

The Bride, Chapter 7 – Ministering In the Last Days

General Evaluation: What We Should Expect

We read in Matt. 24: 3-14, ³As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. “Tell us,” they said, “when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?” ⁴Jesus answered: “Watch out that no one deceives you. ⁵For many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Messiah,’ and will deceive many. ⁶You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. ⁷Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. ⁸All these are the beginning of birth pains.⁹“Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. ¹⁰At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, ¹¹and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. ¹²Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, ¹³but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved. ¹⁴And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

Also in 2 Tim 3: 1-16, ‘But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. ²People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, ⁴treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God— ⁵having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people. ⁶They are the kind who worm their way into homes and gain control over gullible women, who are loaded down with sins and are swayed by all kinds of evil desires, ⁷always learning but never able to come to a knowledge of the truth. ⁸Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so also these teachers oppose the truth. They are men of depraved minds, who, as far as the faith is concerned, are rejected. ⁹But they will not get very far because, as in the case of those men, their folly will be clear to everyone. ¹⁰You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, ¹¹persecutions, sufferings—what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them. ¹²In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, ¹³while evildoers and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. ¹⁴But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, ¹⁵and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

The above passages revealed the events that would take place before the end of the age and what it is like in the last days. The Scripture tells us that in the last days, we should expect:

- 1) Conditions will be worsened,
- 2) Homes will be further weakened, and
- 3) Morals will be deteriorated even further.

But as we saw in previous chapter from 2 Tim2:19, “¹⁹ Nevertheless, God’s solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: “The Lord knows those who are his,” and, “Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord will turn away from wickedness.” The truth will prevail, even though it seems that the wicked and the wrong always have their ways. The firm foundation of God will stand! God’s way will triumph!

The Greater Question

The question isn’t, “Will things get more difficult?” Nor, “Is God in control?”

The greater question is:

“How do we live and minister in a world that has lost its way?”

“What does a church do to make a dent?”

“What will it take to make us remember who we are and who God is?”

“How do we make a difference in these last days?”

Scriptural Instruction: How We must Respond

In 2 Tim 3:1, Paul warned by saying “Mark this”, that is “Realize this”. The terrible last-days lifestyle is here to stay. The Greek word used here for “difficult” means more than hard. In line with Matt 24:12, the warning of “the increase of wickedness”. God gives us the pictures of the future. In the last days, ungodliness will be there, there will be depravity, corruption, and there will be counterfeit and rejection of truth. But Paul encouraged Timothy saying, “they will not get very far because, ... their folly will be clear to everyone.” There will still be God’s people who will discern the truth from error, not everyone will be sucked into the system. Without doubt the increasing of heresy, mixed with moral impurity and violence, seemingly overwhelming. But we will find reminders in the Scripture to be remarkably reassuring, that His truth will prevail and ultimately triumph.

We are living in exciting times, looking towards the returning of Christ. It is not a time for the church to be asleep, we are to rise up and reflect the presence of God for His glory. The apostle gives us four practical advices as a church on how to respond in these last days:

1. Follow the model of the faithful.
2. Return to the truth.
3. Proclaim the message of Christ.
4. Maintain an exemplary life.

We will be looking the first two in this chapter and the balance in the next chapter.

1. Follow the Model of the Faithful

Paul exhorted Timothy to follow his example. Paul is saying to Timothy “¹⁰You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, ¹¹persecutions, sufferings ...”, follow me. Do we have a model to follow?

The person models that influence our lives are very human – and therefore imperfect. Nevertheless, they are great examples to us. They motivated us to live better lives. Some may have already lived and died. I can think of a few models that shaped my life and strengthen my faith. A Sunday School teacher in Bethany; a missionary serving in Africa with his family of 6; and a few more. We probably can also look up to the men of faith in the Bible as our models, such as Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Moses, King David, etc. As we look at our models, people of the truth ... we can look up to them and say, “That is what I want to be like.” Are there people in your mind who are worth following, worth knowing their teaching, their way of life, their purpose, their love, as what Paul encouraged Timothy to do. The Scripture encouraged us to follow them!

However, we must ultimately build our faith not on fading lights but on the Light that never fails. We remember Jesus before he was crucified, knowing the heavy burden He will be bearing, chose for God’s will and not His own to be done. As God’s people, we should look at Christ as our ultimate model as we minister to the lost world in the last days.

As we follow the model of the faithful and Christ as our ultimate model, let us be aspired to be the model for others to follow in the last days as well. We are the light of His presence. It is time for His people to stand firm, shining brightly and reflecting His glory.

2. Return to the Truth

As warned by both Jesus and Paul, in the last days there will be many evil doers and imposters, but let’s determine not to be one of them. Let’s be different ... as Timothy was. What was it that made Timothy different? We understand that the training and equipping of Timothy’s deeply rooted faith and knowledge of the Holy Scripture came from grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice. It was them who shaped his early spiritual growth, with the teaching of the Scripture, “which is God-breathed and is used for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷so that the servant of God may be complete and thoroughly equipped for every good work”.

Who was it with you who taught you God’s Word? Were you also blessed with mentors who loved the Lord? Was it a godly, faithful pastor? Remember the foundation of His Word, returning to the truth. Anchor yourself deeply into the Word that stabilized you, be committed to the studying and knowing His Word, in order to endure the harshness and deceitfulness of the last days. His Word is a plumb line for us to discern and measure His Truth in every situation. Don’t just believe the Word, live the Word. Operate in behaviors that glorify God! As we are being encouraged to be different, like Timothy was,

may I also challenge some in our midst, to be a “Lois” or a “Eunice” as well, feeding God’s Word to the younger generation.

Listen to God’s Warnings

Listen to God’s warnings, which were given to prepare ourselves, our family, and our community for the last days. The root problem of the end-time world is self-love. They love themselves more than God, which results in many other sins—love of money, love of pleasure, lack of family love, pride, abusiveness, etc.. This lack of love was causing other sins in their lives, as it does with ours. As we follow the models of the faithful and dip into His Word, let us genuinely seek Him because God is our provision and protection and these come only through our listening and responding to His voice.