

8. In the last days

April 25, 2010

I don't think that any born-again Christian would disagree with me that we are living in the last days. Some Bible scoffers would argue, "The Christians have been saying that for the last two thousand years. So it will go on another two thousand years."

It might be a convincing argument if nobody cares about the truth or the biblical prophecies. But according to the Bible, there is not one single prophecy left to be fulfilled before the rapture happens and followed by seven years of the Great Tribulation. Besides, wouldn't you know, their argument was already predicted and recorded by the Lord in the Bible. How about that?

2 Peter 3:3-4 knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, 4 and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation."

Within this period of "last days," there will be "times" – a.k.a. seasons – of different kinds. But as the times draw to a close, they will become perilous. The definition of 'perilous' is "involving or full of grave risk or peril; hazardous; dangerous". This is the same Greek "chalepos" that is used to describe the two violent demoniacs of Gadara in Matt 8:28:

Matthew 8:28 When He had come to the other side, to the country of the Gergesenes, there met Him two demon-possessed men, coming out of the tombs, exceedingly fierce, so that no one could pass that way.

This suggests that the violence of the last days will be energized by demons. There is absolutely no doubt that more and more horrendous and heinous crimes will be committed by people around the world. Rather than reading a newspaper, I read news articles from FoxNews.com web page. Here are the things I saw yesterday morning.

A. THEIR 18 CHARACTERISTICS

2 Timothy 3:1-5 But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: 2 For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, 3 unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, 4 traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5 having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!

1) Lovers of ourselves

Here are 18 different characteristics listed here. Don't you think that the Scriptures we just read goes on a perfect parallel lines with the headlines we just saw? The words "Lovers of themselves" in v2 is originally from one Greek word 'philautos'. It means "loving one's self, too intent on one's interest, selfish".

The contemporary psychology fans the flame of self-love more than ever before. They claim that self-love is the foundation for a healthy human personality. We don't need to be encouraged to love ourselves. We naturally have a great love for ourselves and that is the fundamental problem we face in our relationship with God and others.

Romans 12:3 For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.

We must see ourselves as we really are – both the depraved sinners in flesh and the forgiven and redeemed saint in Jesus Christ.

When you boil down all 18 characteristics of the perilous times, you get a conclusion of pride and selfishness. The heart of every problem is a problem in the heart. God commands us to love Him with all of our hearts, minds, souls and bodies supremely, and then our neighbors as ourselves. But in reality let's admit it, the vast majority of us love ourselves supremely, not God nor our neighbors. If we really love our God supremely over ourselves, we would do what the Lord tells us in the Bible, not what we want, amen?

2) Lovers of money

In this universe there is God who owns everything. And there are people and things. We should worship the Lord our God and love people and use things for His glory. But if we start to love and worship ourselves, we get to ignore God and start loving things and using people for our own selfish benefits. This is the formula for a miserable life, yet it characterizes many people today.

It has been said that covetousness does not have limit. Here is one good example of it: George Soros became known as "the man who broke the bank of England" after he made a reported \$1 billion during the 1992 Black Wednesday British currency crisis which brought a massive devaluation of properties and investments of the British people. He sure didn't care anything about those English people's well being as long as he made money.

With his 14 billion dollar personal asset and the political and financial influences he has around the world, he is pulling the strings on president Obama any way he wants. The Health Care Reform that covers one sixth of our nation economy, national student loan, automakers' market, now the financial reformation in Wall Street are nothing more than stepping stones to put the entire United States under George Soros' thumb. His plan is to take over the world through finance without firing one shot. Tell me that is not covetousness.

3) Boasters, proud, blasphemers

The direct result of loving oneself and money is pride. Today boasting, pride and blasphemy are apparent everywhere, especially among the celebrities that our culture idolizes so much. In their pride, they put themselves in the position of God.

Romans 1:25 who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever.

4) Disobedient to parents, unthankful

It is not surprising that more and more children become disobedient to their parents and unthankful for the parents' sacrifices since they were not taught the Ten Commandments from schools, and many parents trying to be kids' friends rather than being parents because of the worldly psychology advice.

Exodus 20:12 "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you."

The family is under attack heavily these days, and, as go its families, so goes the nation. I am sure that you've noticed in many of TV's so-called family sitcoms, they portray parents, especially dads, as pathetic idiots. The children who watch these take their cue from the TV sitcoms treat their parents in the same way as they watched on TV.

5) Unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers

In place of the natural love that God has put into men and women and families, today we have a massive amount of unnatural love which God has condemned.

Romans 1:26-32 For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. 27 Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due. 28 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; 29 being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, 30 backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, 31 undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; 32 who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.

Homosexuals don't want equal treatment in America, they want special privileged treatment over everyone else. In addition to that, they want to silence Christianity because of the Word of God. The Bible clearly condemns their lifestyles of perversion. No matter what they try to do, God will judge them in the end.

6) Without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God

When people don't follow what the Lord God says in the Bible, they don't care what others think. There is no self-control. People would do whatever they please.

Judges 21:25 In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.

They make their own rules and expect others to follow theirs. They answer to no one. They are the ones that matter. Not only their universe, but others should revolve around them.

Born-again Christians don't have to choose between pleasure and God. Serving God should be our ultimate pleasure.

7) Having a form of godliness but denying its power.

In our self-obsessed world, people feel very free to have a 'buffet' religion, so that they can pick and choose what they want and ignore what they don't like. They feel free to be very 'spiritual' but they don't want any obligation to be biblical.

84 percent of Americans consider themselves Christians. As you all know that not all of them are born-again Christians. 31% of Americans claims that they are born-again. But how many of them truly want to do what the Lord want over their own desires? You tell me.

B. THE STRATEGY OF THE CORRUPTION IN THE LAST DAYS

2 Timothy 3:6-7 For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, 7 always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

I should make this very clear before I get that glare from the ladies. The Bible does not suggest that all women are like this, or that men are so much smarter and less gullible than women against the devil's schemes.

However, we have to acknowledge this one: In general, women are far more spiritual than men. I said, 'spiritual', not necessarily 'biblical,' because women tend to be more emotional than men. If anyone who considers himself or herself 'spiritual' yet not 'biblical', should be cautious for what they are getting into.

We are going to learn more about false teachers and their doctrines in near future studies of this Book. But allow me say this much. False teachers use guilt and gimmicks to manipulate their followers with the Bible verses which they took out of context. But in the end, the followers are always searching for truth, but they are never able to be satisfied.

These false teachers worm their way in and soon control people's lives. It is not long before these teachers grab their followers' loyalty, money and service. And their converts are worse off than they were before. They still have their problems, but they have been duped into thinking all is well.

C. THE FALSE TEACHERS – MEN OF CORRUPT MINDS

2 Timothy 3:8-9 Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith; 9 but they will progress no further, for their folly will be manifest to all, as theirs also was.

Though Jannes and Jambres were not named for us in Exodus 7, these two men are the Egyptian magicians who opposed Moses before Pharaoh. I am sure that you all remember when Moses threw down his staff in front of Pharaoh, it turned into a serpent. Jannes and Jambres also threw down their staffs and made them into serpents as well. But Moses' serpent swallowed up theirs.

When Moses turned the Nile River water into blood, these two dummies turned the rest of the water into blood. When Moses brought up all the frogs, they also imitated the miracles and brought more frogs. If I were the Pharaoh, I would do something about these two idiots – instead of fighting against Moses' miracles, they made the situation worse.

Satan is an imitator of what the Lord does. The false teachers in the last days will have a counterfeit faith and their purpose is to promote a lie and resist the truth of God's Word. They deny the final authority of the Bible and substitute with human ideas and philosophy. They insist that the Bible is outdated and it needs to be modernized and they deny the reality of sin and people's need for salvation.

I know a Christian brother who insists that satan cannot do any miracles. I beg the difference according to the authority of Scripture. Yes, he does have enough power to pull it off, but he has limits that God sets and he counterfeits what God does. Satan allows his false teachers to exercise miracles to authenticate their deceptions. A couple of examples are walking on hot coals and bending spoons with so-call mind power. Do not be sucked into those things.

D. APPLICATIONS

- 1) When someone quotes a Bible verse, please read at least 5 verses before and after to keep everything in context.
- 2) Never, never take human ideas and philosophy over the Word of God.
- 3) When God's judgments fall, the true identity of the false teachers will be revealed to everyone.