

The Burning Bush—Online article archive

The Rising Tide of Evil in the United Kingdom

A sermon preached by Rev. Ivan Foster



This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come, 2 Timothy 3:1.

It is clear from Paul's writings that he instructed his converts in the doctrine of the last times. *But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you, 1 Thess 5:1. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? 2 Thessalonians 2:5.*

The latter times have occupied the minds of God's people from the beginning of time. *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, Gen 49:1. And now, behold, I go unto my people: come therefore, and I will advertise thee what this people shall do to thy people in the latter days, Numbers 24:14. 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, Deuteronomy 4:30. 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 will do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger through the work of your hands, Deuteronomy 31:29. After many days thou shalt be visited: in the latter years thou shalt come into the land that is brought back from the sword, and is gathered out of many people, against the mountains of Israel, which have been always waste: but it is brought forth out of the nations, and they shall dwell safely all of them 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 Gog, before their eyes, Ezekiel 38:16.*

These are but few of the many Old Testament Scriptures that refer to events that will yet take place in the last days. One of the earliest of the prophets obviously spoke of the last days. *And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, Jude 1:14. From the beginning of the Bible to the last book, the subject of the last days is dealt with. Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, 2 Peter 3:3. Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time, 1 John 2:18.*

It is natural then that God's people focus their attention upon the climax of the ages. Then shall the great purpose of God be fulfilled and we shall enter into the fulness of the blessing of redemption. *But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets, Rev*

10:7. The prophets were told that we might be told and instructed.



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One of the chief features of the last days, that is highlighted in these prophecies referred to, is increasing wickedness amongst the nations. Our own nation is certainly evidence of this trend. Sin and rebellion have become institutionalised in the affairs of government. Government members live openly in rebellion against God's laws and, it naturally follows, promote laws and practices amongst the nation that are rebellious in Heaven's sight. Any Cabinet Minister who is a sodomite can do nothing else other than support that which is contrary to the revealed will of God, such is his mindset! It is little wonder then that we see the basic tenets of decency and democracy trampled underfoot in Ulster.

Consider what our text has to say on this matter.

I. GOD WOULD HAVE US LEARN SOMETHING IN PARTICULAR ABOUT THE TRENDS IN THE LAST DAYS

This know also.

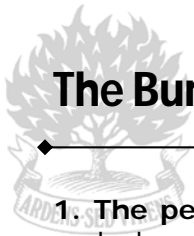
1. This was a truth which needed to be understood. This is a subject we ought also to be acquainted with. The phrase this know also means this seek to know and grasp. Here is something the Lord would have us study to understand. When driving on an alpine road which winds along the edge of a precipice it is well to take notice of every warning sign! In these days of dark evil, we are called to walk an exceedingly narrow and dangerous path.

2. It is a truth essential to the holy walk of the believer. Holiness of character and the behaviour of a servant of God was the subject Paul had been dealing with in the previous chapter, 2:16-26. Now he comes to this topic. The two topics are closely linked. It is not a subject then to be lightly dismissed. We cannot walk uprightly today unless we are versed in the evils that are to be avoided and shunned. Are not many of God's people foolishly indulging in the ways of the world today to the detriment of their souls? I think the question needs no detailed answer. Disaster has pursued many Christians and their families, all because they failed to heed the evil nature of some of the trends that have emerged within society and carelessly involved themselves in such practices, without considering whether or not they were acceptable to God. There is a high price to be paid for failing to learn that which God would teach us about today's crazes and fads!

3. It is particularly a subject for preachers. Paul has just dealt with that form of behaviour which is expected of a minister of the gospel. At the close of the epistle, his subject is a solemn charge to Timothy to preach the Word of God. Sandwiched in between these two vital topics for the minister to contemplate, is this topic of perilous times at the end of this age. The word *therefore* (4:1) that introduces Paul's charge to Timothy, shows the intimate relationship between the knowledge of this subject we are considering and a faithful gospel ministry.

II. THE MATTER ABOUT THE LAST DAYS GOD WOULD HAVE US LEARN.

In the last days perilous times shall come. If the perilous times were close at hand then, at the commencement of the last days, how essential for us to note this matter some 2000 years later? We need to be on the watch for these developments.



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1. The perilous nature of the last days. The word perilous means hard to bear. Are not such days upon us? The word perilous appears in Matthew 8:28, and is translated by the two words *exceeding fierce*. It is a word that expresses satanic rage and fury. These two men in the narrative of Matthew 8 were men living far from Christ, on the other side of the sea of Galilee in the land of the Gergesenes, a Canaanite tribe. They lived amidst death and corruption. They took up positions so as to hinder Christ's progress. They were belligerent toward Him. This is what the environment of the last days will be chiefly like. Already, we see a growing animosity toward the things of God in a nation, the laws of which once befriended and sheltered the gospel of Christ and His people. The word *perilous* has within it the idea of *reducing of strength*. Here is why these days are hard to bear. They tax the strength of God's people. Christ highlighted this feature of the last days. *And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold*, Matthew 24:12.

2. The chief features of the last days. Verses 2-5. Here is the release of man's evil nature from the restraints that a bold and faithful ministering of the gospel placed upon it. I think that we can count 18 characteristics mentioned in these verses. That is a three-fold combination of 6, the number of sinful man. These sins denote the fulness of depravity, breaking forth as the constraint of the gospel is removed. It is human nature without the restraint that grace imposes. There will be a resisting of the gospel as never before. Self-rule will oppose all God-ordained authority. God, parents, good people, all will be hated and despised, 2-3. We cannot read these verses but the headlines of our daily newspapers flash before our minds. An example of this evil opposition is given us in verse 8. *Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith*. The magicians of Egypt resisted Moses by deception and by counterfeiting the works of God in a limited fashion. *Then Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers: now the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments*, Exodus 7:11. So today, there are the counterfeiters of the ecumenical and charismatic movement who would oppose God, by seeking to deceive through their fraudulent and boastful claims of divine power and knowledge of the will of God and His path in these days.

III. WHAT OUR RESPONSE TO THIS TIDE OF EVIL SHOULD BE

1. Separate from them. *From such turn away*, verse 5. Shun and avoid. That is the command we are to obey. It certainly does not mean fellowship and worship with them or sitting under their ministries and showing support for their wickedness! Every faithful Christian should diligently labour against the interests of those organisations, denominations and individuals whose ways are described in these verses.

The Lord Jesus never countenanced the evil ways of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. Neither did He sanction the foolish and wrongful political desires of those zealous for the promotion of Israel's national wellbeing. In like fashion, we should stand aside from the unbiblical movements, both spiritual and political, within our society today.

2. Persevere in the truth. *But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of*, verse 14. The word *continue* is the same as that translated *abide* in



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John 15: 4-7. It remains God's will for His people that they occupy the ground whereon our forefathers stood. *Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls,* Jeremiah 6: 16. We are to continue in the things Paul taught. We are to be like the converts on the day of Pentecost. *Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers ,* Acts 2: 41-42.

This is the old-time religion which we are called to pursue in these days of ever-deepening apostasy.