

1st Timothy, Chapter 4 **"Latter Times"**

:1 *"Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times..."*

The first 4 verses of this chapter talk about the "latter times". What are the "latter times"? Here are some questions we could ask about the latter times:

- a.** Has it already happened?
- b.** Are we living in it right now?
- c.** Could it start any time soon?
- d.** Should we be looking for it?
- e.** Is this the same as "end of the age"?
- f.** Is this the same as the "day of the LORD", or the "day of Christ"?
- g.** Is this the same as "the last days"?

As I looked up verses to figure out what the latter times are, here's what I found:

1. There's a period of time in the Bible spoken of as "the end of the age", and that same time is also referred to as the "day of the LORD", and "the day of Christ." Sometimes it's also called "the last 7 years", or "the tribulation".

It's a 7-year period of time, still in our future, described in the book of Revelation. It's the time when God reaches down into our world, gives every person one last chance to believe in Him, shakes up the whole world down to its core, and ends up judging every person who ever lived based on whether or not they believed in Him.

Matthew 24:1-35
Revelation 6 & 7
II Thessalonians 2:1-12
I Thessalonians 5:2-10

2. And then there's a period of time called the Last Days, or the Latter Times, or the Last Hour. It exists before the last 7 years begins.

I Thessalonians 5:4-8
I Timothy 4:1-3
II Timothy 3:1-7
James 5:1-8
I Peter 4:7-11
I John 2:18 & 19

We have been in the "latter times" since the church began. We have been waiting, since then, for the "end of the age" - the "Last 7 years" to begin.

:1 "Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, ²speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, ³forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. ⁴For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; ⁵for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer."

The Spirit of God is the One Who has told us what things will be happening in those "latter times".

- a. :1 Many people who look like they are believers in Jesus will actually turn away from Him. **Depart from the faith.** They will be people who used talk like Christians, look like Christians, go to church like Christians, but suddenly they stop acting like Christians, stop living by the Bible's words, and stop be kind or gentle or loving.
- b. :1 These same people will actually be lured away from what is true by what is a pack of lies. They **give heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons.** They might get involved in cults or false religions, or worse. They might get involved in the world's worship of money and sex and power. They believe the lies these cults and false religions and evil powers teachbecause they never actually were committed to Jesus in the first place. They never really loved Truth. So they easily believe the lies.

- c. :2 Men and women will freely and creatively **tell lies** without even feeling a bit guilty about it. Lying will be a way of life for many.
- d. :2 **Consciences will be seared.** No feeling at all. People will feel less and less guilt about all the evil things they do. They will lie, cheat, commit adultery, divorce, hate, hurt others, seek addictions....and all with less and less a feeling of horror at what they are doing.
- e. :3 **Marriage the way God designed it will be looked down on.** Marriage between two believers will be made fun of, or even forbidden. Homosexuality will flourish. Pre-marital sex will flourish. Pornography will flourish.
- f. :3-5 While many of God's standards will be scorned, also many other standards, or rules, will be added to life – designed to **strangle people with rules they can never keep.** Legalism will abound. People will worship themselves...and will work hard to keep all the rules...so that they do not have to bow the knee to Jesus.

All these things are happening now. They are all clear indications to us that we are living in the latter times.

:6-9 "If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed. ⁷But reject profane and old wives' fables, and exercise yourself toward godliness. ⁸For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come. ⁹This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance. "

So what is Timothy supposed to do with this knowledge about the latter times? Teach his people in his church to expect these things. To learn to recognize these things. To not be surprised that these things will happen.

And after his people learn what to expect, then they can be taught how to live by the Words they read in the Bible. They can reject false teachings because they are familiar with the truth. They can exercise godliness. In other words, they can "work out" by acting like Jesus. It's hard work, and they will need His help to do it. It will leave them panting and sweating...but it will be far more profitable than going to the gym, lifting weights, and running on the treadmill.

Being nourished with the Word, and exercising Godliness brings results which last into eternity. That is what Paul wants for Timothy himself, and what he knows Timothy must also teach his people.

:10&11 "For to this end we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe. ¹¹These things command and teach."

To what end is Paul working so hard? What is his goal? To what end should Timothy be working? Answer: The life which is to come.

:12 "Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity."

We don't know how old Timothy was, but we do know he was young. Maybe a man in his 20's? Maybe the age of the 12 apostles when they followed Jesus and learned from Him while He was on earth?

Timothy didn't have to apologize for his youth...but it was going to be a good idea for him to be very aware of the fact that his life was an open book. He needed to live for Jesus 24-7.

How did Timothy dare presume to teach those older and more experienced than he? He had orders from Paul, and he just kept serving Christ where he had been placed, no matter what anyone else might say.

:13-16 "Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. ¹⁴Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership. ¹⁵Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. ¹⁶Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you."

As we close this chapter, Paul is urging Timothy to do few things on a consistent, habitual basis:

- a. :13 Read
- b. :13 Exhort
- c. :13 Know good doctrine
- d. :14 Don't neglect your spiritual gift. It won't exercise itself all by. You have to use it.
- e. :15 Think hard about all I have told you
- f. :15 Give yourself completely to all I have told you, so that you will be making progress, and everyone will see it.
- g. :16 Continue

After all this sobering advice to a young Pastor 2,000 years ago, how much of this advice to Timothy do you think is relevant to you?

Questions you can use for your own devotional time, or for group discussion:

- 1. :1 What are the "latter times"?
- a. Has it already happened?
- b. Are we living in it right now?
- c. Could it start any time soon?
- d. Should we be looking for it?
- e. Is this the same as "end of the age"?
- f. Is this the same as the "day of the LORD", or the "day of Christ"?
- g. Is this the same as "the last days"?

Look up the following to get your answers:

END OF THE AGE, DAY OF THE LORD, DAY OF CHRIST

The "end of the age" is described here: (This describes the last 7 years of life as we know it on this earth...sometimes referred to as the "tribulation") This is also called "the day of the LORD", and "the day of Christ".

Matthew 24:1-35

Revelation 6 & 7

II Thessalonians 2:1-12

I Thessalonians 5:2-10

LAST DAYS, LATTER DAYS, LAST HOUR

But, there also is a long period of time, referred to in scripture, which precedes the last 7 years, and that is described here:

I Thessalonians 5:4-8

I Timothy 4:1-3

II Timothy 3:1-7

James 5:1-8

I Peter 4:7-11

I John 2:18 & 19

We have been in the "latter times" since the church began. We have been waiting, since then, for the "end of the age" - the "Last 7 years" to begin.

2. :1-4 What is going to happen in the latter times?
 - a. :1
 - b. :1
 - c. :2
 - d. :2
 - e. :3
 - f. :3
3. :1 Who has told us that these things will happen?
4. :6 What is Timothy supposed to do with this knowledge about the latter times?
5. :6-9 What should Timothy be nourished with, and what should his exercise be?
6. :10 To what end is Paul working so hard? What is his goal? To what end should Timothy be working?
7. :12 How old was Timothy?
8. :12 How did Timothy dare presume to teach those older and more experienced than he?

9. :13-16 What are some more of the things Paul is urging Timothy to do on a consistent, habitual basis?
- a. :13
 - b. :13
 - c. :13
 - d. :14
 - e. :15
 - f. :15
 - g. :16

APPLICATION QUESTION:

How much of this advice to Timothy is relevant to your life?