

THIS PRESENT AGE

Over the next several weeks, I want to look at what Scripture calls “**this present age**”, or the church age in which we live. Today will be a kind of introduction to this topic to set the tone for the next several studies. The reason is so that over the next several weeks that we can fully recognize those distinctive elements that clearly characterize the **END** of this “**this present age**” in which we live. As your pastor, I do not want to stand before God and have Him ask me why I never warned you about what was coming and how it could be recognized. So that is what I am going to do – give you the biblical characteristics identified in Scripture that serve as a warning for every single one of us to be prepared for what I simply want to call the “end” of life as we currently know it.

If we know that this “end” is somewhat “imminent”, then it only behooves every one of us to make sure that our lives are in order as far as salvation and our relationship to Jesus Christ are concerned. Being prepared for eternity is a much bigger issue than most people even care to talk about. In my mind, the person who is not willing to address the genuineness of their relationship to Christ and whether or not they are even prepared to meet Him are in grave danger of actually having to go through the Tribulation. You can worry about everything else on the planet if you want to, but if you are not right with God when this “end” occurs, then nothing else you are concerned about will even matter. Now, if I believed that this “end” was another several hundred years away, I doubt that I would even be teaching on this, but that is not the case at all. I believe it is at the door, and as we look at “**this present age**” and what the Bible also calls “**this present evil age**”, maybe we can get a glimpse into what actually leads up to the end so that we can be prepared for it. I would much rather be prepared than surprised.

Obviously, the church age in which we live began on the Day of Pentecost, so there has been a lot that has transpired since that day nearly 2000 years ago. However, what that means in simple terms is that we are constantly getting closer and closer to the end of “**this present age**”. No one knows the day or the hour when this will end, but what we do know is that there are certain characteristics that will mark the end of “**this present age**”. They are characteristics that we can actually see, that we can actually know are happening with a much greater frequency and speed than previously. We know that this “**age**” in which we live ends with the abrupt removal of the church in the rapture and then the subsequent beginning of the seven years of Tribulation after the antichrist has signed a seven year treaty with Israel that on the surface seems to guarantee their peace. I certainly believe that people will be saved during the Tribulation, but unfortunately I doubt that it will be that many, and most of those who are saved will be brutally martyred before the seven years is over. The point is why would you not be prepared for the end of “**this present age**”? Why would anyone even consider waiting to make sure that their relationship with Jesus Christ was rock solid?

Now, if someone were to ask you what were some of the characteristics of “**this present age**” in which we live, I wonder how you would actually answer that question? Would you say that we are making a lot of technological advances, or that we are developing a lot of life saving medical discoveries, or that we are standing on the brink of artificial intelligence being a social and economic reality? Would you tell someone that we are thinking about sending people to Mars or that we now have cars that can drive themselves without your help? What would you say? On the other hand, I wonder if you would address the less friendly issues and talk about gross immorality and pornography pervading our nation or evil men waxing worse and worse or how the church is abandoning the truth at an alarming rate. I wonder

if you would address the generation of young people that are turning away from biblical values and from the faith in droves? Would you be willing to address the disintegration of the traditional family as we have known it, or the meteoric rise of false teachers in the church? I wonder if you would like to talk about how we live in a church age that only has a “**form of godliness**”? How would you actually describe this age if asked to do so. I.e., do you know what are the biblical characteristics that Scripture says mark “**this present evil age**” relative to the time frame in which we live in 2021?

I believe that the Scriptures actually do that for us so that we do not need to be guessing at what is going to happen. [Revelation 2-3](#) describes seven distinct periods within the church age and what were some of the characteristics of the church during those seven periods. However, we really only need to look at the last period, the one in which we are living. It is called the age of the Laodicean Church ([Revelation 3:14-22](#)), or what is often called “The Apostate Church”. Does anyone know what the actual word “**Laodicea**” means? That would probably be a good place to begin. It means “people ruling”, which is a good indication that God is not ruling. The period of what we know as the Laodicean church probably began around 1900 and continues to this present day.

Probably the defining characteristic of the Laodicean church today is that it is characterized by very destructive biblical heresies. One of those heresies is that people may outwardly affirm the fundamentals of the faith in a very general way, but they no longer view the Bible as the final authority in determining divine truth. Experience and reason have been placed on par with the Scriptures. However, in practice, someone’s experience will invariably take precedence over the Scriptures. When this happens, the new experience is justified as being a “new revelation of the Holy Spirit”. We have so many strange and varied doctrines today that twist the Scriptures and boldly deny the authority of Scripture. Ultimately, this wave of teaching has replaced Scripture with experience and feeling and relegated the Scripture to a secondary position. If I can say it this way, the people and their ideas are ruling (Laodicea) and not the divine Word of God. If you want to know the truth, then you must go to the Word of God. My personal experiences have no value if they are in direct contradiction to the Scriptures. Then to make it even more unpalatable to the liberal who wants to live however they want to live, the Scriptures are the final authority on all matters related to faith and practice. This kind of position is seen as hard, harsh, overbearing, and unacceptable to the man who wants to think for himself. I can assure you that what God thinks and says is much more important than what I think or say.

Now, we can reasonably assume that the end of this “**present age**” will constitute the beginning of the next “**age**” in God’s outworking. In our study of the rapture, we have already addressed in some detail the general apostasy that will characterize the last days, but in reality there are other distinctions that need to be addressed as well. Just so that this can be placed into perspective, this “**present age**” will come to a close. It has a limit as to how long it can and will exist. [1 Timothy 4:1](#) says,

1Ti 4:1 (NKJV) **Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons,**

The phrase “**in latter times**” is referring specifically to that period of time leading up to the Second Coming of Christ – which would include the time which precedes the rapture and directly follows the rapture. [2 Timothy 3:1](#) says,

2Ti 3:1 (NKJV) **But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come:**

There are a number of other specific references that speak about the “**last times**”, the “**last time**”, the “**latter days**”, the “**latter times**”, and the “**last hour**”. The point is that this current church age will come to an end and with it there are specific elements that will characterize this end and should be recognized.

As we have seen previously, the primary picture of the last days church is that of **men departing from the faith**. Clearly, there are many other global and political events falling into place just prior to the rapture of the church as well, but we are not addressing those in this part of the study. The characteristic that defines this period of time within the church could simply be labeled as people having what **2 Timothy 3:5** declares as just a “**form of godliness**”. The word “**form**” is “*morphosis*” and it means that it is something that is just an external appearance only without any real internal substance to validate its reality. We often call people “fakes”. This is referring to someone for which their faith is not real to them. They live however they want to live without any real regard for the truth of Scripture. If they want to do something that they know is contrary to the Word of God, they will simply find a way to justify how they want to live. It really is no big deal, and if someone is willing to challenge them, they will accuse that person of judging them, of being a hypocrite, of being harsh, arrogant, and bigoted. To be challenged by someone actually gives them a greater precedence to rationalize what they are doing. It is the idea that someone wants to leave the impression that they are saved, but in reality there is no real and abiding substance to their spiritual life. The “**last days**” church is simply filled with men and women who are not saved. It is not just people in the pew, but it includes those who lead in many churches. The testimony of Scripture is that false teachers and false doctrines will abound. **2 Peter 2:1-2** says,

2Pe 2:1 (NKJV) But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. ² And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed.

Once doctrinal truth is forfeited and compromised, everything else becomes spiritually destructive and heretical. Stated another way, what is being taught is worthless as far as God is concerned. I would not hesitate to say that doctrinal truth is literally being abandoned and forsaken in many segments of the modern church, and it is only a matter of time before it is completely lost. The fallout within the church itself is that those who are truly Christ honoring, Bible believing Christians are seen by the remainder of professing Christianity to be cultic, abnormal, reactionary, and ignorant. Scripture also declares that there will be an increased denial of the faith, a denial of sound doctrine, a denial of living a separated and holy life, and a denial of godly morality in “**the last days**”. No wonder Scripture calls this “**present age**” an “**evil age**”.