

The Last Days: What?

We have seen what the New Testament means by ‘the last days’; that is, the ‘when’. And ‘the last days’ stretch from Pentecost to the return of Christ. But, of course, the next question to be answered concerns the character of this age, what we are to expect during this time. In other words, what does Scripture tell us about the state of the gospel and the *ekklēsia* in the world in ‘these last times’; that is, what does Scripture tell us about the spiritual ambience we are to expect throughout this age, from Pentecost until Christ’s return in glory?

It is explicit:

Now the Spirit expressly says that in *later times* some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared (1 Tim. 4:1-2).

But understand this, that in *the last days* there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people (2 Tim. 3:1-5).¹

You should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Saviour through your apostles, knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in *the last days* (2 Pet. 3:3-4).

You must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. They said to you: ‘In *the last time* there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions’.

¹ Clearly, these dreadful things were happening in the early days: it is hard to see how Timothy could ‘avoid’ men and women who would be not be living until at least 2000 years after he had died!

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It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit (Jude 17-19).

Bearing in mind what we have already seen, these extracts do not mean that during the last few months before the return of Christ, things will go pear-shaped. No! They tell us that throughout this age, the *ekklēsia* will pass through choppy waters. And worse.

Notice that these indictments are not to be confined to pagans; professing believers are involved.

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This leaves us with the obvious question, the unavoidable decision. In light of the above, what is your verdict? Would you say that the apostles told us that the course of the gospel during this age – until Christ returns – would be one of Triumph or Tragedy? Of course, it's not either/or, black or white. Nevertheless which of the two better fits the bill?