

## **LIVING IN THE LAST DAYS**

Events on the global financial markets over recent weeks with Wall Street losing 2,4 trillion dollars or 22% of its value in 8 days has had the world in a frenzy with governments scrambling to try and minimise the damage to their respective countries. It is amazing to think that a country like Iceland has effectively gone bankrupt overnight. Many have tried to explain what has happened and there are as many theories as there are experts. One perspective that has not received too much attention has been the biblical perspective relating to the last days or the end times. Often when these two terms, “the last days and end times” are used, there is an air of gloom and despair that tends to descend and yet when one is able to analyse the times in terms of what the Word has predicted, there should be a sense of expectation that Scripture is indeed being fulfilled and our ultimate salvation is at hand. The reality is that the Word makes it very clear that we are living in the last days.

With the coming of Christ the era of the last days were ushered in. In Hebrews 1:1-2 the writer tells us, “In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by His Son...” and in 1 Pet 1:20 we are told of Jesus, “He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake”. We are indeed living in the last days. This morning I want to look briefly at what the Word says about living in the end times and from this draw some understanding, hope and encouragement.

### **1. WEALTH BECOMES WORTHLESS**

When times become uncertain as they are in these last days one of the safe havens or the places of security that we always flee to is the security of our earthly wealth. In the last few days we have had such a reminder of how fickle the value of money is, not even to think of what has happened in Zimbabwe. In the last

days our wealth in fact becomes worthless leaving us exposed. James writes about this in James 5:1-3 and gives some sobering advice to those who hoard wealth in these last days.

“Now listen you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming upon you. Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. Your gold and silver have corroded....You have hoarded wealth in the last days”. We have seen down through history that earthly wealth has no intrinsic value and to put our trust in it therefore is very foolish. Jesus himself highlighted this when he advised in Matt 6:19-21, “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also”. In the last times our hearts need to be on heavenly things and our hope needs to be there and not on that which can simply fade away but that

which will into eternity. The psalmist understood this when he wrote in Psalm 20:7, “Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God”. In these last days our trust needs to be in and our focus on the Lord and not the wealth that have accumulated here on earth.

## **2. HEARTS BECOME HARDENED**

One of the significant characteristics of the last days is that the hearts of men and women will become cynical and sceptical toward the things of God. Not only will there be a disinterest in the things of God but many will attack the every existence of God. This is an outstanding characteristic of our secular society at present. If you believe in God and even dare to suggest that you have a relationship with Him, you are often looked down upon as being simple and stupid, unsophisticated. Peter warned of this in 2 Pet 3:3-4 where he noted, “you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their

own evil desires. They will say “Where is this coming he promised?” Indeed we live in an age of great cynicism and scepticism toward particularly the Christian faith and the promises that God has made through His Son Jesus. People have become hardened to the gospel. It is not easy to break through people hardened hearts. Our task however in these last days is not to change the hearts of man but just to share the good news of the gospel with those who are lost and allow God to do His work of changing hearts.

### **3. MORALS BECOME MEANINGLESS**

Another outstanding feature of our age is that there is no longer a universally accepted guideline in terms of morals and character that people guide their behaviour by. In our humanistic culture all of these have become relative to what is acceptable to the individual. Paul writes to his young disciple Timothy in his second letter in 2 Tim 3:1-5 with the following

observation, “There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God...” . Surely this is a very accurate description of our society today, self-centred with little interest in God. This is the natural consequence of man hardening his heart against God.

### **4. TRUTH BECOMES TESTED**

One of the greatest challenges of our time is to discern what is truth and what is deception for there are so many truths out there that look so genuine that it is difficult sometimes to separate truth from deception. The New Age movement in particular has a very subtle way of using the truth but creating deception at the same time. This occurs within the church as

well. John writes in 1 John 2:18 and warns the church of false teachers and prophets he refers to as the antichrist and notes, “this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour”. In Matt 24 Jesus speaks of the signs of the end of the age and notes in verses 10-11, “At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people”. In these last days we need to test all teaching in the light of Scripture and stand against that which is false.

## **5. SPIRIT IS SENT**

The four previous characteristics of the last days are essentially very negative and may leave one feeling rather negative and depressed about the age within which we live. The good news is that there is light shining in the midst of the darkness of these

last days. In Acts 2:17-21 we are told of the good news of God’s Holy Spirit being poured out in the last days.

“In the last days God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy...And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved”.

These last days of darkness will see the salvation of the Lord drawing far nearer than it has ever been before. This will be accompanied by new and more power manifestations of the Holy Spirit’s power particularly in the area of prophecy and signs and wonders. I think that this is being seen around the world at the moment. We are seeing a new move of God in the midst of the darkness of the last days. Let us not be overcome by the negatives we have seen about the last days but be excited that even in the midst of this God is doing a new and exciting

thing in this world. God is working out his plans and purposes and we should draw strength and encouragement from this rather than becoming fearful.