

2086 - The LAST DAYS & SCRIPTURE - 2 Tim 3:1,14,16,17

INTRO. Paul is **ageing** and concerned for the Church - so he **advises** Timothy the young preacher how to carry out his work of ministry in his day and generation. This is the **last letter Paul wrote**, although it does not appear last in the **order** of Paul's letters. Paul is **passing on** the baton of the gospel ministry to the next generation of preachers. In fact he instructs Timothy *what you have heard from me...entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also* [2;1,2] Paul had been troubled by 3 members of the congregation, Phygelus, Hermogenes and Alexander the coppersmith. Thus the emphasis on doctrine. Paul wanted to strengthen Timothy in his work in Ephesus.

THE LAST DAYS

in the last days there will come times of difficulty [1] The last days of **what?** To what period of time is Paul referring? Is he referring to the last days of **world history** before Christ comes? I do **not** think so! I believe Paul is primarily referring to his **own** and **Timothy's** **lifetime**. Look *Avoid such people* in [5c]- how could Timothy avoid such people if they lived 2000+ years later? *The term *last days* refer to the 'last days of the **Jewish Church** (of the **Old Covenant**), the end of Israel as the **custodian** of the Divine Oracles - which was now to be transferred to the International Church of God! It was the 'end of an era'! In 1987 when **Fred Astaire** and **Jackie Gleason** died in the same year the media said it was 'the end of an era'!

Paul believed it was near the 'end of an era', for he said the Scriptures were written down *for our instruction on whom the end of the ages have come* [1Cor 10:11]. The Writer to Hebrews said that Christ *has appeared once for all at the end of the ages* [Heb 9:26]! And Peter said: Christ *was made manifest in these last times for you* [1Pet 1:20AV] God *in these last days has spoken to us by His Son* [Heb 1:2] What were these writers referring to? They were **inspired** writers! They believed something important would happen.

The Early Church **were** looking for some '**imminent great event**'! James: *Be patient therefore brothers until the coming of the Lord... for the coming of the Lord is at hand...behold the Judge is standing at the door* [Jam 5:7-9] James wrote his book in **AD69** - a year

before the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple! To **what** was James referring if not the destruction of the Temple? *Listen to Peter: *The end of all things is at hand...do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you ...For it is time for judgment to begin at the house of God [1Pet 4:7,12,17AV] ‘The House of God’ meaning Israel’s **Temple**. God was about to judge Israel by **destroying** the Temple in Jerusalem. Early in His ministry Jesus said the Temple was *My house is a house of prayer* [Mat 21:13], but **after** His arrest, He called the Temple *your house is left to you desolate* [Mat 23:38] God left His House! Jesus came in AD70 in **judgment**. Jesus said to the high priest that judged Him. *YOU will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven* [Mar 14:64] + *This generation shall not pass away until all these things take place* [Mat 24:34]. as that true, or was it not! Yes it was true - all that generation saw the Temple destroyed because Jesus **did** come in **judgement** to His covenant people Israel!*

John’s gospel was written in AD90, there is much **evidence** (books and doctoral theses **demonstrate** that it was written **before** the destruction of the Temple!) John himself: *Children, it is the last hour and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many anti-christs have come. Therefor we know it is the last hour* [1John 2:18] The last hour of **what?** Certainly not of history or before Christ’s coming! Paul wrote to the Romans *The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet* [Rom 16:20] The last hour of Old Covenant!

The *last days* means the last days of the covenantal nation of Israel, the 40-year ‘generation’ between the Ascension of Christ (AD30) and the fall of Jerusalem to the Romans (AD70). The imminent destruction of Jerusalem - the centre of Christendom was an event of **great magnitude** - so it is not surprising that Paul **warned** Timothy that *there will come times of difficulty* [1], in fact *all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted* [12] as happened in Jerusalem. *And has happened **ever since** to loyal and faithful Christians! While the immediate reference in Scripture may be to the **immediate** readers, the **application** - as do all of Scripture - refer to **all future generations!** And so... *But as for you (Timothy) continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from*

whom you have learned it, and how...you have been acquainted with the sacred writings [14,15] has application for us today!!

The **encouraging** thing for us today is that **all the problems** which we may face in the 21st Century, have **already** been faced and have been **overcome** by the Early Church. Our enemies are no different from what the Early Church experienced - they just have **different names**. The Church **grew out** of the **ashes** of the Temple!

HOW DID THE EARLY CHURCH OVERCOME?

Not by listening to TV Jonathan Ross Show, Loose Women, Russell Brand (although there some truth). But by **faith**, not only in Jesus Christ but in **His Word** the Holy Scriptures. By **practicing** the **advice** Paul gave Timothy here! That is how the Church has survived until today - and the Church is the **fastest growing movement** in the world - but that is **not publicised** by the media! But it is **true!**

God has **given us**, the Church, the Holy Scriptures as a **wonderful Gift** - a gift next to Christ Himself! God has **breathed out** His Word to the Church (believers). All the books are written to the **saints**. God gave us the Scriptures as a **reliable textbook** (which does not need updating like most textbooks) to **take the guesswork out** of knowing how to handle the problems of life! Its a textbook covering all the possible scenarios of life for all ages and for all cultures! For **practical living** in this **21st Century world!**

The Bible's teaching is to **equip us for every good work** [17c] It is **not only** for righteous living. The Bible is not just for the **pious** and the hyper-holy who want nothing to do with this world. The Bible gives instructions for building **nations/kingdoms**, and **businesses**, and **homes** and **families**, and **governments** and **churches!**

Obviously there is **not a detailed blueprint** of every industry the world will produce, but the Scriptures do provide the **general principles** that must apply to each and every work and programme for the creating and building up of society.

However, it is clear from this passage (and all over Scripture) that the **most fundamental** matter in life is being **wise for salvation** [15] And note it is the **man of God** (not the unbeliever) who can be **equipped**

and *competent for every good work*! It is **only** those who **have found faith in Christ Jesus** [15c] who **will** believe and take seriously the **sacred writings**. All others will **despise** God's Word! To believe and follow God's Word, you need to be **humble**! You have to be committed to the Word of God. **If you are a 'lover of self, lover of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, ungrateful, without self-control'** [2], you will **never** give heed to what Jesus says in His Word. It will be so **contradictory** to your own way of life.

The Early Church was able to overcome all the opposition of their enemies by living out the Christian faith as outlined in Scripture. They loved God above all things. They were prepared to suffer and lose (in some cases everything) in order to be obedient. They **worked hard** at being Christians. It wasn't a game - it was **essential** that they served the Lord. For them, it was no option but a **necessity**.

They had Paul's **aim in life** [10]! They did not simply have the **appearance of godliness** - they also had **its power** [5]! They were **lovers of God- not lovers of pleasures** [4].

You see, we need to be **taught** and **instructed** how to live properly - in fact we need to be **trained in righteousness**. We need to **practice** the way of righteousness - it does not come **automatically**. We must **apply** ourselves to its teaching. We must concentrate.

We must also be **humble** - because we will need a lot of **correction** and **reproof** - how do you fare in regard to these? Are you moody, huffy, offended at being corrected and rebuked. **Challenge for Xns:** Can you take a rebuke and reform your life from the Word **alone**, when there is no one involved but you and your Bible?

Are you **always learning** and discovering new things in the literature you read and the programmes you watch - but **never able to arrive at the knowledge of the truth** [7] You have the knowledge of many things, but you have not yet discovered **the truth** of God regarding the many corrections you need in life!!

The big lesson today is: **continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed...**(in) **the sacred writings** The state of the world **depends** on the state of the Church (you/I)

