

The Last Days re-visited

Lloyd Dale - 2002

Chapter four The Letters

In the November 13 issue of the Dakota Herald, published weekly in Lemmon, South Dakota, Pastor T. J. Shockley, in his weekly column, expressed his opinion about some “event” he referred to as the “last days”. He stated, “We are living in...The last days”, “the end (is) near” and “time is running out”.. However, he was very unclear about one simple thing. He never told us what “last days” he had in mind. Was he referring to the “last days” of the recent election? Or was he referring to the “last days” of fall? Or possibly, the “last days” of the 20th century? The “last days” of what? What “end is near”? What “time is running out”? He simply did not explain. Ostensibly, he assumed that all who read that message would know what he meant by the phrase “the last days.”

Pastor Shockley also stated that “the Bible is full of prophecies that are being fulfilled daily that all point to the fact that we are indeed living in the last days”. Again he does not state the “last days” of what? Nor does he identify a single Bible prophecy that is currently being fulfilled. We would ask, what Bible prophecies are currently being fulfilled?

Please understand that this *is not a personal attack on Pastor Shockley*. Pastor Shockley has publicly stated:

I have known Mr. Dale for many years, and although I could not say that we are “close friends, I do count him as a friend of mine, and I respect him as a person. It is quite evident that we don't have the same ideas on some Biblical issues.

I thank Pastor T. J. Shockley for his very gracious response (12-04-00) to my recent letter (11-15-00). I also count Pastor Shockley as a friend and my wish is that we could be “close” personal friends. I am delighted to see it confirmed that he is not threatened by differences of opinion. I hope that we can continue to be friends for many more years. It is precisely because of the above that I chose to write this. His response to my letter confirms my respect for him as a person and as a pastor.

However, many “Christians who read the Bible with regularity, and attend a church that preaches the Word of God in its undiluted form” have **no such** “awareness within them that the time that we are living in is indeed the last days”? **We understand the Bible in an entirely different manner. We understand that the New Testament was written to and for a first century audience – not a 21st century audience. Certainly, the New Testament is applicable TO us today; however, it most certainly was not addressed to us! It was clearly addressed to people that lived during the first century and as we read the New Testament we should always ask ourselves, “How would those first century people to whom it was written have received it and how did they understand it. After we have done that we can see what application any given passage may have for us.**

As Pastor Shockley did not tell us what “last days” he thinks we are in, nor did he explain which “end is near,” nor did he identify what “time is running out,” we are left in confusion as to what he actually meant by these alarmist words. However, he did refer five times in various forms to “the coming of the Lord”. Therefore, it may be permissible to assume that what he refers to as “the coming of the Lord” might have something to do with his “last days”, “time is running out”, “the end is near” notions. It just might be possible that he thinks *our world* is about to run out of time and come to an end. If this should be the case, I would like to set his mind to rest. The Apostle Paul states in Ephesians 3:21, that we are:

...to know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge... (Yahweh [God]) is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, Unto Him (Yahweh) be glory in the congregation by Christ Jesus **throughout all ages** (to come), **world without end.** (Ephesians 3:21, comments and emphasis added)

Paul’s statement in the New Testament is in perfect agreement with the Old Testament:

One generation passes away, and another generation comes: **but the earth abides for ever.** [Ecclesiastes 1:4, see also Daniel 2:44, 7:13-14, 27]

Thus, the Bible Clearly states that the “world (is) without end”!!! Pastor Shockley and many others should rest much easier tonight.

Pastor Shockley responded:

I would like you to know that I rest easy every night not because I believe that we have all the time in the world, and that this world is not coming to an end as we know it, but I rest easy simply because as Paul stated, “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.

That is as it should be. However, the verse which the pastor quoted begs these questions, “what and when is the “**that day**” which the apostle referred to in the above quote?” Was this really some day 2000 or more years in the far distant future, or was this a “day” that *Paul expected to become a reality within the life time of that generation in which he lived in the first century?* Read on to find the answer.

Contrary to what pastor Shockley believes we are not living in the “last days,” time is not running out, the end is not near!!! If Pastor Shockley thinks that we are living in “the last days” of this earth’s time perhaps he would be willing to publicly debate the pros and cons of that notion.

As the pastor is “not open to a public debate, as (he does) not believe that that would really accomplish anything.” This attitude is in perfect keeping with one who believes that he holds the higher ground, for they know that they have **everything to lose** and nothing to gain in such a debate.

The pastor writes:

The term “last days” and the subsequent terms in my previous article were used to describe...the end of an age. When Jesus returned to His Father in Heaven, and was seated at the Father’s right hand, it was for a season, a time. He told those who watched Him Ascend that He would return again. I believe we are just about at that point where this current age of Jesus being bodily in heaven and believers being bodily on earth is about to end, and we shall be changed and be with Him.

The Bible uses the term “last days”...both in relation to Israel, and also in relation to the Church. (We will explore this notion later, LD) The ‘last days’ in relating to the Church began with the advent of Christ, but refer(s) especially to the end of this age.” (See his definition of “this age” in the paragraph above)

The above statement reveals a terrific aberration in the thinking of the pastor and multiplied thousands of other Christians. The notion, held by these thousands, that the Biblical phrase “the last days” “refers especially to the end of this age” I. e. this time in the 21st century in which we now live **is an error of epoch portions**.

The Biblical term “the last days” as used in the New Testament **ALWAYS REFERS TO THE LAST DAYS OF THE MOSAIC MARRIAGE COVENANT CONSUMATED AT MT. SINAI, ended at the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, AND NOTHING ELSE** as we will positively establish in this book.

T. J. Shockley stated:

The Lord is coming soon, and just in case you didn't happen to know what season it is friend, I want to tell you today that time is running out. Don't take my word for it, **look into the calendar of God's Word for yourself.** (emphasis added)

The advice to "**look into the calendar of God's Word for yourself**" is some of the very best advice that I have ever seen in print. We have practiced this excellent advice for many years and have looked long and deeply into Yahweh's (God's true Hebrew name) Word.

Here is what we found out about "the last days or last times":

Yahweh,...Hath **in these last days** spoken unto us by *his* Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; (*Hebrews 1:2 AV, emphasis added*)

Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in **these last times for you.** (*1 Peter 1:20 AV, emphasis added*)

...but now once in the **end of the AGE** (last times) He hath appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. (*Heb. 9:26, comment added*)

According to the passages quoted above, Jesus Christ, Peter and all the first century people lived in the "last days" or the "last times"! Therefore, according to the clear and plain teaching of Scripture the "**last days**" or the "**last times**" were **the days of the first century during the life time and death of Jesus Christ and following until 70 AD. The New Testament does not address the subject of any other "last times" or "last days".**

However, the New Testament does tell us several things about the "last days" of the first century:

And it shall come to pass **in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh:** and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: (*Acts 2:17 AV*)

This know also, that **in the last days perilous times shall come.** (*2 Timothy 3:1 AV*)

Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. **Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days.** (*James 5:3 AV*)

Knowing this first, that **there shall come in the last days scoffers,** walking after their own lusts, (*2 Peter 3:3 AV*)

According to the four Bible verses quoted above, Yahweh would “pour out His spirit upon all flesh” during “the last days”. All Theologians agree the Spirit was poured out upon the Jewish Christians at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-5) and upon the gentile Christians (Acts 10:44-45, see 1-45) at the time of the gentile centurion, Cornelius’ salvation. Therefore, the Bible clearly and plainly teaches that the “last days” were in the first century.

“Perilous times shall come in the last days”. The perilous times of which Paul wrote occurred during the period of 63 - 70 AD and ended with the destruction of Jerusalem just as Jesus Christ (Matt.23:1-38; 24:2 & 4-34, etc.), Daniel (9:26-27; 10:30-35; 12:1 & 9-11), and several New Testament writers prophesied. (For a very detailed study of that great oracle of destruction recorded in Daniel 9:24-27 see the book by the same name on our website: www.lloyddale.com)

James tells the rich men of his day that they had “heaped treasure together for the last days”. Peter tells the first century Christian recipients of his letter (the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia) of his letters that “scoffers” “shall come in the last days” i.e. in their life time - the last days of the Mosaic marriage covenant which was drawing to a close (Heb.8:13) when Peter wrote his letters and ended in 70 AD with the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple just as Jesus foretold in Matthew 24.

Thus all these things occurred in the “last days” i.e. New Testament times as all New Testament writers except Philemon attested!

In his response to our previous letter pastor Shockley stated:

In the end, **it doesn’t really matter** what Mr. Dale or I believe to be the proper interpretation, because God’s truth will eventually be known, and that cannot be changed. (The Dakota Herald, issue 39 Volume 1 - December 4, 2000)

Why do we need to wait for “eventually” for Yahweh’s truth to be known? We have His **word** now, so **His Truth may be known now, if we are only willing to see and hear it** (Matt.13:11-17). And when it is known, we shall all know that the New Testament phrase “the last days” always and only refers to the last days of the Mosaic Marriage Covenant which the author of the letter to the Hebrews clearly states was, “getting old and decayed...ready to vanish away,” in other words: in “the last days” even as he wrote his letter to those **FIRST CENTURY** Hebrew Christians.

While it may be true that “in the end” our different understanding of what the Bible teaches about the last days doesn’t really matter,” unfortunately **it does matter a great deal between now and “the end** (what ever and when ever he thinks that is and what that might be).” **Even as this document is being produced local, area, national and international decisions, based on the erroneous eschatological teachings of Billy Graham, Hal Lindsey, Dr. Tim LaHaye, etc., are being made. These decisions have a great effect upon each on of us!** Note this example; as we wrote the above words Charles Morris of Haven Ministries was being broadcast all over America on the Moody radio network incorrectly advising Christians how they should be living now because Jesus Christ is “coming soon”. He even went so far to say that “attempts to make peace are pagan” because Christians know that there will be no peace until Jesus returns and sets up His kingdom. Such foolish advice was clearly based on his “Dallas Theological Seminary (Hal Lindsey’s alma mater) styled” eschatology.

The pastor reminds us that the Greek “word translated ‘world’ ” in Ephesians 3:12 is “aion, pronounced ahee-o-ohn. The meaning of this word is ‘age.’ ” We are well aware that the Greek word “aion” translated “world” in certain places in some translations means “age” not “world”. However, We did not deal with that point because of space constraints. Suffice it to say that “ throughout endless ages” requires an endless earth. Actually Eph 3:21 should read, “Unto Him glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all generations, the age of the ages. Amen.” Thus the endless age of the kingdom of heaven is **the age** of the ages! We are now living in that **age**! The age of all ages. The pastor and many others refer to this as the “church age.” It is more properly understood and recognized as the “kingdom age” of Daniel 2:34-35 & 44-45, 7:13-14, 26-27, and Revelation 1:9, 12:10.

There are many Biblical issues, particularly that “the Word of God is Truth”, where Pastor Shockley and I would be in agreement, unfortunately the “last days” is not one of them. However, **for most of my life I believed** essentially the same as Pastor Shockley does about the “last days.” Fortunately, I have discovered the errors of my former belief about the “last days” **by doing precisely what Pastor Shockley continues to recommend:**

...it is the responsibility of each person to study the Word of God yourself and to come to your own understanding...if you truly desire to understand the truth of God’s word, and ask Him to help you through His Holy Spirit,...you will have that understanding...You need to begin to study these things for your self and come to your own understanding...What we really need to be doing is to begin

feeding ourselves and digging into the Word for ourselves and actually praying and asking God to reveal His truth to us...

With a true desire to know and understand the truth of God's Word, We have done exactly what Pastor Shockley is recommending. After more than 5000 hours of prayerful study ("digging") in the past five years, we can say with great confidence that the Bible **DOES NOT TEACH THAT WE ARE LIVING IN THE LAST DAYS OF "THIS AGE."**

While we are in total agreement with Pastor Shockley about the need for each person to study the Word of God for himself, **unfortunately far too many people do not do that.** Of those that do, most read and study the New Testament and much of the Old Testament of the Bible as if it were written directly from God to themselves **with a total disregard for what the first century authors expected their first century readers to understand from what they had written.** This is especially true when it comes to the study of the "last days."

The highly respected Christian theologian, apologist and author C. S. Lewis stated:

The grounds for modern embarrassment about this (second coming) doctrine fall into two groups, which may be called the theoretical and the practical.

... "Say what you like," we shall be told, "the **apocalyptic** (last days) **beliefs** of the first Christians have been proved to be **false**. **It is clear from the New Testament that they all expected the Second Coming in their own lifetime. And, worse still, they had a reason, and one which you will find very embarrassing. Their Master had told them so. He shared, and indeed created, their delusion.** He said in so many words, 'this generation shall not pass till all these things be done'. And **He was wrong**. He clearly knew no more about the end of the world than anyone else."

It is certainly the **most embarrassing verse in the Bible.** (Comments and emphasis added)¹

This is an incredibly incredulous statement. Did C. S. Lewis actually believed that ***Jesus Christ, the Sovereign Son of God; God in flesh, could be ignorant, wrong, delusional and/or misleading?*** If he did, his Jesus was certainly a different Jesus than the one I love, worship, and serve. Our Sovereign Lord **Jesus Christ is incapable of being wrong in any way about anything!** *Anything less is not the Jesus Christ of the Bible.*

¹ The World's Last Night, and Other Essays, C. S. Lewis, Harcourt, Brace, and Company.

The truth, of course, is that the apocalyptic beliefs of the first century Christians have **NOT BEEN PROVEN FALSE**, rather it is C. S. Lewis (and all who think like him) that is proven wrong.

C. S. Lewis correctly stated, **“It is clear from the New Testament that they all (first century Christians) expected the Second Coming in their own lifetime”**. He is also correct in stating, **“they had a reason...Their Master had told them so.”** However, **Jesus Christ was NOT WRONG**, Lewis was!!!

Jesus told His disciples that:

the Son of man shall come in the glory of His Father...There be some standing here, **which shall not taste of death, UNTIL** they see the Son of man coming **in His kingdom**...Verily I say unto you (the first century disciples), This (first century) **generation** shall not pass **until** all these things be fulfilled. (Matt.16:27a-28, 24:34,emphasis and comments added)

Jesus Christ was absolutely correct, that first century generation did not pass away until all those things, **including His “second coming”** were fulfilled. That’s right, it is not a misprint, **the “second coming” of Jesus Christ occurred in the first century AD, Jesus Christ is not coming soon, Hal Lindsey (and any others) notwithstanding.**

Pastor Shockley’s response (Dakota Herald 12-04-00) to my letter (Dakota Herald 11-15-00) introduced several new issues relative to our discussion of the timing of the “last Days.” Those issues we shall discuss herein:

- The usage of the terms “last days,” “last times,” “times and seasons” by Jesus, Paul and other writers of the New Testament
- The Wrath of God (Yahweh)
- The new heaven and the new earth [Rev.21:1-2]
- The time when the Kingdom of God was to be set up [Dan.2:34-35, 44-45; 7:13-14,26-27, and Revelation 1:9 & 12:10, and many others in the New Testament]
- The time of the “second coming” of Jesus Christ

Dearly beloved, *avenge not yourselves*, but rather **give place unto wrath**: for it is written, *Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord*. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and **they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation**. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil.

Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for **he beareth not the sword** in vain: for he is the minister of God, **a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.** Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. (Romans 12:19-21 & 13:1-6 AV)

The passage of Scripture shown above is not generally considered to be an eschatological passage of Scripture, **but it is!** As we begin to examine the time references for the establishment of the Kingdom of God, we must keep in mind that **Paul wrote Romans to first century Christians.** It was not written directly to modern day Christians as most are wont to read it. (We know that it has modern day applications, but that is not the primary reason for which it was written.)

Another thing that we must keep in mind here is that Paul did not put the chapter breaks into his letter to the Romans. As shown above, the thought that we wish to deal with here begins at Romans 12:19 not Romans 13:1, as in the minds of most modern day readers.

Now notice how Paul begins this thought: “Dearly beloved, *avenge not yourselves*, but rather **give place unto wrath.**” Why does Paul tell the first century Christians to **NOT AVENGE THEMSELVES**; especially in the context of, “*rather give place unto wrath?*” The reason is that Paul is speaking eschatologically about the “**WRATH OF YAHWEH**” not the wrath of government as most modern day readers are wont to understand this passage.

In the historical context of this passage, Paul is writing to first century Christians that are living in Rome c. 60 AD. For almost thirty (30) years the Christians within the Roman Empire had been undergoing bitter opposition and persecution at the hands of that faction of Judaism that had rejected their Messiah. This persecution had begun in Jerusalem with the stoning of Stephen (Acts 7) and continued to escalate as the persecutors followed the Christians wherever they went (Acts 8:1, etc.) throughout the Roman Empire. Many Christians that had fled to Rome had experienced this persecution and Paul Knew that it was going to get a lot worse in *the days ahead of them.*