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THE LASTS DAYS

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At least a third of the Bible is unfulfilled prophecy. Prophetic truths are interwoven in the Bible in such manner that our knowledge of God's Word will be limited to the extent that we comprehend the prophetic message. Ignorance of the prophetic books will seriously affect our proper understanding of the balance of the Word of God. However, those who seek an understanding of the prophetic message by means of a penetrating study of the prophetic books will come face to face with undeniable difficulties as they seek the meaning of the things set forth. A bewildering number of personages and events are encountered, and it seems almost impossible to bring order out of this confusion. The truth seeker longs, yes he prays, for something that will bring about a true harmony of the great body of prophetic truth.

When after years of searching, after years of seeking to scale walls that make further advance impossible, one finds a truth that clears away innumerable difficulties and solves innumerable problems, he cannot help but feel that he has laid hold of a great truth of God. It is my conviction that the present lack of harmony in prophetic truth is caused by a "lost chord," and that this lost chord is God's revelation concerning a period of time which precedes the second coming of Christ and the millennium, when God through divine intervention will bring about an era of peace, righteousness, justice and equity in the earth. The truth concerning this period of time is so obvious that all one needs to do to establish it is to point out simple Scriptural facts. This is what I propose to do in this study. And as Bishop Butler has said, "A truth being established, objections are nothing; the one is founded upon our knowledge, the other upon our ignorance." Due heed given to this principle will keep the searcher from rejecting truth just because he does not understand it perfectly or completely.

This period of time is called in Scripture "the last days," and if we receive the simple record as to its character we will know that it will be the most glorious era that mankind has experienced since the fall. But this era is not the most glorious time that the world will ever experience,

for it will be exceeded in glory by the thousand years which will follow during which Satan is bound. The outstanding New Testament testimony concerning this time is found in Acts 2:17-21. Parts of this passage are admittedly obscure; nevertheless, we are faced with the duty of believing what we can understand, then waiting upon the Lord for further light. We will examine this passage in some detail.

An Examination of Acts 2:17-21

And it shall come to pass in the last days. This statement establishes by means of simple words the exact time in which the things declared are to be realized. We should note carefully that these things "come to pass in the last days." They do not characterize "the last days" from the beginning to the end. They come to pass in them. Peter makes this peculiarly solemn by adding the words, "saith God."

If we read through the list of things that God has said He will do in the last days we come upon a further statement in verse 20 which just as emphatically declares that all these things are to be done "before that great and notable day of the Lord come." In view of these two statements one is only accepting obvious truth when he receives as truth the statement that "the last days" is a period of time which precedes "the great and notable day of the Lord." These are facts that are direct from the Word, and in spite of any damage they do to our preconceived notions or systems of prophetic interpretations, they should be held firmly as being the truth of God. We will now proceed to see what it is that God is going to do in the last days, that period of time which comes before "the day of the Lord."

I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh. I readily confess that for years I could not believe this statement as it stands in the Word. I had no place for any event of such magnitude in my system of prophetic interpretation. If this statement had been spoken of the millennium, I could and would have believed it to the letter, but since the Word declared it would occur before the day of the Lord, I had no room for it. I tried to limit it to Israel and to make "all flesh" mean all kinds of flesh in Israel, such as the young, the old, the men, the women, etc. But there is no longer any need to do this. I can now see that there is plenty of time and room for the full literal fulfillment of this prophecy. That period called "the last days" is not a short time. My studies have led me to think that it may be as much as five centuries in length.

The "last days" begin by God pouring out of His Spirit upon all flesh. This states the final result and does not declare the process by which it

will be accomplished. I believe it will be to the Jew first, then to the Gentiles. This will be the most glorious direct blessing that God has ever poured out upon the world up to that time. We need to consider what this means and the process by which it is accomplished. We may not be able to agree as to what it is God will do when He pours out of His Spirit upon all flesh, but we will have to agree in principle that it is a great blessing.

Mankind Enlightened

It should be carefully noted that God pours out OF (or, from) His Spirit. This tells us that when God does this "all flesh" do not receive the Holy Spirit "without measure," but that every man on earth will come into possession of something which is positively of the Spirit of God. I believe that this promise corresponds to the promise spoken by Christ in John 16:7,8.

Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you. And when He is come, He will reprove (enlighten) the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment.

The fulfillment of this promise has been long delayed. In the day when it comes to pass the Spirit of Truth is going to impart to every man divine truth in regard to sin, righteousness, and judgment. Thus God will literally pour out of His Spirit upon all flesh. The Holy Spirit has perfect knowledge of the truth concerning these three great things. When He imparts this knowledge to mankind, all men will then have it. In that day it can truly be said: "The darkness is past, and the true light now shineth." I John 2:8.

In the process of doing this, enlightenment concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment will be to the Jew first. However, when God deals with the Jew, whenever God gives him any blessing, he is not to be a container. He must be a channel. It is not possible for Israel to be blessed of God except that the world be correspondingly blessed through Israel.

This instruction concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment will be inwrought by God in every human being, and it will be coequal in the whole human race. This will bring every man under a definite responsibility and accountability to God. From that time forth men will live or die in harmony with their response to this God-given light. Numerous passages give testimony to this. Psalm 1:6; 37:9; 101:6-8; 104:35; Proverbs 2:21,22. All who respond to this basic knowledge will discover that it is not the end of God-given light. God will continually add to this basic knowledge.

Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy. To "prophesy" does not only mean to foretell the future. It means to tell forth the truth of God. This promise here is, I believe, limited to Israel, and it tells what the true sons and daughters of Israel will do in the last days. The source of this higher knowledge which they will tell forth, will be God-given visions and God-wrought dreams. It should be noted that verse 18 ends with "and they shall prophesy." This indicates that all in the last part of verse 17 and all of verse 18 has to do with the sons and daughters of Israel coming into possession of, and telling forth the truth of God. This will greatly increase the store of perfect knowledge. Little wonder that "many peoples shall go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways and we will walk in His paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." Isaiah 2:3.

And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and sign in the earth beneath. In this statement we do not have men entering into knowledge and then passing it on to others as in the previous statement. Here we see God Himself giving further knowledge by means of wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath. These are not simply displays of celestial fireworks produced for the entertainment of the earth's inhabitants. These wonders and signs will contain and convey definite truth and further add to the absolute truth which God has dispensed to all men when He pours out of His Spirit. The meaning of "blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke" is at the present somewhat obscure. However, we can rest assured that it is not a curse. It appears in a list of blessings; therefore, it must in some manner indicate further blessings related to the increase of divine knowledge. See Isaiah 4:4-6.

The sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood. That this is figurative language is most evident. The moon will never be literally turned into a great clot of blood. Since the sun by day and the moon by night are our two great sources of light, we usually use these as the greatest representations of brightness and light. "Bright as the sun," is a common expression. However, the time will come when men will have a greater light to use as a symbol. In "the last days" they can say, "Bright as the light that God has given," for by then the sun will seem pale by comparison. However, no matter what interpretation one may give to the details of blessing recorded in verses 17 to 20 we can rest assured that every item is a blessing related to knowledge. Wisdom and knowledge will be the stability of the last days. See Isaiah 33:5,6. Furthermore, we must not fail to note again that all these blessings come to pass in a

period of time called "the last days" and that this period of time precedes the great and notable day of the Lord. And we must never forget that the second coming of Christ and the millennium both take place within the day of the Lord. With these facts before us we are now ready to consider our second great passage.

The Glory of the Last Days

The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. And It shall come to pass IN THE LAST DAYS, that the mountain of the Lords house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all notions shall flow unto it. And many people (peoples) shall go up and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His path's: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. Isaiah 2:1-4.

This marvelous prophecy opens with two divinely given guards against the misdirection of its message. The first guard is in regard to the subjects and the second is in regard to the time in which this shall be fulfilled. I doubt if plainer words could have been found to express these truths. This prophecy concerns Judah and Jerusalem, and the era of its fulfillment is declared to be "in the last days." In spite of these safeguards most of the older theologians held that this was a vision that Isaiah saw concerning the progress of "the Church," and they further held that this prophecy would be fulfilled in the present time. The dispensationalists made an excellent step in the right direction when they began to insist that these words concerned Judah and Jerusalem, but they made a serious blunder in ignoring the plain declaration as to the time when these promises would be realized. Their writings on Isaiah infer that this will come to pass in the millennium, and having inferred it they next state it as being positive truth. Even F. C. Jennings in his excellent commentary on Isaiah ignores this time element altogether. We have no right to shove events forward into the millennium when God has said they would come to pass in the last days, a time which we have seen from Acts precedes the millennium.

The glorious blessings set forth in these verses are in no way dependent upon the second coming of Christ. They were dependent upon the first coming and upon His death upon the Cross. Now they are dependent only upon God pouring out of His Spirit upon Israel and granting them further light by means of "dreams, visions, signs, and wonders." Let us consider the nature of these blessings.

In that period of time called "the last days" the mountain of the Lord's house is to be established as the head of all other mountains.

The word *mountain* is a figure of speech here which is used in order to emphasize and heighten the truth being declared. If we gather together all the shades of meaning contained in our words sovereignty, influence, authority, rule, control, and government we will have the idea which is set forth in the word *mountain* when used figuratively. It is often said that a mountain in Scripture symbolizes a kingdom, and this is true, if we attribute to the kingdom sovereignty, influence, authority, etc. Apart from these, a kingdom is nothing.

The exaltation and establishment of the Lord's dynasty (house) as the head of all other "mountains" is not to be done by means of force, but by the same process that causes cream to rise to the top in a container of milk. The enrichment of Judah by God will cause her to rise to the top in such manner that all other nations will want to give her their strength. Nations shall confer together and determine to send ambassadors to the court of the dynasty of the God of Jacob in order that they might learn the ways of Jehovah and walk in His paths. Jerusalem will then be the center spiritually and politically, as she now is physically, of all the earth. She will then be a holy attraction that will cause nations to flow to that center of light and truth as naturally, willingly, and peacefully as rivers flow to the sea. The fact that they do this gives positive evidence that divine intervention has taken place. And it is plain that this intervention is not in a catastrophic manner, for if it is, no nations will be left to go up to the mountain of the Lord. This verse pictures the former enemies of Christ as being His footstool; that is, in subjection to Him. Those who know the Word concerning this will also know that this takes place before He ever leaves the Father's right hand. See Hebrews 1:13; 10:12,13. But this is not all that is to take place in the last days.

Universal Peace

And He shall judge among *many* nations, and shall rebuke many people (peoples): and they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore. Isaiah 2:4.

It has long been taught that this passage describes something that takes place in the millennium. This cannot be true unless the terms "the last days" and "the thousand years" are synonymous. But this cannot be since Acts 2:17-20 gives positive proof that the last days precede the day of the Lord. At this point it might be well to consider the period of time called the millennium.

Those who reject the idea that there is to be a millennium usually insist

that the only place it is directly mentioned is in Revelation 20. Since this reference appears in a highly symbolical and somewhat obscure book, they eliminate the idea as unworthy of further consideration. It is true that the only direct mention of the thousand years is in Revelation 20, but for the believer, that is enough. A thing needs to be stated only once in Scripture in order for it to be true. Concerning this thousand years we know that Satan is securely bound, imprisoned, and a seal set upon him so that he can no longer deceive the nations. Revelation 20:1-3. We also know that certain companies of saints live and reign with Christ during the thousand years. Thus, Revelation 20:1-5 is the most important passage in the New Testament concerning the thousand years, but it is not the only passage which bears upon this theme. Another passage reveals the divine processes and acts which precede and bring about the millennium.

The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear. Matthew 13:41-43.

The things recorded in this passage take place just before the millennium. The Son of man sends forth His messengers and they eliminate from His kingdom all things that offend and they which do iniquity. These "things that offend" are things that might lead men to offend; that is, snares, stumbling blocks, or temptations. Thus all things and individuals who are out of harmony with the rule of God are thoroughly purged in one great clearance from His kingdom. Nothing remains that might lead men to sin, no individual remains who practices iniquity. Only the righteous remain, and these do not turn to unrighteousness. They shine forth in the kingdom of their Father. This is the millennium.

Thus when the millennium begins it is perfect from the start. There is no long process that brings it about. All processes that have to do with its realization come before it, but they are no part of its time period. Therefore, it is an obvious truth that needs only to be pointed out that there are no swords in the millennium to be beaten into plowshares; there are no spears to be beaten into pruning hooks. No weapon of warfare will ever enter into the millennium. If Isaiah 2:4 is not completely fulfilled in a period of time that precedes the millennium it cannot have a fulfillment in the thousand years. And, it should be noted, Isaiah 2:4 does not speak of a time when the Son of man shall in one

great stroke purge all weapons of war from the earth. It speaks of a time when men shall be impelled by the truth that God has given to take the instruments of war and turn them into the implements of peace.

An enlightening contrast between the processes that bring about the age of righteousness that precedes the millennium and the process that results in the millennium is seen when we compare Ezekiel 11:17-21 with Matthew 13:41-43. In Matthew we read that "the Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity," but in the Ezekiel passage we read of something quite different.

Therefore say, Thus saith the lord God; I will even gather you from the people, and assemble you out of the countries where ye have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel. And they shall come thither, and they shall take away all the detestable things thereof and all the abominations thereof from thence. And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh. That they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God. But as for them whose heart walketh after the heart of their detestable things and their abominations, I will recompense their way upon their own heads, saith the Lord God.
Ezekiel 11:17-21.

Here we see the people of Israel inspired by God to purge their land of all detestable things and all abominations. Other nations will follow in their steps when they see the rich blessings this brings. The result of all this is set forth in Isaiah 61:11.

For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all nations.

These passages do not deal with the millennium. The purging of the world that precedes the millennium will be done by angels, and righteousness and praise will be its characteristics from the first day to the last. These passages deal with the blessings of God that the world can expect "in the last days," a period of time which precedes the return of Christ.

The Hebrew term "the last days" occurs fourteen times in Scripture, but it is translated "latter days" in ten of these occurrences. Genesis 49:1. Numbers 24:14. Deuteronomy 4:30; 31:29. Isaiah 2:2. Jeremiah 23:20; 30:24; 48:47; 49:39. Ezekiel 38:16. Daniel 2:28; 10:14. Hosea 3:5. Micah 4:1. The interpretation of the full portion in which these passages occur is not the purpose of this study. However, a brief examination of each one is in order.

Genesis 49: 1

And Jacob called unto his sons, and said, Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days.

This blessing of Jacob is a direct prophecy, and his words set forth that which will befall the sons of Jacob in the last days. The interpretation of the highly symbolical and figurative language of this chapter has puzzled every commentator. It would help greatly if men would take the key that hangs upon the front door and interpret this chapter as a prophecy that will be fulfilled "in the last days," rather than one of which the fulfillment can be found in the past history of the twelve tribes. If it is beyond our understanding now, we can rest assured that each symbol and figure will be crystal clear in the day when its fulfillment takes place.

Numbers 24:14

And now behold, I go unto my people: come therefore, and I will advertise thee what this people will do to thy people in the latter days.

Here Balaam makes known what Israel will do to Moab in the last days. As impossible as the literal fulfillment of this prophecy may seem, the believer will not doubt it when he reads it in the light of Jeremiah 48, particularly verse 47 where the last days are mentioned again.

Deuteronomy 4:30

When thou art in tribulation. and all these things are come upon thee, even in the latter days, if thou turn to the Lord thy God, and shalt be obedient unto His voice.

The last days are not a period of continual blessing, even though the period of blessing is long. They begin in affliction, followed by blessing, and they end in affliction. The failure of men will bring tribulation in the last days.

Deuteronomy 31:29

For I know that after my death ye will utterly corrupt yourselves, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will befall you in the latter days; because ye do evil in the sight of the Lord to provoke Him to anger through the work of your hands.

This is one of those strange passages wherein a twofold fulfillment is clearly indicated. Moses declared that Israel would turn aside after his death. They will turn aside again in the last days. This tendency of Israel to transgress is not ended until the millennium begins.

Isaiah 2:2

And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.

This passage has already been considered.

Jeremiah 23:20; 30:24

The anger of the Lord shall not return, until he have executed, and till he have performed the thoughts of His heart: in the latter days ye shall consider it perfectly. Jeremiah 23:20.

The fierce anger of the Lord shall not return, until he have done it, and until he have performed the intents of His heart: in the latter days ye shall consider it. Jeremiah 30:24.

In the last days when the great bulk of the prophetic Scriptures are in the course of fulfillment, God's people are exhorted to consider it carefully. This will result in an ever increasing conviction as to the divine character of the Word and bring great glory to the God of the Word.

Jeremiah 48:47; 49:39

Yet will I bring again the captivity of Moab in the latter days, saith the Lord. Thus far is the judgment of Moab. Jeremiah 48:47.

But it shall come to pass in the latter days, that I will bring again the captivity of Elam, saith the Lord. Jeremiah 49:39.

These verses teach a territorial and political restoration of Moab and Elam in the last days. We do not know where the Moabites and Elamites are who will possess in the last days their former land, but we know that God will fulfill His own word. Compare Numbers 24:14

Ezekiel 38:16

And thou shalt come up against My people of Israel, as a cloud to cover the land; it shall be in the latter days, and I will bring thee against My land, that the heathen may know Me, when I shall be sanctified in thee, O God, before their eyes.

This passage is important as it gives further evidence that the last days are not the millennium. In numerous passages in the Old Testament we read of a time to come when Israel will dwell safely.

Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is the name whereby he shall be called, the Lord our righteousness. Jeremiah 23:5,6.

The first coming of Christ was all that was needed to make possible the fulfillment of this sublime prophecy.

Behold, I will gather them out of all countries, whither I have driven them in mine anger, and in my fury, and in great wrath; and I will bring them again into this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely. And they shall be my people and I will be their God. Jeremiah 32:37-38.

In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, the Lord our righteousness. Jeremiah 33:16.

Thus saith the Lord God; When I shall have gathered the house of Israel from the

people among whom they are scattered, and shall be sanctified in them in the sight of the heathen, then shall they dwell in their land which I have given to my servant Jacob. And they shall dwell safely therein, and shall build houses, and plant vineyard; yea, they shall dwell with confidence, when I have executed judgments upon all those that despise them round about them; and they shall know that I am the Lord their God. Ezekiel 28:25,26.

And I will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land: and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods. Ezekiel 34:25.

Thus, in all these passages we find the most emphatic declarations concerning a time to come when Israel will dwell safely. However, in Ezekiel 38:10-16 we read of an invasion that takes place in that time, even in the last days. This entire chapter must be read and pondered if the reader expects to follow the study at this point. As a rule the "Gog and Magog" here are identified with the final revolt at the end of the millennium when Satan is loosed for a little season. This is not true, for the invasion which Ezekiel describes here takes place before the millennium. It should be noted that in verse eight that these nations invade a land "that is brought back from the sword and is gathered out of many people." They come against "the mountains of Israel, which have always been waste." Their purpose is to go up to "the land of unwalled villages" to them that are at rest and who dwell safely, without walls, and having neither bars or gates. They come upon a people who have been gathered out of the nations, who have prospered materially, and who dwell in the midst of the land (38:11,12).

This prophecy can never be fulfilled until Israel has been redeemed, restored, blessed, and has dwelt safely for a long time in her land. This will be a reality in the last days, and this invasion comes at the close of those days.

Daniel 2:28

But there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days.

The vision of Nebuchadnezzar began with Daniel's times and it reaches into the last days. The recognition of this fact along with other truth revealed concerning the last days will be of great help in arriving at a true interpretation of Daniel's vision.

Daniel 10:14

Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days: for yet the vision is for many days.

The last days do not have the same characteristics all the way through. The heavenly messenger revealed to Daniel certain things which would befall his people in the last days.

Hosea 3:5

Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king: and shall fear the Lord and His goodness In the latter days.

The time elements in this passage and the one which precedes it are highly illuminating. In verse four we are told that the children of Israel will abide many days without a king, prince, sacrifice, image, ephod, or teraphim. Every word of this became a fact when Jerusalem was destroyed in A.D. 70. It has continued for almost 1900 years. Following this the children of Israel are to return, and seek the Lord their God and David their king. Since this is to take place "in the last days," it will precede the second coming and the millennium.

Micah 4:1

But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it.

This entire portion should be carefully read as lack of space forbids its full quotation here. This passage repeats much that is found in Isaiah 2, but there are some significant additions. It reveals that "the last days" will be characterized by universal peace, universal prosperity, security for every individual, and universal adoration of Jehovah.

The phrase "in that day" of verse six is identical in meaning with the phrase "the last days" in verse one, supplying us with a clue that may prove helpful in understanding the term "the last days" in the New Testament. This phrase occurs in John 6:39,40,44,54; 11:24 and 12:48. In the first five of these occurrences this phrase is linked up with the promise of resurrection. In the last it is related to judgment. In all occurrences here the Greek reads "IN the last day," rather than "at." Just what these facts indicate, I am not prepared now to say. But if "the last day" of John's gospel is identical with "the last days" of Micah 4:1 and "that day" of Micah 4:6, resurrections in the last days will be commonplace.

New Testament Occurrences

The term "the last days" appears in the New Testament in Acts 2:17, II Timothy 3:1, Hebrews 1:2, James 5:3, II Peter 3:3. There is one reference in this group that calls for special attention. It is II Timothy 3:1.

This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.

When we read the verses that follow this we find a record of great perverseness and iniquity along with a form of godliness. It should be noted that this does not say that some are perverse while others have a form of godliness. It declares that the perverse are those who have the form of godliness.

This record of what shall be "in the last days" is contradictory to what we find in Isaiah 2:1-5 and Acts 2:17-21. I do not hesitate to say that the last days of II Timothy 3:1 is not the same period of time as that spoken of in Isaiah and Acts. In order to understand this difference we will need to carefully consider the exact meaning of the word *last* as used in the Old Testament.

In Deuteronomy 8:16 this Hebrew word is translated "at thy latter end." In Psalm 37:37,38 it is translated "the end." In Psalm 109:13, "posterity;" Proverbs 5:4, "her end;" Proverbs 24:14,20, "reward." A study of all occurrences will show that this word has in it the idea of that which issues forth as the outcome of what has gone before, the result. In fact we could very well translate "the last days" as "the resultant days," since this is the idea in the Hebrew word.

We have been considering first of all that period of time which issues forth from all of God's dealings with the people of Israel. His work or purpose with them began with the call of Abraham, and it continued through Isaac, Jacob, and the twelve patriarchs. God preserved them in Egypt, brought them forth from it, carried them through forty years of wilderness wanderings and settled them in the land of Canaan. He gave them the law, entered into covenants with them, provided them with judges, prophets, and kings. The result of all this is to be glorious. Not a bit of this has been useless, or of no effect. The resultant days will be the best days that Israel and the world have ever experience. The result has long been postponed, but it will surely come. None of His works, none of His words will ever return void. "Though it tarry, wait for it," is God's word concerning the outcome of His word and work.

In II Timothy 3:1 we have "the last days" or the resultant days of the dispensation of grace. At that point marked by Paul's declaration in Acts 28:28, God began His long demonstration of the graciousness of His character. This demonstration is accomplished by His dispensing nothing but grace, no matter what men may do. The outcome or the result of this dispensation of grace is set forth in II Timothy 3:1-9.

Grace will never produce a righteous world. This is not strange, for it confirms the declaration made long before by the prophet Isaiah:

Let favor (grace) be shewed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness: in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord. Isaiah 26:10.

The conditions described in II Timothy 3 are about the best we can expect as long as God continues to dispense nothing but grace. But the dispensation of grace will not continue forever. When it is complete, God will intervene and bring His judgments into the earth.

When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness. Isaiah 26:9.

May God speed the day.