

The Last Days...

by Norbert Link

Editorial from Update 397, June 5, 2009

It seems that men at all times believed that they were living in the "last days."

The early apostles thought for a while that Christ would return during their lifetime. When the Vandals sacked Rome in the mid-fifth century, many believed the end of the world had arrived. In the late ninth century, the fall of the last Carolingians and of the Roman Empire that Charles the Great had restored brought confirmation for some of a looming end. When Otto III was crowned emperor in 996, many felt that the end would come during his reign, apparently in 1,000 A.D. Martin Luther believed he was living in the last days. One of his followers, Michael Stiefel, computed the Day of Judgment for 8:00 a.m. on October 9, 1533.

The belief in Christ's imminent return was so strong under Oliver Cromwell, that the English government made it a criminal offense, after Cromwell was gone, to speculate publicly about the Second Coming. Isaac Newton believed that Christ's return would occur by the end of the 17th century. William Miller predicted that Christ would return in 1844. Many Germans believed that the Last Judgment would occur in 1890, and Charles Russell claimed it would occur in 1914, then in 1918, and then in 1925. His followers and others predicted it would occur in 1975. Islamic numerologists calculated that the end of the world would come in 2001.

Why, then, would today be any different? Can we be sure that the "end time" has indeed come upon us? If so, what does this mean for us?

Of course, we are not to set dates or even SUGGEST dates for Christ's return. The Bible tells us that only the Father knows the exact day and hour of the Second Coming (Matthew 24:36). Nevertheless, God gave us many prophecies which must be fulfilled just prior to Christ's return, and which indicate that the time is near (compare Matthew 24:32-33).

Among many other criteria, Christ referred to events that would give rise to religious

deception, national and international wars, terrorism, earthquakes, tornadoes, hurricanes, tidal waves, famines, pestilences and pandemics. But one might respond: Man has witnessed these phenomena many times before. This is true, but Christ gave us additional end-time prophecies which must be understood in conjunction with those we just mentioned. And many of those prophecies were never fulfilled in prior generations, nor could they have been!

For instance, think of the tenth and LAST military, economic, political and religious revival of the ancient Roman Empire in Europe which is developing now--and recognize the fact that nine prior revivals have already occurred. This FINAL and LAST revival began its course in 1957, with the Treaty of Rome, which "explicitly linked the Common Market with the ancient Roman Empire" (Eugen Weber, *Apocalypses*, page 204, copyright 1999).

Consider the coming "Great Tribulation"--a time unparalleled in scope and magnitude in human history--a time when human annihilation would be made possible through the use of horrific weapons of mass destruction--weapons that did not even exist until recently.

Realize the likelihood of a coming war in the Middle East, involving and directed against the state of Israel, and the invasion of the Holy Land through EUROPEAN armies to suppress Jewish sacrifices; think of the downfall of the United States and other English-speaking nations, be it economically, politically and even militarily; and consider the important fact that the TRUE gospel of the KINGDOM of God is being preached in ALL THE WORLD as a witness to all nations (Matthew 24:14)--something which was hardly possible before the invention of the highly sophisticated technical means of our 20th and 21st centuries.

Add to this the rotten and ungodly societies which we are living in today. James 5:1-3 speaks of unscrupulous rich people, taking advantage of the poor, who "have heaped up treasure in the last day." True, past generations lamented about the deterioration of the society in their times, but how much worse can it really get, today? We are told that the last days will be as the days of Noah, just before the Flood came and took them all away!

How accurate is Paul's description of the people in our "perilous" times, as prophesied in 2 Timothy 3:1-5! Notice: "For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money... proud, blasphemers... unthankful... unloving, unforgiving, slanderers... headstrong... lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power..." Headstrong and proud scientists and would-be "intellectuals" scream out their belief in the myth of the Theory of Evolution and become ANGRY and HATEFUL when someone dares to question their ungodly postulations.

What about Peter's description of the prevailing attitude of Bible-defying people in the last days? Here is his prophecy, in 2 Peter 3:3: "... scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, 'Where is the promise of His coming...?'"

We are warned that even in the Church of God, these kinds of people would arise in the last days. Jude said in verses 18-19 that "there would be mockers in the last time who would walk according to their own lusts. These are sensual persons, who cause divisions, not having the Spirit." 1 John 2:18-19 added that many antichrists would come in the last hour who "went out from us, but they were not of us." How many seemingly true Christians have left the Body of Christ in recent years, following idle tales and fables of human imaginations and philosophies!

One point of extreme importance is Christ's warning and admonition, as recorded in Matthew 10:22 and 24:13: "But he who endures to the END shall be saved." Whether you apply this to the end of this evil world or age, or whether you look at this as the end of your personal life--you must endure until that end comes. Many did not endure. They gave up. They did not "hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end" (Hebrews 3:6; compare Hebrews 3:14; 6:11). They returned to the world and the worldly ways of life from which God had delivered them.

We are not called to change the WORLD now--but rather, to COME OUT of this world and allow God to change US. But the time will come when we WILL BE given opportunity to help bring about real and true change in the world TOMORROW--to show mankind a better way of

life. Christ tells us in Revelation 2:26: "But he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations."

When you understand that "the end of all things is at hand," you need to "be serious and watchful in your prayers. And above all things have fervent love for one another, for 'love will cover a multitude of sins'" (1 Peter 4:7-8).

We must endure to the end--never giving up--never returning to this world, which awaits its soon-coming destruction. The realization that we ARE living today in the last days--the days of the end--must be of tremendous meaning and importance for us. It must motivate us to change and purify ourselves (1 John 3:1-3). It must motivate us to continue and persevere (Luke 21:28)--knowing that the Lord is "at hand" (Philippians 4:5), and that He is "coming quickly... to give everyone according to his work" (Revelation 22:12).

Church of the Eternal God
P O Box 270519
San Diego, California 92198
www.eternalgod.org