

About the Last Days

Taken from Ronald L. Dart's Program Notes

What did the First Christians believe about the last days? Forget about the expression, "The End of the World." The end of the planet is a long way off; nevertheless, it's plain that the first Christians believed there was to be an end of the age. One might take that, because that is what they asked Jesus about one day on the Mount of Olives. They were familiar with the Old Testament prophets and their view of the last days and end of this system.

Peter cited Joel with clarity on the day of Pentecost. He would be less than human if he had not seen what looked like the initial phases of the end times. And yet, Christ would not come in his lifetime, or for more than 2000 years. The prophets told of a "day of the Lord," a day of God's wrath, and while they also saw it as a near term thing, there is good reason to think that they also saw it as a distant event. It would be so cataclysmic, that the destruction would boggle the mind. And they also saw it ushering in a new age.

Not only did they have the prophets, they had Jesus' message on the Mount of Olives, to make them a little hypersensitive to prophetic events. Peter and the others thought they saw it coming, but they were also quite careful to avoid crying wolf. And they had good reason for that as well. On the Mount of Olives, after they had asked Jesus, "What will be the sign of your coming and the end of the age," Jesus gave them a lot to think about. He had already warned of a future destruction of the Temple standing before them.

Jesus also said, "And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter there into. There would be enough warning that the saints could get clear of Jerusalem, and the First Christians did just that before the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD. Jesus continued, "And except those

days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened" (Luke 21:20-21).

The idea of the destruction of all flesh was a little beyond the disciples' horizons. We thought we could see it

coming in the days of the old Soviet Union, but sanity prevented either side from doing it. And, bad as they are, nuclear weapons wouldn't herald the end of all flesh. The Russians are rational people, and no one has died under a nuclear weapon for more than 50 years. So is there something new?

Now, we have an irrational, arguably insane leadership emerging in Persia, and all bets are off. Al Qaeda operatives could smuggle biological weapons across the Rio Grande into Texas.

A mere ten years ago, none of us gave a second thought to the reality that is now approaching.

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Listen to Timely Born to Win Broadcasts. . .

In these most crucial and frightening times, we need people who are committed to keeping *Born to Win* on the air across this nation. We know you want the broadcast so you can hear it in your area. So will you join us in providing financial and prayer support to make this happen? It takes a team effort to do this. We need *you!* We pray we can count on you.

Taken from an article written by Ronald L. Dart

It is not saying too much to describe the men of the New Testament as driven, and none more so than Paul. His description of his ministry is enough to make one feel weak just to read it. We know he was a hard worker, he was in prison more times than he cared to count, he was beaten five times to the legal limit by the Jews and more times than that by Gentiles—three times he was beaten with cudgels, he was stoned once and left for dead. He was shipwrecked three times, and was 24 hours in the water on one occasion. It seems he was never really safe, not even among brethren. He went without food and water on many occasions, and there were many nights when he slept cold. Why did he suffer all this? What was driving him? This was not a man who was fatalistic about his work and his calling. He believed deeply that what he did made a difference (2 Corinthians 11:23-28).

Earlier he had written to these same people, “For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more” (1 Corinthians 9:19). There is no escaping the implications of this statement. How Paul pursued his ministry made, in his mind, a big difference in the outcome. How are we to take this phrase “that I might gain the more”? It is clear in the context that he isn’t talking about personal gain. He concludes by saying, “To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some” (1 Corinthians 9:22). A shocking statement, this last clause.

Yet there is no mistaking Paul’s meaning. He felt that if he were negligent or self indulgent it might well stand in the way of saving real people. Paul was not fatalistic about the Gospel or the calling of the people before him. He did not believe that “whatever will be, will be.” How did Paul come to this conviction? He got it from Jesus, no less.

Early in his ministry, as Jesus was going from place to place teaching, preaching and healing, He looked out over the crowds of people and “was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd” (Matthew 9:36). Then he addressed what must be done about it: “Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.”

There are two major ideas that are very hard to reconcile with some Christian thought. On the one hand, it appears that the outcome is very much in doubt. On

the other hand, some Christian theologians believe that the outcome is predetermined. On the one hand, the potential harvest is plenteous and the presence or absence of workers will make a difference in the outcome. On the other hand, some believe that only a few are being saved in this age and there is nothing we can do to change that.

The figures of speech here, lost sheep and the harvest, are common throughout the Bible and would have been well understood by the disciples. And if there is one thing that is clear in this passage, it is that workers make a difference. Paul got it from Jesus that not only the number of workers, but the quality of the work makes a difference in who is rescued, saved, brought into the fold, and who was not.

Now when Jesus looked out over the multitudes, what he saw was Israel, Jews to be specific. His words on this occasion were drawn from a very old prophecy first given to Ezekiel. “And they were scattered, because there is no shepherd: and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered. My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them” (Ezekiel 34:5).

Lost sheep with no one looking for them. This is the image that Jesus drew for his disciples. And it is a recurring theme throughout Jesus’ ministry and work. On the very first occasion that he sent out the 12 Apostles, he gave them “power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.” And then he told them this: “Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 10:5-7). We should not assume that this is merely a warning message. Jesus spoke of it as a harvest.

The very first mission the Apostles were given was to search for lost sheep. At this point, it was the lost sheep of the House of Israel, but that would soon change. Jesus himself limited his ministry to Israel for a time. On one occasion, though, he left the country and sojourned in Tyre and Sidon. While he was there, a Canaanite woman came to him, begging him to cast a demon out of her daughter. Even here, Jesus’ reputation preceded him. The woman made a complete nuisance of herself until the disciples asked Jesus to send her away. Jesus’ answer is fascinating and continues the lost sheep motif: “I am not

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sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matthew 15:24).

Yet Jesus gave a strong hint that it was not always to be so. After a long discourse about sheep and shepherds, Jesus dropped this statement into his message without further explanation: “And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd” (John 10:16). “This fold” is plainly the house of Israel, so there can be no doubt that Christ’s “other sheep” are Gentiles.

The disciples could not miss this, because “The Great Commission” includes it. What Jesus really said was, “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all nations [Greek: Gentiles], baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world” (Matthew 28:18-20). So Christ has “lost sheep” among the Gentiles as well, and these must be found and brought home.

Then, there is this surprising incident in Paul’s ministry. He has only just arrived in Corinth, and turmoil has already begun. But this time, Christ says something to Paul he has not said before: “Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city” (Acts 18:9-10).

Now what exactly did Christ mean by that? It seems unlikely he was talking about Jews in the city, for Paul had already met with the Jews of the city. This “much people” were sure to be people unknown to Paul. How many were

there? Where were they? How could they be found?

And it is worth noting that he does not speak of these people in the future tense. It is not, “I will have much people,” but, “I have much people in this city.” And Jesus also said, “I have other sheep, who are not of this fold,” not “I hope to have.” I frankly am not sure what import I should place on verb tenses, but one thing seems plain. God has lost sheep and he wants them found.

Now we can be sure that Paul and the others understood that not everyone is being called in this age. They knew of Jesus’ statement that no man could come to him unless the Father draw him (John 6:44). But there are also two important things about this. The numbers of those drawn to God were quite large. They baptized 3,000 on the day of Pentecost and another 5,000 men believed later (Acts 4:4). These may have been people drawn of God when Jesus made his statement. In any case, there may have been 8 to 10 thousand believers in Jerusalem before the later persecutions drove them out or underground.

The other important thing the disciples knew about these lost sheep was that they couldn’t, like Bo Peep, leave them alone and wait for them to come home “wagging their tails behind them.” They had to go looking for them.

That search for the lost sheep is the dominating theme of the New Testament, from the four Gospels, to the Book of Acts, to the Epistles of Paul. There is no fatalism here, no “Que sera, sera,” no “whatever will be, will be.” There was the driving realization that what they did would make a difference in the lives of people. It may be true that a relative few are called of God in this age, but that may not be very relevant to the mission of the church. It is certainly true that the number of those called in this age is much, much larger than any number we have reached.

2015 CEM Feast of Tabernacles

Join us for the *best Feast ever* at the Bella Vista Event Center, on beautiful Lake Palestine, in Flint, Texas. You might recognize the property as the former location of the Church of God International. The facility provides opportunities to worship together, learn together, and break bread together. Breakout rooms will accommodate five levels of YEA and Christian living seminars. Watch your mailbox for details about housing, activities and opportunities to serve.

In Memory

Christian Educational Ministries gratefully acknowledges two generous donations in memory of Dennis Hughes, 63, of Arp, Texas, who passed away March 8, 2015. Dennis was born Sept. 3, 1951, in Altus, Oklahoma, to Jackie and Denzil Hughes. He leaves behind his wife of 37 years, Paula Hughes; his children, Eric and his wife Chelsea Hughes, Alissa and her husband Chris Asaff, Andrew Hughes, and Sam Hughes; his grandchildren, Ashlyn and Cale Asaff; and his mother, Jackie Hughes. Our heartfelt sympathy and prayers are with the family.

Taken from Ronald L. Dart's notes

Why was the early church so much more effective than we are? If we baptize 3000 people in 17 years we feel good about it. However, the early church baptized 3000 people in one day! Someone said, but they had the power of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Is that our problem? Do we lack the Holy Spirit—the power of the Holy Spirit?

Notice Acts 1:1-5: “The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen: To whom also he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God: And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.”

What did they expect? Nothing like this had happened in their lives or their experience. So, what did they have to do to make this happen? Wait! There was nothing they could do to make this happen. They could not make it happen one day earlier by praying harder. It could only happen when God was ready for it to happen. “When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?” (v. 6).

“And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth (vv. 7-8).

Was there anything they could do to prevent this from happening? Yes. They could have refused to wait. They could have left Jerusalem.

“And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:1).

People have spoken of “praying down another Pentecost.” Do they not know that the disciples didn’t

“pray down” this one. But does that mean there is nothing we can do to receive the power of the Holy Spirit?

Peter told the assembled men: “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). Okay, but where is the power?

Power comes from a source. In this case from God. The further you are from the source, the less access to the power. It says in Ephesians, “And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins: Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others” (Ephesians 1:1-3).

“For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another. This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, jealousy, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another” (Galatians 5:13-24).

There are two ways of responding to any situation: The human way and the godly way. The way of man and the way of the spirit. And there are two ways of the spirit—the dark way, and the way of light.

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Jesus explained to his disciples: "Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Look, I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (Matthew 24:23-28). The coming of the Son of man is not going to happen in secret. No one can avoid it. "For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together." (Matthew 24:29). What a strange thing to say. Is this out of context? If it is not, then what he is saying is, "Don't worry. When I come, we will all be together. You won't have to be told about it."

Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken. Whoa! This is a huge astronomical event. We haven't seen anything like this. It seems to be describing a huge meteor shower. And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind (Revelation 6:13). Here in East Texas, it might have been compared it to a pecan tree, shaken by the machine they use to harvest pecans. It doesn't take a lot of imagination to visualize the disaster that enough meteors of size striking the earth would do. And the spooky thing about that is that we know it has happened before. Just look at the moon.

"And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.

Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matthew 24:30-35).

We can forgive the disciples for thinking this was an event that would come in their lifetime. But it appears that Jesus meant that the generation that sees these things start, will see them end. Then, he throws a caution to them.

But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left (Matthew 24:36-40). It is this passage that underlies the "Left Behind" books. One could wonder how, with the events preceding, anyone would still be working, or getting married. Part of the problem arises with the interpretation of the word rendered "taken." Taken where?

"And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto" (Luke 21:20-21).

When the Christians saw the sign to leave, they dropped tools and started walking away to the mountains. Thus the "taken" takes place a little before the final destruction of Jerusalem. You can probably see how the first Christians developed expectations about this.

Continuing in Matthew 24: "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up.

"Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh." To ensure you are ready, order this *FREE Born to Win* broadcast, *About the Last Days*. There's much more to be learned about this subject and you need to know. Return the enclosed card or call us today at 1-888-BIBLE-44 to order this fascinating CD to listen to time and again.

June 1: Psalms 119:89-176

June 2: Solomon 1-8

June 3: Proverbs 1-3

June 4: Proverbs 4-6

June 5: Proverbs 7-9

June 6: Proverbs 10-12

June 7: Proverbs 13-15

June 8: Proverbs 16-18

June 9: Proverbs 19-21

June 10: Proverbs 22-24

June 11: 1 Kings 5-6; 2 Chronicles 2-3

June 12: 1 Kings 7; 2 Chronicles 4

June 13: 1 Kings 8; 2 Chronicles 5

June 14: 2 Chronicles 6-7; Psalm 136

June 15: Psalms 134, 146-150

June 16: 1 Kings 9; 2 Chronicles 8

June 17: Proverbs 25-26

June 18: Proverbs 27-29

June 19: Ecclesiastes 1-6

June 20: Ecclesiastes 7-12

June 21: 1 Kings 10-11; 2 Chronicles 9

June 22: Proverbs 30-31

June 23: 1 Kings 12-14

June 24: 2 Chronicles 10-12

June 25: 1 Kings 15:1-24; 2 Chronicles 13-16

June 26: 1 Kings 15:25-16:34; 2 Chronicles 17

June 27: 1 Kings 17-19

June 28: 1 Kings 20-21

June 29: 1 Kings 22; 2 Chronicles 18

June 30: 2 Chronicles 19-23

The Holy Spirit

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As was said, the Holy Spirit comes from a source. The further you are from that source, the less access you have. There are barriers to that source of power. What are they? To whatever extent you are entrusting in your own power, you cannot be empowered. If you are manipulative you limit the power of the Holy Spirit. If you trust method instead of the spirit, again you limit the power of the Holy Spirit in your life. There is a balance between being good stewards on the one hand, abandoning methods that don't seem to work, etc., and trusting methods on the other hand.

Faith is an essential element in any work. Just because we don't see results, does not mean they are not there. Receiving the power of the spirit is, in a way, is a matter of submission. Of abandoning one's own power in favor of the power of God. The power of the Spirit can do peculiar things to a man.

Remember the story of King Saul and Samuel? "Then Samuel said to Saul, "The Lord sent me to anoint you as king over His people, over Israel; now therefore listen to the words of the LORD." Samuel gave King Saul specific instructions and he didn't follow them. As you read through this chapter, you could easily feel Samuel's instructions were unreasonable. After all, he told Saul to kill all the men, women, children, infants, sheep, camels, and donkeys. Killing babies? This is something one could easily rationalize around that "surely God wouldn't want him to do that." Saul thought he knew better than Samuel and didn't follow the instructions he was given. He made all sorts of excuses. There is a very important lesson to be

learned from Saul (1 Samuel 10:1-9). It is important that you read this section of the Bible at least through 1 Samuel 16.

Then in 1 Samuel 15:17, "And Samuel said, When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the LORD anointed thee king over Israel." Because of King Saul's rebellious spirit and unwillingness to obey the commands God gave through Samuel, he lost being king of Israel, and he lost God's Spirit!

You'll see in 1 Samuel 16:14ff that the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul and an evil spirit from the Lord terrorized him. How sad! This happened because Saul refused to follow the instructions God gave through Samuel.

So we learn from this that the spirit of God, when given, is not necessarily permanent. This is why David was so frightened. When David realized what he had done he prayed that God would not take his spirit from him. There is something singularly dangerous about having had the spirit and then losing it. Such a person is, in a way, insane.

This is not to frighten you, but perhaps a little fear is good if it causes you to take hold of yourselves and draw near to God.

Born to Win

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