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### III. Characteristics of the Last Days

The Bible describes the type of world people will live in during the Last Days. Certain marks will characterize the type of people, culture, and society that will be in existence prior to the End of this Age.

What are the marks of the Last Days?

#### A. The Marks of the End Time Humanity (II Timothy 3:1-4)

##### 1. A Troubled Society (v. 1)

*"Perilous times"* = grievous times

##### 2. Selfishness (v. 2)

a. *"Lovers of their own selves"* = self-lovers; humanism

b. *"Covetous"* = money lovers

##### 3. Arrogance (v. 2)

a. *"Boasters"* - to brag about self-superiority

b. *"Proud"* - haughty; to look down on others

##### 4. Blasphemy (v. 2)

Abusive speech toward Jesus Christ (Ex: rebels, liberal theologians, and cults)

##### 5. Disregard for Authority (v. 2)

a. *"Disobedient to parents"* - unpersuaded of their need to submit to and obey parental authority

b. *"Unthankful"* - no appreciation for what their parents gave to them and ultimately what God gave them (evolution gives

rise to unthankfulness - Rom. 1:21)

- c. *"Unholy"* - no reverence for that which is sacred

**6. Without Natural Affection** (astorgoi)

Modern examples:

- No family loyalty
- Divorce
- Abortion

**7. Liars**

- a. *"Trucebreakers"* - refuse to be bound by agreements
- b. *"False accusers"* - devilish slander

**8. Wild, Rowdy, and Lawless**

- a. *"Incontinent"* = uncontrolled; unrestrained; no power over their emotions, words, actions, etc.
- b. *"Fierce"* = savage, untamed, brutal
- c. *"Despisers of those who are good"* - lit. to have no love for good (cp. Is. 5:20; Rom. 1:32)

**9. Inconsiderate**

- a. *"Traitors"* = to betray someone to ruin them
- b. *"Heady"* - headstrong; reckless and rash; to rush forward in pursuit of getting their own way without concern for those they crush along the way

**10. Egocentric**

- a. *"High-minded"* - conceited; to "be so inflated with a sense of their own knowledge and importance, that they envelop themselves in a cloud of smoke (root comes from "tuphos" - smoke, mist, cloud) and are unable to recognize the truth" (H. Kent).
- b. *"Lovers of pleasure, more than lovers of God"* - pleasure lovers rather than God lovers

Contemporary preoccupations: entertainment, recreation, sports, leisure, food, comfort, and convenience

**B. The Marks of the End Time Religion**

(II Timothy 3:5, 4:3-4, 4:1-2)

**1. Religious Formality (II Tim. 3:5)**

People will be satisfied with having the external shell of godliness but will have no internal reality. They pacify themselves, "It's nice to have religion, but really there is nothing real and life-changing about it." (cp. Titus 1:16).

Religious quacks will increase and will easily lead astray the naive who need an answer to their guilt of sin (II Tim. 3:6-9).

**2. Doctrinal Intolerance (II Tim. 4:3-4)**

People will become disgusted with straight-forward, sound expositional preaching, and will be inclined to justify their wicked lifestyles by listening to preachers who will tell them what they want to hear (Is. 30:10). (Modern examples: church tramps and TV church)

**3. Spiritual Apostasy (I Tim. 4:1-2)**

(Cp. II Thes. 2:3 - "A falling away" is coming before Jesus returns)

The "New Age" philosophy is spreading across the world.

**4. False Asceticism**

A religion of works whereby one denies their normal appetites--this will be the religion of the Last Days.

A disregard for marriage and vegetarianism will be on the increase.

Examples of ascetics: Judaizers, Gnostics, Catholics (Fridays, Lent), Seventh Day Adventists

### C. **The Marks of the End Time Church**

Revelation 2 and 3 describes seven actual, literal local churches which existed in Asia Minor in the Apostle John's day and had certain characteristics or qualities which will characterize the spiritual situation of local churches in the Last Days before the Rapture.

Proofs that these churches will characterize churches that are in existence at the end of this Age:

- 1) These churches (1:4; 2-3) are described in an eschatological book - Revelation. What purpose would these churches serve if they have no bearing on End Time events?
- 2) The Holy Spirit did not merely have a message for each church (singular), but is speaking to the churches (plural) (2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22)
- 3) These churches all have warnings of the trials and troubles to face the Church in the Last Days.

The following phrases evidence the eschatological significance of these churches:

- a) *"I will come unto thee quickly"* (2:5)
- b) *"Thou shalt suffer. . . ye shall have tribulation"* (2:10)
- c) *"I will come unto thee quickly"* (2:16)
- d) *"Great tribulation"* (2:22)
- e) *"Hold fast till I come"* (2:25)
- f) *"I will come on thee as a thief"* (3:3)
- g) *"I will keep thee from the hour of temptation. . ."* (3:10)
- h) *"Behold, I come quickly"* (3:11)
- i) *"He that overcometh and keepeth my words unto the end"* (2:26)

What kind of churches will exist in the Last Days prior to the Rapture?

#### 1. **Unloving churches** (like Ephesus - 2:1-7)

Note: This church describes a working (v. 2), discerning (v. 2), enduring (v. 3), and separated (v. 6) church; yet one who had "left her first love" (for Christ) (v. 4)

2. **Suffering (persecuted) churches** (like Smyrna - 2:8-11)
  
3. **Compromising churches** (like Pergamum - 2:14-15 and Thyatira - 2:20)
  
4. **Worldly churches** (like Thyatira - 2:20)  
 This church was a worldly church yet a busy church (2:19)
  
5. **Dead churches** (like Sardis - 3:1)
  
6. **Faithful churches** (like Philadelphia - 3:8, 10)
  
7. **Complacent ("lukewarm") churches** (like Laodicea - 3:15-16)
  
8. **Self-sufficient (arrogant) churches** (like Laodicea - 3:17-18)
  
9. **Empty churches** (see Hebrews 10:24-25)

There will be a tendency for Christians to forsake the Assembly.

The phrase "*and so much the more as ye see the day approaching*" (v. 25) points to the intensified need in the Last Days for Christians to exhort each other to not forsake the assembling of themselves together.

The phrase "the day" (v. 25) refers to the return of Christ (the Rapture) (cp. Heb. 10:37; Rom. 13:11-12). This phrase, when used without an antecedent, is a technical phrase which points to "the Day of Christ" (which means "The Rapture" - see: II Th. 2:2; Phil. 1:6, 10; 2:16).

The need for spiritual fellowship, accountability, and encouragement will increase as the end of this Age draws nearer; Satan is already fighting with great vigor to try to keep people from being faithful to the local church assembly.