

THE AGE OF GOD'S GRACE IS CLOSING

The Last Days and the Age to Come

As this millennium draws to a close, two distinct groups of people are looking ahead. One group sees in the future a new age. The other group sees in the future the last days of the present age. Those of the first group call themselves "new agers;" they exhibit hope and anticipation regarding the future. Those of the other group call themselves Christians; they exhibit despair and fear concerning the future, thinking that the end of the world is near. Which group is right? Does the future hold a new age or the last days?

The situation is like a glass partially filled with water. Is the glass half full? Or is it half empty? The answer is, that is both. So it is with the near future: we are rapidly approaching the last days of the present age, as well as the beginning of a new age. Four years ago, this preacher delivered a nine-part series of messages entitled "The Last Days." In the series I show the Bible meaning of the phrase, "the last days." Contrary to common notion, the phrase refers to the end of an age, not to the end of the world. In that series I pointed out two important facts:

Fact No. 1—the last days were in progress nearly 2000 years ago. In Hebrews 1:1-2 (KJV), we read, "God who at sundry times and in diverse manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son..." We see that the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews considered his own day to be the "last days." Likewise, from Acts 2:14-17, it is clear that the apostle Peter considered his own day to be the "last days." "But Peter, taking his stand with the eleven, raised his voice and declared to them: 'Men of Judea, and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give heed to my words. For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only the third hour of the day; but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel, and it shall be in the last days, God says, that I will pour forth of My Spirit upon all mankind; and your sons

and your daughters shall prophesy and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams."

The "last days" in which the apostles and the early church lived were the last days of Jerusalem. The destruction of the city ended the age to which belongs the Levitical priesthood and temple sacrifices, an age called in Scripture the "consummation of the ages," (Heb 9:26). Moses likewise lived in a period which could be termed "last days." They were the last days of Pharaoh's Egyptian Empire, and the last days for innumerable first-born Egyptian male children.

Fact No. 2 in the last days of the apostles, the last days were still in the future. The apostle Paul writes to Timothy, "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come," (2 Tim 3:1 KJV). Peter likewise writes, "knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers walking after their own lusts," (2 Pet. 3:3 KJV).

Prophecy for the Last Days and for the Age to come

To properly understand prophecy, one must understand the time, the place, and the people to which the prophecy applies. Take, for example, the prophecy found in Jonah 3:4, "Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown." Here, the time is forty days from the day the prophecy was uttered; the place is Nineveh; and the people are the Ninavites.

Today, the study of prophecy is a big fad in Christian circles. But it is also a big farce, because most prophecy teachers are in error concerning the place and the people. These teachers take the people who today call themselves "Jews," speak of them as "God's chosen people," and try to apply to them the prophecies concerning Israel. But these are the people described in Revelation 2:9 and 3:9, and the prophecies regarding Israel do NOT apply to them! Next, the teachers take the God-forsaken place called old Jerusalem and try to apply to it the prophecies concerning Israel.

These teachers do not understand who the true Covenant People of Scripture are, nor do they understand that the old Jerusalem is not the New Jerusalem. The New Jerusalem is described in the second chapter of Zechariah as an immense land, so large that it took an

angelic being to measure it. The New Jerusalem is described as a land full of unwallled villages, with a multitude of men and cattle in it.

Let's consider the time factor of prophecy. Hebrews 6:5 speaks of one age and the beginning of another age it stands to reason that there are prophecies for each age. 2 Timothy 3:1-7 is a prophecy describing the nature of people in the "last days." (Read the passage and you'll see that it describes the nature of people today). James 5:1-4 is a "last days" prophecy describing an economic collapse in which the super-wealthy are destroyed economically. 2 Peter 3:3-7 is a "last days" prophecy which warns that God will judge and destroy ungodly men.

The parable of the tares and wheat is a new-age prophecy which shows plainly that the present age is not the last days for true Christian people, but, rather, for the wicked (their time is short). "Therefore just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age. The son of man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks and those who commit lawlessness, and will cast them into a furnace of fire; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father." (Matthew 13:24-30 & 37-43).

What Babylonian babble and confusion exists in the present day! While singing "Victory in Jesus," Christians are expecting the wicked to triumph and bring about a godless one-world government. In the new-age movement, everyone gets to be god, everyone except Jesus Christ. If you are a pendulum-swinging, crystal-staring, UFO-expecting, "new ages," looking forward to the next millennium, you are in for a big disappointment. In reality, you are a "last-dayer" who will never see the coming age. You are a godless lot because you are Christ less; you are deceived and damned sinners. No one comes to God except through Jesus Christ (John 14:16). Unless you repent (Acts 2) you will perish in the last days of this age.

Christians, on the other hand, need to become determined to be new-agers—that is, to live through the end of the present age and into the beginning of the next age. For this to happen, there are certain things which they must do. In the days of Moses, it was necessary for the children of Israel to put the blood of the lamb on the door posts in

order to survive the last days of Pharaoh's Egyptian empire and enter into the next age.

Many will not survive the coming last days. The Babylonian system itself will not survive. Many sense that a destruction of some type is near. What they sense is what has been prophesied in the book of Hebrews: "See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking. For if those did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less shall we escape who turn away from Him who warns from heaven. And His voice shook the earth then, but now He has promised saying, 'Yet once more I will shake not only the earth, but also the heaven.' And this expression, 'Yet once more,' denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken, as of created things, in order that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; for our God is a consuming fire." (Heb. 12:25-29).

There will be an end to public schools, but there is a future for education. There will be an end to socialized medicine, but there is a future for health. There will be an end to the women's liberation movement, but there is a future for Christian womanhood. There will be an end to the bashing and emasculation of white males, but there is a future for white, Christian males. There will be an end to Babylon, but there is a future for the kingdom of God.

"But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, on account of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells." (2 Peter 3:10-13).

We, too, of this generation live in "last days"—the end of an old age and the beginning of a new age. Hebrews 6:5 speaks of an "age to come."