

# SEED & BREAD

FOR THE SOWER    ISA. 55: 1 0    FOR THE EATER  
BRIEF BIBLICAL MESSAGES FROM

## THE WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRY

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### WHAT ARE "THE LAST DAYS"?

It is my conviction that "the last days" spoken of in 2 Timothy 3:1 is a segment of time at the end of God's present dispensation of grace. It immediately precedes the divine assumption of sovereignty which inaugurates the kingdom of God upon the earth. It is also my firm belief that this segment of time is characterized by twenty-one specific manifestations of unusual wickedness listed in 2 Tim. 3:1-8, and that the definite appearance of these things in concert and intensity will demonstrate to the believer that he is living in the last days of the present evil eon. Believing these things to be true it becomes my duty to proclaim them and also to defend them from every assault. All who know me personally will admit my veracity when I say that these convictions are the result of long and assiduous study of the Word of God.

Paul in his final epistle, which was written to his fellow-laborer Timothy, declares that **"in the last days perilous times shall come"** (2 Tim. 3: 1). The simple obvious meaning of "the last days" is that they refer to the final days of God's long display of grace, but since the word "last" (*eschatos*) has in it the idea of result or outcome, we also see portrayed the result or outcome of man's long practice and tolerance of iniquity. Sin begets sin, and the cumulative effects of man's long indulgence of sin is seen in human character in the last days as detailed here. And since the result is always at the end, the word "last" here must carry the idea of finality.

On one point all believers in the Word must agree. This dispensation is not going on forever. God's present method of dealing with mankind is not a permanent one. His long display of grace is most certainly going to come to an end. This being true it will have its last days, its final days, its concluding days, and it is of these days that Paul speaks here. He tells us what the

character of mankind will be when these days are upon us.

Paul's statement here about "the last days" has to do with a time that was still future when these words were written, a fact sufficiently evidenced to the unbiased mind by the use of the future verb "shall come" (*enstentsontai*). This clearly indicates that "the last days" were not then a reality when this epistle was written, a fact established by the accuracy of God's inspired words.

This letter was a communication from God through Paul to the man Timothy. When he received it, he knew quite well that he was not reading an ordinary letter. He was reading the original copy of an epistle that was destined to be a portion of holy Scripture, a part of the written Word of God. From the simple act of reading it, he would know that whatever Paul said in it was to be committed in turn to believing men who also in turn were to teach these things to others (2 Tim. 2: 2 ). That this refers to this epistle is demonstrated by Paul's use of the aorist *ekousas* (not "that thou hast heard of me," but "which you hear from me"). Furthermore, the phrase "among many witnesses" would indicate that the matters dealt with in this letter are not private.

Timothy experienced no problems in understanding this letter. Let him do his simple part and God would do His. **"Consider what I say, and the Lord will be giving (*dosei*, future) thee understanding"** (2 Tim. 2:7). Thus he would read, **"For men will be"** (2 Tim. 3:2), and consider the additional use of a verb in the future tense (*esontai*) and would know not then to look for these twenty-one indicators that would denote the presence of "the last days". He would know from this future tense that the twenty-one manifestations of resultant wickedness were not then a present reality that would continue on and characterize the entire dispensation of grace. He would understand that the picture of men painted here would not be an actuality until after "evil men and seducers had waxed worse and worse" (2 Tim. 3: 13 ), and the world had come into the result of man's long indulgence of sin. He would know quite well that the time period referred to, as "the last days" did not cover the whole of the dispensation that began with Paul's pronouncement at Acts 28:28, as some are saying today.

There are those who insist that the instructions given in 2 Tim. 3:5 would indicate that the conditions described were already there. Why would Timothy be told to shun such men if they were not then in existence?

This imposes no problem, since it is readily admitted that men like this have always been upon the earth. If not, how could it be said that they would "wax worse and worse." Furthermore, if we are going to make the presence of wicked men to be a demonstration of "the last days," then we should be consistent and begin this time with Cain. What Timothy is told here is that when he met up with men, or even one man, who showed these characteristics, he should turn away from them. This is a continuing divine directive to all to whom these truths have been committed.

There have always been evil men upon the earth since the entrance of sin. The first chapter of Romans gives a description of men **"who hold down the truth in unrighteousness"** (Romans 1: 18 ), and among the sins of which these are guilty are listed boasters, proud, disobedient to parents, and without natural affection. Men of this character were common in the Roman empire in Paul's day, and they were practicing their vices long before the present dispensation began. However, it is only when we see the result of this iniquity long-practiced so that it is manifested in twenty-one (3x7) characteristics that we know we are in the last days of the dispensation of grace. It should also be noted that these manifestations of wickedness are not given as signs of something to come, but as indications of a malignancy that would at some future time be present.

It is up to the individual believer to consider diligently each one of these features, to look at them in light of present world conditions and decide for himself whether or not we are now living in the last days of God's dispensation of grace.

I have done this. I have made a long and careful study of this portion in the inspired Greek in which it was first written. I believe I have used every means by which a man arrives at a true meaning of a word used in holy Scripture. Furthermore, for more than fifty years I have watched the conduct of men and observed the progress of iniquity. As a result, it is my personal conviction that we are now living in the resultant days of man's long practice of iniquity and in the last days of God's long display of grace. Believing this as I do, I shall live every day of my life anticipating and expecting that blessed hope which is the blazing forth of the glory of the great God, even our Savior Christ Jesus (Titus 2: 13, Isa. 40:5). God's kingdom is coming, and my understanding of 2 Tim. 3:1-9 tells me that it may be nearer than we think.

Three of the most definite features of the last days are in the world today as they have never been before in history. These are the final three set forth in this list of twenty-one. They are (1) the multitudes today who are lovers of pleasure more than they are lovers of God, (2) the great multiplicity of the forms of godliness that deny the power of godliness, and (3) the Jannes and Jambres characteristic which substitutes the false for the true work of God. These three things are today showing a manifest and extraordinary development never before seen in history.

The interpretation I have given of "the last days" is in complete harmony with other portions of Scripture that declare a deluge of iniquity just before God assumes sovereignty and establishes His beneficent government upon the earth. The teaching of 2 Tim. 3: 1-9 is that following a time of unusual wickedness, God intervenes and wicked men are stopped in their tracks. **"They shall proceed no further"** is the triumphant declaration of Paul. The act of God that stops all wicked men in their tracks is that "their dementia will become obvious to all men." This will be realized when God speaks from heaven once again and says, "let there be light" (Psalm 97:4).

The truth declared in 2 Tim. 3: 1-9 is parallel to Psalm 64 in so many points that it is somewhat startling. In this Psalm David describes an "insurrection of the workers of iniquity," which is what Paul also set forth in 2 Tim. 3. This is not the ordinary flow of iniquity that has always characterized the human race. Both passages describe an unusual surge of the workers of iniquity, and both describe how God will deal with it. "God shall shoot at them with an arrow, suddenly shall they be wounded. So shall they make their own tongue to fall upon themselves" (Psa. 64:7-8). These are the words David uses to describe what is going to happen. **"But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest to all men"** (2 Tim. 3: 9). These are the words Paul uses to describe the same event. In both passages the wickedness of the wicked comes to a sudden and dramatic end.

The Word of God reveals in many places that divine intervention takes place in a time of unusual iniquity. The promise that "evildoers shall be cut off" (Psa. 37: 9) is in complete harmony with the declaration in 2 Tim. 3:9 that **"they shall proceed no further."** It is when nations are in turmoil and governments totter on their foundations that God speaks in heaven and the people of the earth become soft like wax that is heated (Psa. 46:6). It is when the wicked spring up as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish (Psa. 92: 7) that they shall be destroyed. It is when the enemy shall

come in like a flood that the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him (Isa. 59:19).

We take our stand on His promises. Evildoers shall be cut off, they shall proceed no further, the wickedness of the wicked will come to an end, God will shoot at the wicked with His arrow of truth, they will be wounded, He will cause judgment to be heard from heaven, His lightnings will enlighten the world, His divine standard will stop the flood of wickedness. These are divine promises. They will be fulfilled to the letter.

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