to the world (1 Thessalonians 2:19; 3:13; 4:13-17). This word is never used in the prison epistles of Paul. (2) The word for appearing is "epiphaneia," and means to shine forth or upon, to be brought into light (Colossians 3:4; 1 Timothy 6:14; 2 Timothy 4:1,8; Titus 2:13). This word is never used in the inter-Acts epistles of Paul. While the appearing and the coming of Christ may be two stages of one event (2 Timothy 4:1), they are not the same if the words mean anything.

I believe that prophecy has to do with Israel and the kingdom of heaven to be set up on this earth, therefore, all the prophetic truths have to do with the coming of Christ to set up this kingdom. Because the Body of Christ began in mystery, I believe it will end in mystery. The members of the Body of Christ are already seated with Christ in the heavenlies and they will appear with Him in glory. Nothing prophetic has to occur before His appearing with His Body. However we see many of the prophecies connected with the coming of Christ being fulfilled before our eyes, then how much closer must be His appearing with His Body?

"And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men's hearts failing them for fear, and looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for you redemption draweth nigh" (Luke 21:15-28). While these things will be much more radical than what we are seeing today, famines, pestilences, earthquakes, high cost of living, job shortages, etc., it is the beginning of sorrows (Matthew 24:8)

"But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark. And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (Matthew 24:37-39). We only need to look around us and see that we are in the days of Noah.

"Likewise also as it as in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all" (Luke 17:26,27). We are certainly in the days of Lot. "For this cause God gave them up to vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward

another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet" (Romans 1:26,27).

There must come a falling away first (2 Thessalonians 2:1-12). A falling away from what? The truth. We have arrived at this for there is virtually no truth being preached or taught in our day.

". . . Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8). "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils" (1 Timothy 4:1). These are said to depart from the faith, but not from Christ. Those who depart from the faith were never in Christ.

The Gospel of the grace of God has been replaced by the Prosperity gospel which is described by Paul. "If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railing, evil surmisings, Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself" (1 Timothy 6:3-5).

There will be scoffers and mockers. "Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts" (2 Peter 3:3). "How that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts" (Jude 18).

"Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time" (1 John 2:18). The antichrist system is already in place it only awaits the Antichrist himself to appear on the scene.

"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned into fables" (2 Timothy 4:3,4). Israel was threatened with the scab and the itch (Deut.28:27). Today these apostates have itching ears, something far worse. The teachers which they heap to themselves are only channels for seducing spirits and doctrines of devils (demons), deceiving and being deceived.

(2) 2 Timothy 3:1-9, and the description of the last days.

This is the natural result of a departure from the faith and truth of God. Perilous (difficult) times shall come. These times will be difficult for believers to keep their lives, estates, or any happy state in the world with a good conscience by reason of so many evil men living who make it difficult. As the world goes, believers are thoroughly outnumbered, but with God they are a majority. However the real perilous times are not so much on account of persecution from without, as on account of corruption within. It has always been the so-called "religious" world that has persecuted the real believing church. "For I know this, that after my departing shall greivous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears" (Acts 20:29-31). Perilous times shall come for men shall be wicked, false teachers from within, and sin makes the times perilous.

Men have always manifested the characteristics of these verses, but the peculiar force of this prophecy is that it predicted such conduct would accompany "a form of godliness," i.e. a fabricated image of God. This is the prominent feature of the last days. Christianity is professed, but its power denied. The necessity of a spiritual conversion is

gone. Such moral facts and false teachings prove that the professing church has now reached these last days. In the first epistle Timothy was to oppose and silence false teachers, but in this epistle predicting the ruin of the church, he was to turn away. Do we have a form of godliness, or are we real?

This passage when compared with Romans 1:19-32, shows us that the nature of man under paganism and Christianity is the same, except that Christianity imposes an outward restraint so as to hide certain sins from public view. Paganism was the corruption of primitive truth. Christendom is the corruption of Pauline truth, but with hypocrisy added to it. They have "a form of godliness," though not in words, or a pretended way of worship, but there is no truth, righteousness, love and peace, self-denial, or mortification of the members, a thing which must be done through the Spirit (Romans 8:13). It can be said they are like the church in Sardis. ". . . I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead" (Revelation 3:1).

The marks and signs whereby these perilous times may be known.

- (A) Self-love, i.e. having neither love for God or men. "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold" (Matthew 24:12).
- (B) Covetous. Every man is for what he can get, and for keeping what he has, which makes men dangerous to one another. They will obtain their wealth any way they can get it, and they desire to have what others may have.
- (C) Boasters and proud. They have pride, i.e a lifted up opinion of themselves, and are vain glorious even in boasting of what they have not.
- (D) Blasphemers. When men do not fear God they will not regard man. They will speak evil of both.
- (E) Disobedient to parents. If children are disobedient to their parents, they will rebel against all authority.
- (F) Unthankful and unholy. The reason men are unholy and ingrates is because they are unthankful for the mercies of God. They are impure and profane, and think the world owes them.
- (G) Without natural affection. The world has become amoral and lives like the beasts. Thus they disown even their own families. They have no love, honour, or respect for those who bore them.
- (H) Trucebreakers. Those who will not be bound by natural affection see no need to keep their word or any oath. Every thing must be in writing today or you are apt to be sued for that which you are not liable.
- (J) False accusers. Men lie because they have no fear of God, or they can get gain by doing so. They have no regard for truthfulness if they can have an advantage.
- (K) Incontinent. There is no self-control or moderation. No governing or reigning in of passions and lusts. They satisfy their fleshly appetites. Drunkenness, gluttons, and unclean persons.
- (L) Fierce. This spills over from incontinence. This is the raging passions of murder, rape, torture, and extreme cruelty.
- (M) Despisers of those that are good. To all who do the things already mentioned, those who stand for good and right are despised. Laws are changed to protect the criminal. Haters of all that is good.
- (N) Traitors, heady, and highminded. They betray all trust. A general falsehood among men. Judas and the Jews who crucified Christ were traitors. They are heady or inconsiderate. Highminded or puffed up with self-esteem, scornful, and haughty.
- (O) Lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God. These have a carnal mind full of enmity against God. They prefer anything before God, and gratify the sensitive appetites rather than to please God. This does not mean a lesser love for God, and a greater love

for pleasure, but the total displacement of the higher love by the lower love of carnality and sensual appetite.

(P) Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof. This is a fabricated image of holiness which lacks the power of the Holy Spirit to crucify the flesh, to mortify the members of the body, has no self-denial of a crucified life, and has a pretended worship of God without the truth of God. From such we are to turn away.

We have to take heed to these kind because they creep into houses (Jehovahs Witnesses, Mormons, etc.) to gain a good opinion of themselves and draw the unsuspecting to their party or teaching. The people they get are wicked and weak. "A foolish head and a wicked heart make persons prey to seducers." (Matthew Henry). They are ever learning and never able to come to a knowledge of the truth, or they pretend to be ever learning. They have corrupt minds (Romans 1), and are reprobate concerning the faith, but they shall proceed no futher. Error may be let loose for a time, but God has it on a chain. God shall send them strong delusion (2 Thessalonians 2). They shall be shown for what they are, i.e. imposters.

Verse 13, the time shall not mend for men that are given up to their lusts and go about to deceive others, they will grow worse and worse both in their endeavours to deceive, and in their malice and hatred to those that oppose them. As good men by the grace of God grow better and better, so bad men through the subtely of Satan, and the power of their own corruptions, grow worse and worse. They not only deceive, but they are themselves being deceived, and are left by the just judgment of God to deceive and ruin their own souls.

(3) The believer's responsibility in the last days.

In verses 10-12,14-17, Paul sets forth in his own example and experience the power of these truths, and how the Lord delivered him from these men. Then tells believers what they can expect if they also live godly in Christ Jesus. To continue in the truth of the Scriptures, for that alone preserves us from error and the seduction of false teachers, and mixed with faith makes us wise unto salvation. Men can live morally and be safe enough, but if anyone will profess faith in Christ, or love to Him in keeping His commandments, they will be exposed to troubles. The world will not endure men to live in peace if they will not live as they live, and believe as they believe.

"Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses" (1 Timothy 6:12). We fight the good fight of faith with faith.

"But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Hebrews 11:6).

"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand" (Ephesians 6:10,11,13).

"Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 2:1).

"Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

(4) God's promise and encouragement to His people in the last days.

"The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell. Though an host

should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident" (Psalm 27:1-3).

"Thou art my hiding place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance" (Psalm 32:7). "Thou art my hiding place and my shield: I hope in thy word" (Psalm 119:114).

"I have been young, and now am old: yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread" (Psalm 37:25).

"Be merciful unto me, O God: for man would swallow me up; he fighting daily oppresseth me. Mine enemies would daily swallow me up: for they be many that fight against me, O thou most High. What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee. In God I will praise his word, in God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me. In God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid what man can do unto me" (Psalm 56:1-4,11). "The LORD is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me?" (Psalm 118:6).

Psalm 91 is a wonderful comfort in trouble, and compares with, "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:3).

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee" (Isaiah 26:3).

"If God be for us who can be against us? Who shall be able to separate us from the love of Christ? For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, . . . nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:31-39).

"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 mine infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (2 Corinthians 12:9).

"Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6,7,13,19).

"For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day" (2 Timothy 1:12).

"And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen." (2 Timothy 4:18).

"Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5).

The list of promises could go on and on, but these will suffice to give us comfort, encouragement, and assurance in the last days. And I believe we are in the last days.