

THE PIONEER BAPTIST

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THE LAST DAYS

Matthew 24:37-39, 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.

Luke 21:25, And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring.

Luke 17:28, Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded.

INTRODUCTION: Our texts tells us that the last days of this age are to be like the days of Noe and Lot. No man can know the exact day nor hour of Christ's return, but the Scriptures do furnish us with a description of conditions that shall prevail at the time of His coming.

1. They are to be days of abounding wickedness. The human race has never been good since the first man sinned. It has been said that blessed is the land that has no history because history is a record of war and blood shed. A study of the Old Testament shows that at no time during the 4,000 years it covers, was there ever more than a small minority of earth's millions that had any respect or reverence for God. Noe was a contemptible minority in his day, and after preaching 120 years, only eight souls were saved, there were millions of people on the earth at that time. Who would think of eight being right and all others wrong. Vex populi, vex deus was not true in that day. The moral condition of that day is told in Gen. 6:5, And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

Now the days preceding the coming of Christ are to be characterized by abounding wickedness. "Wicked men and seducers shall wax worse and worse." "In the last times perilous times shall come." Times of wickedness and pleasure.

How much worse conditions can and will get, only God knows.

This earth is a rebellious province in God's mighty empire; it is a suburb of hell: it is the devil's happy hunting ground; it is an open range for a horde of demons.

Abounding iniquity on the outside is to be associated by amazing lukewarmness among Christians. Matt. 24:12, And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.

II. They are to be days of materialism. In the days of Noe men were putting emphasis on material things to the neglect of God and his service. They were eating, drinking, etc. They were following earthly pursuits and ignoring God.

No harm in eating and drinking and marrying but it is sinful to be engrossed in such things to the neglect of God and eternal things. They were absorbed in material pursuits in the face of impending doom. Like Belshazzar engaged in revelry as God's hand was about to write his doom upon the plaster of the wall. The materialist emphasizes time and forgets eternity. He barter the heavenly for the earthly. He sells his birthright of eternal happiness for the pottage of temporal gratification.

A man was hastily summoned to the bedside of a friend who was dying. As he approached the bed, the dying man, in the most piteous way, said, "I find that I have been putting the wrong world first." We talk about the forgotten man, but in reality it is the forgotten God. It was said to Israel: Deut. 32:18, Of the rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee.

III. They are to be days of skepticism and infidelity. Job is the oldest book of the Bible. Here is a reference to the flood: Job 22:15-18, Hast thou marked the old way which wicked men have trodden? Which were cut down out of time, whose foundation was overflown with a flood: Which said unto God, Depart from us: and what can the Almighty do for them: Yet he filled their houses with good things: but the counsel of the wicked is far from me. This reveals their attitude towards the preaching of Noe - the preacher of righteousness. They scoffed at Noe's preaching, but at last when the ark was finished and Noe entered it and shut the door their jeering and ridicule was soon over. When the old ship began to ride the waves, the jeers and sneers soon gave way to cries and shrieks and groans from drowning men and women.

Peter tells us that there shall be scoffers in the last days. II Peter 3:3-4, Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.

And Paul says the last days shall be a turning away from the word of God. A pastor in a town in Ohio told a woman not to take the coming of Christ too seriously.

IV. They are to be days of distress among the nations. Luke 21:25. The nations are certainly in distress today. One meaning of the word perplexity is "no way out." A picture of bewilderment. The governments of the world are bewildered. So involved and entangled with one another till they can see no way out; all talking peace and making war.

If there is any truth established by fact, it is human failure. There is no ideal government upon earth. The ideal government is not a democracy, with sovereignty in the hands of the people, or a monarchy with the reins of government in the hands of a human king; or an oligarchy with government in the hands of a few; or Socialism with the authority in the hands of the working class; the ideal government is a Theocracy, the reign of God. And we

will have a theocracy when Christ comes to reign. Not until the government is upon His shoulder will there be stability and happiness for the world.

V. They are to be days of the long-suffering of God. We are told that the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noe. I Peter 3:20, Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a-preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. It is God's long-suffering that keeps Him from letting loose His wrath upon sinners.

There was once a judge in England whom they called "The sleeping Judge," because of his appearance on the bench. He had a drowsy look as if he were asleep and not listening to the case in court. But he was not asleep as his decisions clearly proved. Many seem to think that God is asleep and takes no notice of what is going on, but one of these days their notion will be confuted.

C.D. COLE

"LOOK AND LIVE"

By: Al Gormley

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:14-18). These verses come from the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus. Jesus had told Nicodemus that a man must be born again before he can see the kingdom of God. (John 3:3). In the verses above Jesus told him how this new birth takes place.

OLD TESTAMENT ILLUSTRATION

Nicodemus was familiar with the Old Testament and its teachings since he was a ruler of the Jews and, therefore, Jesus brought this before him to illustrate the way the new birth takes place.

In Numbers 21:5-9 we have the lifting up of the serpent in the wilderness. Jesus said in like manner the Son of man must be lifted up. As we study this passage to which Jesus refers, we see some great spiritual truths come to light which are also present when a person is born again.

ALL ARE SINNERS

In Numbers 21:5 the Children of Israel spake against God and Moses. They were complaining about the lack of bread and water. The light bread spoken of here refers to the manna (a type of Christ) which was God's daily provision for them to live by. The people had sinned against God and God will punish sin. Romans 6:23 says that the wages of sin is death, which is more than a physical death but an eternal death. All men, before they are saved, are in the same condition. "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom. 8:7). All men are sinners and have come short of the glory of God. Rom. 3:23. The complaining, the cursing, and the denial of God's Word to live by is sin. So we today are in the same condition as they were.

GOD'S JUDGMENT

The Lord sent fiery serpents among the people. The serpent is a figure of Satan, as he used the serpent to deceive Eve in the Garden of Eden. The serpent's bite is a figure of Satan tempting men to sin and break God's laws and rebel against Him. The people dying because of the serpent bite is a picture of the end result of lust and sinning against God. James 1:15 says that when lust hath conceived it brings forth sin, and Satan is the tempter who causes us to lust. Then James 1:15 says that sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. So we see that the serpent that bit the people and was causing their death was a figure of Satan who causes us to sin through temptation and the result of our sin is death. This death is not just the death of a physical body, but is the eternal separation in the lake of fire (Rev. 20:14).

PEOPLE WERE DYING

As we look at the people who had sinned in the wilderness, we see that many died from the serpent's bite. The Bible says in Numbers 21:6: "Much of the people of Israel died." In John 3:16, Jesus said that the people who would believe on Him would not perish. People today are perishing; they are dying in their sins. John 8:24. Every physical death is visible proof that Satan has caused them to sin. Every person who dies physically, unless he has been born again, will die eternally under God's judgment. I John 5:19 says, ". . . the whole world lieth in wickedness." Galatians 5:22 says that the scripture hath concluded all under sin. The serpent bite was a fiery one, creating a burning in the flesh. But the final judgment of God for sins will be an eternal burning in the fires of Hell. Fear God who is able to destroy both soul and body in Hell (gehenna or lake of fire.) Matt. 10:28.

PEOPLE CONVICTED OF SIN

The first thing that happened in the hearts of the people that led them to the salvation offered by God in the wilderness was the conviction in their hearts that they had sinned against God. Numbers 21:7. Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. I Tim. 1:15. He did not come to call the righteous to repentance but sinners. Matt. 9:13. The whole need not a physician but they that are sick. Matt. 9:12. There is absolutely no salvation to those that are self-righteous. There must come a time in your life when you know you are a sinner, that you are dying under

God's judgment. You must realize that if left in that condition, you will perish eternally. This conviction comes by the Holy Spirit, and unless you are born again from above, you will continue to live in sin.

FALSE IDEA OF HOW GOD SAVES FROM SIN

The people asked Moses to pray to the Lord that He might take the serpents from them. Numbers 21:7. Now this would help those that had not been bitten, but what about those that had already been bitten? They would die even if the serpents were taken away. The problem must be dealt with in a greater way than man's way. Where sin abounds grace much more abounds. Rom. 5:20. We will find out later that the serpents were not taken away but that the bite was healed and the snakes had no power to hurt them.

GOD'S WAY OF SALVATION PROVIDED

"And the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live" (Num. 21:8). Now this verse corresponds to John 3:16: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life." Both of these verses give us God's way of deliverance from sin. Both tell us how God delivers people from perishing. Both of them teach us that it is God that heals from the snake bite and from sin.

In Numbers 21:8, a serpent like unto the one that had bitten them was made out of brass. Now in what way does this represent Jesus Christ? The answer comes when we see that Jesus Christ bore our sins in His own body (I Peter 2:24). He suffered for sin (I Peter 3:18); He destroyed the works of the devil (I John 3:8); He took part of flesh and blood, that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil (Heb. 2:14). The devil is called that old serpent in Revelation 12:9. Jesus was made sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him (II Cor. 5:21). Jesus then, as our substitute, was willing to go to the cross, to be lifted up and bore our sins (our snake bites) and satisfied the wrath of God and delivered us from death which was caused by sin. Jesus is God's way of deliverance from the snake bite of sin.

THE WAY SALVATION COMES THE SAME

In Numbers 21:8, God tells Moses to say to the people "Look and live." The people must believe that this was God's way of healing them; that God would cause them to live if they would look to that serpent as it hang on that pole. This salvation God promised was not by any works on their part, but was to be accomplished by the power of God through faith in God. Now the same thing is taught in John 3:15, 16 and 18.

There must be a lifting up of Jesus (John 3:14). This lifting up is plainly explained in John 12:31-33. "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die." Jesus said in John 3:15, that whosoever believeth in Him, look and live. Also in 3:16, Whosoever believeth in Him should not perish. John 3:18 says that "he that believeth on him is not condemned." So the message is the same. Look and Live. This does away with any works on man's part in order to be saved. It was all of God through faith.

SALVATION BY POWER OF GOD

The looking to the brazen serpent didn't save. But it was the power of God that healed them from the snake bite. As soon as an Israelite looked, he lived. God's power saved them through faith. The gospel tells us that Christ died for sin, was buried,

and was raised again. The Gospel is the good news that His Son was lifted up on the cross of Calvary, that the Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all (Isaiah 53:6). He made His Son an offering for sins. As it was in the wilderness so it is in our day. When the Gospel is preached, when Jesus Christ is presented on the cross, dying for sinners, the message is the same. Look and Live. You are responsible to look. God's power will save you through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus (Rom. 3:24).

The Apostle Paul says, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Rom. 1:16).

SALVATION COMES IMMEDIATELY

"Look and Live." As many as looked lived. Numbers 21:9. He lived immediately. He was cured immediately. So it is when believing in Jesus. The very minute you believe on Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour, you live. John 1:12 says, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." John 3:15: "That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." John 3:36: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." John 5:24: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." Romans 3:28: "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." Romans 4:5: "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." Salvation comes immediately. Galatians 3:26: "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." Acts 16:30: "And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Verse 31 says: "And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."

SNAKES LOSE THEIR POWER

The Lord did not take the serpents away. No this would have left the bitten dying. But He cured the ones bitten when they looked. He gave them the power to walk in the midst of the poisonous snakes which, in turn, had the power to kill any who did not look. Yet the snakes would bite them and not hurt them. Even so it is today. Through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and His shed blood we are cleansed from all our sins. Romans 5:9. God does not take away the sinful flesh and Satan causes us to sin day by day. I John 1:8 says, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." In Romans 7:17 and 20, Paul says that "sin dwells in me." Also in Romans 7:24, he declares what he feels about himself. "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death." Romans 4:5 gives us the truth about the snakes losing their power. "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." The strength of sin is the law. Break the law and you die. When we are born again, God takes us out from under law and puts us under grace (Rom. 6:14). Therefore, sin shall not have dominion over you.

Kindness is the oil that takes the friction out of life.