

# Surviving the Last Days

The Bible has a great deal to say about the end times. It starts in the first book, Genesis, and continues all the way through the last book, Revelation.

I was in a medical facility once for some routine medical tests and at one point I had a doctor and two nurses there with me. They asked me, “What do you think about the condition of the world today?” I said, “I believe we’re living in the last days.” Rather to my surprise, all three of them said they believed that was true. It was quite surprising.

In this book we are going to explore how to approach the last days. I believe that it will be a time of testing—the severest testing that humanity has ever experienced. There are some very serious statements made in Scripture about the last days.

## **Trouble in the Last Days**

In 2 Timothy 3:1 Paul says to Timothy, “Know this.” It is very emphatic. You can be certain of one thing, this you must not forget.

But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come. . . .

The Greek word that’s translated perilous here only occurs in one other place in the New Testament, in Matthew 8, where it is used to describe two demon-possessed men who came to meet Jesus on the east shore of the Sea of Galilee. And there it is translated fierce. It says they were “exceedingly fierce.” So, what the Scripture is telling us is that in the last days fierce times will come. I think that is a much better translation than perilous.

Paul goes on in 2 Timothy to give the reason these fierce times will come. The reason is the deterioration of human character, ethics and morals. He lists eighteen moral blemishes that will be conspicuous in the last days. Three of them are things that people love. The first is “lovers of themselves,” the second is “lovers of money” and the last one is “lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God” (verses 2, 4). With unerring accuracy, Scripture pinpoints the great basic problem that faces humanity—to say nothing of America and the modern Western world. It is love of self. Self-love is the cause of the breakup of marriages, families, churches and society in general. The prevailing attitude is, “This is what I want. What you want is secondary. I know what I want and I’m going to have it.” That attitude is responsible for the state of the modern family. The breakup of the family is the precursor to the breakup of society.

We are warned again about what will happen in the last days in Matthew 24:7–13. Jesus is speaking about the birth pangs, or labor pains, that will issue in the kingdom of God on earth. One inescapable fact about the kingdom of God is there is only one way into it. You cannot join it; you must be born into it. Jesus said that unless a man is born again he can neither see nor enter the kingdom of God (John 3:3, 5). That is true not only of the individual; it is true of the earth. The earth can only enter into the kingdom of God through a birth. In Matthew 19 Jesus calls it the regeneration (verse 28). And like every birth it is preceded by birth pangs. In Matthew 24:7–13 Jesus lists some of the main labor pains:

“For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows. Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name’s sake. And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise

up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved.”

The first indicator of the coming of God’s kingdom is nation rising against nation. Interestingly, the Greek word there for nation is *ethnos*, which gives us the phrase “ethnic conflict,” one of the conspicuous features of the present situation in the world.

Then Jesus says that kingdom will rise against kingdom, which I would interpret as political wars. These are followed by famines and pestilences and earthquakes.

As if those occurrences were not traumatic enough, Jesus goes further and makes it personal: “You will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of Me.” The natural result of this will be that many turn away from their faith. Jesus indicates, though, that people will not simply walk away from following Him. They will go so far as to actually betray and hate each other. This, of course, produces a perfect breeding ground for the appearance of highly influential false prophets.

The next sign is abounding lawlessness. Anyone who has lived in the same nation for at least ten years would agree that lawlessness is on a continual increase. Jesus then completes His list by saying the love of many Christians will grow cold. The Greek word for love used there is *agape*, the word normally applied to the special love of Christians.

But Jesus is far from hopeless. He immediately follows His litany of end-time indicators with an admonition about the need for endurance. He says, “He who endures to the end shall be saved.” The Greek is more specific than the translation here. It says, “He who has endured to the end shall be saved.” You are saved now, but to remain saved you must endure to the end.