Bible Light On These Last Days : a series of prophetic studies

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BIBLE LIGHT
ON THESE
LAST DAYS

By Dr. Chester J. Padgett

a series of prophetic studies
given over
THE BIBLE INSTITUTE HOUR
Los Angeles 17, California
BIBLE LIGHT ON THESE LAST DAYS

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by

DR. CHESTER J. PADGETT

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BIBLE LIGHT ON THESE LAST DAYS

One of the most fascinating and profitable studies the Bible student can make is that of Bible prophecy. The Bible is mainly a prophetic Book. Already some of the prophecies have been fulfilled. Other prophecies are yet to be fulfilled. We can safely assume that since those which have already been fulfilled were fulfilled literally that the remaining prophecies will be fulfilled in the same manner.

Now, Bible prophecy is a profitable study for many reasons, and not the least of these is the fact that such a study helps to confirm the believer's faith in the divine origin of the Bible. Who but God could predict with minute accuracy the events of the far-off future?

Again, the study of Bible prophecy helps the Christian to a proper perspective. The chronology of world events is clear before his eyes and he does not become disillusioned as he watches the world become more and more confused and get farther from God. These things must come to pass before the end of the dispensation and the return of our Lord.

The study of the prophecies of the Bible encourage the Christian to a closer walk with Christ. It is true that Jesus could come at any time. We do not know when He is coming, but it could be soon. Many of us are amazed at the rapidity of movements on the world horizon, all of which portend the imminent coming of the Saviour.

THE MAINSTREAMS OF THE BIBLE PROPHECY

A study of the Word of God and a classification of the many prophetic portions give evidence that many, if not all, of these prophecies may be classified under four major heads: 1) Prophecies regarding the Lord Jesus Christ; 2) Prophecies regarding the Jew; 3) Prophecies regarding the Church; and 4) Prophecies regarding the situation among the Gentile nations of the world at the end-time. We shall study each of these subjects briefly in the light of the Word of God.

CHRIST IN PROPHECY

The Bible is all about the Son of God. He is to be looked for, and He will be found, on every page of the Bible (Luke 24:27, 44.) The Old Testament abounds with references to His first advent, all of which have been literally fulfilled. There are also a great many prophecies in the Old Testament that have to do with the second advent of Christ and which describe the glories of His coming Kingdom.

We cannot, within the compass of this booklet, elaborate on each of the first advent prophecies in the O.T. Suffice it to list here
some of these predictions with their references:

He was to be born of a Virgin (Isa. 7:14.)
He was to be born at Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2.)
A slaughter of children was to occur in connection with His birth (Jer. 31:15)
He was to be called out of Egypt (Hos. 11:1.)
He was to be anointed with the Spirit (Isa. 11:2.)
He was to make an entry into Jerusalem (Zech. 9:9.)
He was to be betrayed by a friend (Psa. 41:9.)
He was to be forsaken by His disciples (Zech. 13:1.)
He was to be sold for 30 pieces of silver (Zech. 11:12.)
He was to be spit upon and scourged (Isa. 50:6.)
Not a bone of His body was to be broken (Psa. 34:20.)
He was to be offered gall and vinegar on the Cross (Psalms 69:21.)
He was to have His hands and feet pierced and His garments were to be parted and lots cast for the possession of His seamless robe (Psa. 22.)
He was to know poverty, suffering, patience and death (Isa. 53.)

These and dozens of other prophecies in the Old Testament have been fulfilled and are indisputable facts of history. Because this is true, the student of the Bible has every right to interpret the prophecies of both Old Testament and New Testament literally as they speak of the second return of our Lord.

A careful study of these prophecies indicates that Christ will come, — first, for His saints, and then some time later with His saints, He will return to the earth to rule and reign. You will notice from I Thess. 4:13-18, that the Lord Jesus comes in the clouds of Heaven to gather His church to be with Himself in the air. This is not His return back to the earth. That comes a little later, after the tribulation events of Rev. 6-19. Let us observe here that the events of Revelation are chronological. This is an important fact in the interpretation of Revelation and in the understanding of the teaching of the prophetic word. Immediately after the tribulation period, the Lord Jesus will return to this earth with His Church (Rev. 19:11-16; Rev. 5:10.) When He comes back with His saints, He will set up His kingdom which shall endure for one thousand years (Rev. 20:1-6; Zech. 14:4-5; Matt. 16:27.)

Other prophecies concerned with the second coming of Christ teach us that He will destroy Antichrist when He comes (II Thess. 2:8); He shall sit on the throne of David in the Holy City (Matt. 25:31; Rev. 5:13; Isa. 9:6-7; Luke 1:32; Ezek. 21:25-27.) When He comes, He will judge the nations of the world (Matt. 25:32); and during the Millennium all kings and nations of earth shall serve Him (Psalm 72:11; Isa. 49:6-7; Rev. 15:4; Zech. 9:10; Rev. 11:15, etc.)
wilderness, the Hebrews finally reached their destination. They entered the Holy Land, drove out the tribes living in that area, divided the land and began to put down roots in the land promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (see Joshua, Judges and Samuel.)

After four hundred years of settlement in Canaan, the people insisted on forming a monarchy. They were dissatisfied without an earthly king and wanted to be like the other nations in the world. God permitted this development, but with the solemn warning that it would result in tragedy for the people. The kingdom was formed. It persisted as a united entity from about 1000 to 933 B.C. With the death of David his son Solomon took the reins of government. The seeds of disintegration began and soon the kingdom was divided into two warring factions — North and South, much like our own United States during the days of the Civil War. This situation continued until 721 B.C., at which time the Assyrians captured the northern kingdom and carried the people away captive, eventually scattering them throughout the entire world. In 586 B.C., the Babylonians invaded the south and did the same thing to the people of Judah. For 70 years these people were captives of this northern kingdom.

In 536 B.C., came the decree of Darius, king of the Persians, granting the Jews freedom to return to Palestine and build again the waste places. The majority of the Jews were comfortably established in their new foreign home and chose to remain there, but 52,000 Jews returned to the Holy Land and built again their temple, the walls, and the city, although not to be compared with their former splendor.

The Old Testament closes with the book of Malachi. From the time of Malachi to the time of Christ is approximately four hundred years. During these so-called “silent years” a number of important developments took place among the Jews in Palestine. The Holy Land passed under the political jurisdiction of three great powers — the Persian, the Greek or Macedonian, and the Roman. A number of powerful religious groups sprang up in Palestine among the Hebrews — the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the scribes. We meet these people in the Gospels.

Now, from the time of Christ to the present time the history of the Jew is exceedingly sad. The prediction of Christ has been terribly true (Matt. 23:37-39.) In 70 A.D. the Roman armies levelled the city of Jerusalem and from that time to this the Jews have had neither temple, priest, nor sacrifice, and have been wanderers and fugitives upon the face of the earth (see Deut. 28:63-67.) No people have been so hated, hounded, hunted and hissed at as have the Jews. Just as God said, the enormity of their crime in rejecting and crucifying Christ has resulted in their punishment and chastisement over nearly 2000 years.

But the history of Israel is not over, by any means. God is not yet through with the Jew. Their future may be listed as follows according to the prophetic Word of God: first, they are going to be restored to their own land. This movement began at the turn of the 20th century with Zionism, was further developed during the first World War, was given a mighty impetus during the second World War with its awful Anti-semitism originated by the Nazi Germans, and is being furthered now with great enthusiasm by many powerful groups among both Jew and Gentile.

The new nation of Israel will soon control Jerusalem, will tear down the Mosque of Omar, the Mohammedan temple now located on the site of Solomon’s Temple, and will rebuild in its place the new Jewish Temple, built according to the blueprint of Ezek. 40-48, and destined to be the most magnificent religious edifice ever constructed (see Matt. 24:15.) The reference to the “holy place” in Matt. 24:15, indicates that the Jews are now in control of this area and that the temple has been erected by the middle of the tribulation period. This indicates that probably the temple construction will begin some time before the rapture for undoubtedly it will take more than three years to erect a temple according to the plans of Ezekiel.

Either shortly before or after the rapture, Palestine will be invaded by communist forces from the north. This invasion is dramatically depicted in Ezek. 38-39. It will result in the divine judgment on their forces and their utter destruction on the mountains of Palestine. God Himself is going to liquidate the military forces of communism, and thus open the door for the further development of world government under Antichrist (Rev. 13.)

During the tribulation period — the period of time from the rapture of the church (I Thess. 4:13-17) to the return of the Lord to earth — the Jews will experience their most severe trials. Jeremiah calls it the “time of Jacob’s trouble” (Jer. 30:4-7); Daniel speaks of it as “a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation” (Dan. 12:1); our Lord calls it the time of “great tribulation” unparalleled and unprecedented in the world (Matt. 24:21.) John describes the nightmarish horrors of this period in the book of the Revelation beginning with chapter six!

During the tribulation period the Gentile powers will come to a place of Satanic hatred of the Jew (Matt. 24:9.) The international armies of the Anti-christ will march against Israel with one intention — their liquidation. On the Plain of Esdraelon the Gentile forces will line up against the valiant Jewish armies and a terrific struggle will ensue. Our Lord said that if He did not put a stop to this time of terrible carnage not one Jew would be left alive (Matt. 24:22.) But He does put a stop to it! He personally intervenes. He comes in glory and His saints are with Him. He
defends the remnant of Israel and utterly destroys their enemies (Rev. 19.)

When Christ comes, the Jews will receive Him. This time they will recognize Him as the Son of God. They will acknowledge their awful sin of nailing Him to the Cross in the first Advent. They will turn to Him with open arms and open hearts and the remnant will be born again spiritually, perfectly equipped to lead the people of the Millennium in the things of Christ (Isa. 49:18, 22-23; Micah 4:1-2; Zech. 8:20-23; 14:16; Ezek. 37:23-27; Jer. 23:3-6; Ezek. 40-48.)

THE CHURCH IN PROPHECY

We have already traced the prophecies of the Bible regarding Christ and Israel. Now, let us study some of the Scriptures that have to do with the Church of Christ. The New Testament, of course, is our source for this study. The Old Testament, as we have already pointed out, was chiefly concerned with the Jew. Paul tells us in Eph. 2-3, that the New Testament Church is a “mystery” kept secret by God from the beginning of the world and not revealed until the beginning of the new dispensation (see especially Eph. 3:1-11.)

Jesus came unto “His own,” and they received Him not. That is the nation of Israel would not acknowledge Him (John 1:11; Rom. 9 to 11.) But there were, through the centuries, a remnant according to the election of grace (Rom. 11:5.) These people constituted the true people of God (Rom. 2:28-29.) When Jesus died and went back to Heaven, He sent the Holy Spirit to launch a new movement — the Christian Church. This fellowship was to include both Jew and Gentile who believed, and these two together, believing Jew and believing Gentile constitute the “mystery” Church, the “body” of Christ (Eph. 1:23), the “new man” (Eph. 2:15), the “temple of the Holy Spirit” (Eph. 2:22.)

Now the Church is both visible — in the world, and invisible — in Christ. The visible church has its organization, its problems, its developments in the world. The invisible church is identified fully with Christ and is seated with Him in the heavens even now in the sight of God (Eph. 2:4-7.) The student of the Bible is familiar with the teaching of our Lord on the character, structure and destiny of the Church as presented in Matt. 13. In this parable chapter, or better, chapter of parables, our Lord sketches the Church age from its inception at Pentecost to its conclusion at the close of the Tribulation period. The parable of the four sowers (Matt. 13:1-9, 18-23) teaches the way of entrance into the Church — faith in the Word of God; the parable of the wheat and the tares teaches the mixed membership of the Church — both possessors and professors (vv. 24-30, 36-43); the parable of the mustard seed teaches the phenomenal organizational growth of the Church through the centuries (vv. 31-32); the parable of the leaven teaches the gradual infiltration into the Church of false doctrine preparing for the final total apostacy from the Word of God (vv. 33-35 with II Thess. 2:3); the parable of the hid treasure teaches the tremendous value placed upon the true Church, by our Lord, (v. 44); the parable of the pearl of great price emphasizes the staggering price of the true Church, even the life of Christ (vv. 45, 46); the parable of the dragnet teaches the mixed character of people in the world and people in the visible church, and it also teaches the sovereignty of God in ultimately making a distinction between those who are His and those who are not (vv. 47-52.)

Another passage of Scripture of tremendous importance in giving a prophetic view of the Church age is Rev. 2-3. In this section of Scripture the Holy Spirit delineates the development of the Church from its beginning to the end of the Tribulation period. That this is the correct interpretation of this passage is evident from several observations: 1) Revelation is chronological throughout. The book begins with the vision of Christ, the Head of the Church, in the midst of His Church; it then traces the development of the Church through history (2-3); it then gives a prophetic view of the raptured church in Heaven (4-5); with the Church in Heaven comes the outpouring of God’s righteous anger upon a rebellious world and a recalcitrant Israel (6-19); then comes the return of Christ (19), the establishment of the millennial kingdom (20), the final judgment (20), and the new heavens and new earth (21-22.) 2) Another reason for believing that Rev. 2-3 depicts the course of the Church in this age is that only seven churches are addressed in this section. Seven is the number of completeness in the book of the Revelation. Seven churches are evidently selected by the Lord Jesus because they represent the entire Church during the course of the New Testament dispensation. 3) The key verse of the book (1:19), indicates a three-fold development: first, the things John saw by vision preparatory to the writing of the book (ch. 1); second, the sketch of things that are, that exist now — namely, the Church through the centuries (2-3); and, thirdly, the things to come, that is the events following the completion of the Church in this present age (ch. 6, following.) 4) The word “church” is not mentioned again after chapter 3. This silence is significant. It teaches that the Church is not on earth during the time of the Tribulation.

Rev. 2-3, teach that the history of the Church in this age is an evolution in reverse! The Church begins with the Apostolic era; it is sound, busy, watchful, patient, persevering (2:1-3.) But it had within it the seeds of death — it was leaving its first love, its
warm devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ (v. 4.) The second church suffered from disillusionment (2:10.) It had to suffer for Christ. This experience brought many of the Church members to a place of compromise, which is expressed in 2:14.

The fourth development within the Church through the centuries was that of the erection of a double standard (2:20.) Then came spiritual deadness and inertia (3:1); then came the resurgence of a Bible-believing remnant pressing with the Gospel through open doors, very probably a prophetic picture of these missionary-hearted years of the 20th century (3:8-10); the history closes with the Church indifferent and possessed of a sense of false security (3:17.) The history begins with Christ in the midst of the Church; it closes with Christ shut out of the Church and standing on the outside knocking for admittance! This inspired picture is in harmony with every passage bearing on the history of the Church in the world.

In the chronology of the book of Revelation you will note that the Church is in Heaven before the Tribulation period (4-5 with 6ff.) From other Scriptures we learn the following facts regarding the rapture: 1) it will be sudden (Matt. 24:36-44); 2) it will be instantaneous (I Cor. 15:51-52); 3) it will be mutual, that is, all the saints of all the ages will share in it — the living with those who have died in the faith (I Thess. 4:5-17); 4) it will be secret (I Thess. 4:17); 5) it will be a transforming experience (I Cor. 15:51-52); 6) it will be permanent — “so shall we ever be with the Lord” (I Thess. 4:17.)

As to the time of the rapture we have already noted the fact that it will precede the Tribulation. This we learn from the following evidences: 1) the chronology of Revelation — the Church is seen in Heaven prior to the Tribulation (Rev. 4-5); 2) the typology of the Bible — Noah and his family were shut into the ark before the flood (Gen. 6-9, Lot was “hastened” out of Sodom before God could judge that wicked city (Gen. 19:15ff.), the Jews were spared the plagues in Egypt because they were the people of God (Exodus); 3) the promises of God — God has clearly promised deliverance of His people from the tragedy of the Tribulation (Luke 21:36; Rev. 3:10); 5) the distinction between the rapture and the return of Christ to earth — this distinction is plainly taught in the Word as the Bible student will note when he compares such Scriptures as I Thess. 4:13ff., with Rev. 19, etc.; 6) the warnings on watchfulness — the Bible abounds in warnings to God’s people to await the coming of Christ in the rapture. Such warnings would be meaningless if the Church is to go through the Tribulation because, with open Bible, every believer could check off the events until the very moment of the Lord’s return! (see Matt. 24:42; Rev. 6:12-16; etc.); 7) the character of the Church’s hope — it is called the “blessed hope” now, before the Tribulation, which indicates that the believer will escape the Tribulation. It could not be much of a hope if the Christian had only to anticipate the horrors of that awful day! 8) the removal of the Church is necessary as the preliminary event to the Tribulation (II Thess. 2:1-12.) This Scripture tells us that the people of God must be removed before the total apostacy of the Church can set in and before the Antichrist can be revealed.

A word should be said about the Tribulation saints. During the Tribulation period, God is going to set aside 144,000 regenerate Jews to preach the Gospel throughout the world (Rev. 7.) As a result of this witness, literally millions of souls will be won to Christ. All of these will suffer martyrdom for the faith, but will be included in the body of Christ and share in the glory of the true Church (Rev. 6:9-11; 7:9-17; 19:7-10.)

During the millennium the Church, or Bride of Christ (Rev. 19:7-10) will rule and reign with Him for the entire thousand year period, helping to promote the righteousness of the Lord and to establish peace and prosperity throughout the earth (Rev. 5:10; 20:1-6.)

THE GENTILE WORLD AND PROPHECY

The last broad stream of prophecy with which we shall deal in this booklet has to do with the Gentiles. Let us remember that in God’s sight there are three classes of people in the world — Jew, Gentile, and the Church (I Cor. 10:32). We have traced the prophecies regarding the Jew and the Church. Let us now note the teachings of the prophetic Word as it traces the development of the Gentile nations throughout history and in the days to come, leading up to the return of Christ.

The Bible speaks of “the times of the Gentiles” (Luke 21:24.) This term refers to that period of time in which Jerusalem is under the dominion of Gentile world powers. The “times of the Gentiles” began, at least as a prelude, with the capture of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C. Never again was Jerusalem fully independent. In A.D. 70, the Roman armies destroyed the city and from that time until the year 1948, Jerusalem has been in Gentile hands. Today it is partly in Jewish hands. But partial possession of the Holy City is not enough. Israel must possess it completely. Until they do the “time of the Gentile” are still in operation.

Daniel is an important book with regard to prophecy dealing with the Gentile world. Daniel was a captive in a Gentile land — Babylon — when he wrote his prophecy. He was given, in that setting, the revelation regarding the relationship of the Jews and the Gentiles throughout the “times of the Gentiles.” Daniel
sketches four world powers, and only four. The fourth and last is in operation at the time of the end when the Lord Jesus returns to set up His kingdom (2:31-45.) Three of these kingdoms have come and gone just as the prophet predicted. The fourth has persevered through the centuries and is progress even now! This fourth form of government — diverse (7:23), destructive (2:40), divided (2:44), disintegrating (2:42-43), and doomed (2:44-45), is right now developing as the United Nations Organization, and is destined to rule the world for a brief time prior to the return of Christ. Further information about the character of this world-rule is given in Rev. 3:17-18.

Out of the United Nations there will arise a strong man, a dictator, a personality called in the Bible by various names — "the man of sin" (II Thess. 2:30), "the son of perdition" (II Thess. 2:30), "the lawless one" (II Thess. 2:8), "the beast" (Rev. 13:1.) The Antichrist, or end-time world political ruler will hold universal sway over all peoples of the earth (Rev. 13:3-7.) He will be completely dominated by Satan and energized by him, that is why he hates the Jew with vehement hatred and attempts to rid the world of the Jew (Rev. 13:4; II Thess. 2:8-9; Matt. 24:15.) But no enemy of God can long endure — the Antichrist comes to an ignominious end in humiliating defeat and the judgment of the lake of fire (Dan. 7:21-22; II Thess. 2:8; Rev. 19:19-21.)

A study of the Gentile nations of the end-time cannot possibly overlook the predictions of Scripture regarding Russia and her allies in the drama of events leading up to the return of our Lord. The Bible tells us that there will be two invasions of Palestine at the time of the end. The first is that of Russia and her satellites as described in Ezek. 38-39. The second is that of Antichrist with his international armies filled with the diabolical intent of annihilating the Jews. The latter is depicted in Dan. 2:44-45; Rev. 16:12-16; 19:11-21.

Now, let us note, briefly, the teaching of Ezekiel regarding the Russian invasion of the Holy Land. First of all, let us observe the fact that in the end times Israel is again a nation well-established in the land (36:22-37:28.) At the time of Russia's suicidal "blitz-krieg" the Jews have established their nation again, and have been wonderfully successful in rebuilding their land. Then comes the invasion! (38:1-16.) Note Russia's allies (vv. 5-6.) These include Persia (Iran), the Balkans (Gomer), Turkey (Togarmah), and "many peoples," undoubtedly the vast host of Orientals now under the control of Communist Russia!

Why does Communism attempt to take Palestine? The Scripture is clear: for two reasons: 1) "to turn thine hand on the people that are gathered out of the nations ..." (v. 2.) Why does communism hate the Jews? Because the Jews produced the Bible and the Saviour, both of which the communists are sworn to hate and to eliminate!

But, as we have already indicated, no attack on God can be successful (Psalm 2) Russia and her satellites are doomed to disastrous defeat in Palestine (38:17-39:20.) The military might of communism will be forever broken. This event will pave the way for the conquest of the East by Antichrist (Rev. 6:1-2), who will succeed, finally, in bringing the entire family of Gentile nations under one banner.

Then will come the events described in Rev. 13-19, climaxed by the attempt on the part of Antichrist to liquidate the Jews, resulting in the tragic battle of Armageddon, the return of the Lord Jesus Christ with His saints, the establishment of His kingdom in the world, and the other events of Rev. 19-22, as indicated in a previous section of this booklet.

My dear friend, in the light of these prophecies can you afford any longer to be unsaved if you have not yet yielded your heart to Christ? The Word of God is sure. Prophecy proves its veracity. You cannot doubt the Bible. Then will you believe Christ this moment? Will you receive Him as your personal Saviour and Lord? Will you acknowledge Him as your Substitute who endured the wrath of God for your sin? Do it now without delay. You will never regret it.

And, dear child of God, there is a message for you in the prophetic Word. The time is short. The night is coming when our work is done. Are you on the battlefield for Christ? Are you making your life count for Him in every way possible. Are you making ready to meet Him and to stand before the Throne of Review? If not, why not yield to Him fully right now, and begin to lay up treasure in Heaven. God bless you in this act of decision and dedication.
TODAY

Help me to place in Thy hands today
The thing that my heart most fears;
Tomorrow’s anguish and bitter pain,
Tomorrow’s sorrow and tears.

The long, long years, and the loneliness,
The silence, the vacant chair.
The grief of today is enough, dear Lord,
But tomorrow’s I cannot bear.

Ease Thou my burden and lighten my load,
Till only TODAY is left.
Soft comes His voice in the hush of my soul,
“Oh, broken heart, and bereft,

My grace is sufficient for thee TODAY;
Pillow upon My breast
Thy weary head; in My circling arms
Today thou shalt find rest.

Today I can meet thine every need,
Today My love can fill
The echoing chambers of thy heart,
Then rest thee, and be still.

Be still and trust — tomorrow’s tears
May all be wiped away
By God Himself, O grieving heart,
Thy Lord may come TODAY!”

—Martha Snell Nicholson.

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