

Sunday 10/6/19 9AM & 11:15AM Notes – Jeff Lyle

"End-Times On-Ramp" 2 Timothy 3:1-11 | 9AM

No other generation that has ever lived has needed to understand what is written in Scripture about the calling to discern the times in which they live. Jesus spoke about this need in some very pointed words in Matthew 16. He later listed a whole host of signs that manifest at the end of the age in Matthew 24. John taught us to test & discern the various spirits that operate around us in each generation (1st John 4). Peter mentions in his second letter that God has given us the ability to perceive the nature of the times in which we are living. *And then there is Paul.* In this message we will see that Paul prophetically reveals the anthropology at the end of the age - he tells us what people will be like. As we study his description of the people living just prior to the Second Coming of Christ, we should all be sobered. It is undebatable from his writings that we are currently very close to the return of Jesus. Our present generation is exiting off the end-times on-ramp. Knowing we are close, what do we do?

I. The Radical Leanings of the Last Generation (1-5)

A. The declaration concerning the last days (1) - “But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty...”

Paul wants Timothy, his young protégé in ministry, to understand the nature of those who live at the end of the age. While many of these characteristics were in play at the time Paul was writing these words 2,000 years ago, it is clear in Scripture that the intensity of these characteristics will increase as we move closer and closer toward the Second Coming. Paul gives the general description of these last days as being *difficult*. The Greek word he used indicates an anthropology that is defined as being violent, dangerous, troubled and fierce. The peril that characterizes the generation that is alive before the return of Jesus is fueled by the wickedness of human beings. Paul wants Timothy to understand that the difficulty will come hard against the Church. Christians living during this time will need to be prepared for the intense trouble that will define that generation.

B. The description of the last days (2-5)

Notice that Paul does not write here of geological/astronomical/biological elements that will manifest at the end of the age. No, Paul bypasses these signs and focuses instead on the anthropological attributes at the end of the age. He is telling Timothy that they will know that the end of the age is very near when they witness massive amounts of the population behaving in the ways he is about to describe. As we look at these traits, can we reach any other conclusion than the one that declares we are living in what may be the very last of the last days before the Second Coming?

1. Self-centered (2a) - “For people will be lovers of self...”
2. Greedy (2b) - “...lovers of money...”
3. Egotistical & abrasive (2c) - “...proud, arrogant, abusive...”
4. Rebellious against authority (2e) - “...disobedient to their parents...”
5. Entitled (2f) - “...ungrateful...”
7. Irreverent (2g) - “...unholy...”

8. Cruel (3a) - "...heartless, unappeasable, slanderous..."
9. Violent (3b-) - "...without self-control, brutal..."
10. Outraged & unteachable (3c-4a) - "...not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit..."
11. Sensual & sexualized (4b) - "...lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God..."
12. Religious (5) - "Having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power..."

II. The Religious Leaders in the Last Generation (6-9)

A. Some will be subtle & deceptive (6a) - "For among them are those who creep into households..."

Now, Paul spotlights a particular group among all of those living at the end of the age. He wants all of us to be able to recognize false religious leaders, presumably among those that profess to be Christians. These false leaders will be deceptive in nature. Using language that makes these leaders as predators or thieves, Paul describes them as those who creep into homes. In Paul's day, Christians met in homes so there were no church buildings. These leaders would find a way to work themselves into families or house-churches. They were subtle, using all the right lingo. They knew how to appear *Christian*. Yet their motives were ulterior in nature. They were not seeking to honor Jesus. These leaders were creeping into homes and house-churches in order to get something for themselves. Today, these types of people still exist. Now, technology allows them to be creeping in through podcasts, TV, internet, books, conferences, and social media. They are deceiving the people who view them as worthy Christian leaders to follow. Paul is herein exposing them for what they are: **subtle and deceptive predators**.

B. Some will be seductive & sensualized (6b) - "...and capture weak women, burdened with sins and led astray by various passions."

Not surprisingly, these leaders seem to be skilled at using their deceptive power and persuasion to seduce women. While not exclusively a male sin, it is clear that, over the centuries, men have used ministry position and authority to target women for sexual purposes. There is no need for me to list the ways in which this kind of thing might happen because we have all heard the sad stories of what occurs when a pseudo-spiritual leader seduces women. Paul mentions that these leaders (and perhaps the women they have seduced) end up being burdened under a life of sinful actions. They then become servants of their inflamed passions and find themselves led astray into deeper and deeper depravity. At the end of the age, we should all expect this kind of thing to be increasingly common as false Christians assume leadership positions in ministries. Unfortunately, this kind of scandalous behavior makes it increasingly difficult to trust any male leaders. Skepticism, suspicion and bitterness toward ministers increases every time a new scandal breaks. This is a mark of the end of the age.

C. Some will be convinced but corrupted (7-8) - "Always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth. Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men corrupted in mind and disqualified regarding the faith."

These leaders will also be known for their relationship (or lack of relationship) with biblical truth. Paul describes them as those who continue to learn words, information, doctrine and perhaps even presumably supernatural revelation. In all of their learning, however, they never become rooted and grounded in God's truth. They are not converted, and their theology will end in error at some point along the way. They may give lip service to orthodox Christian beliefs, but they never submit to them. Jannes and Jambres are also mentioned of examples. History tells us that these two men were magicians in Pharaoh's court and opposed Moses there with their own satanic signs and wonders. Paul may be releasing a subtle warning about leaders at the end of the age who operate in signs and wonders but are devoid of biblical orthodoxy. Finally, Paul describes these false leaders who reject the Bible and live for new knowledge, signs and wonders as being in opposition to the truth and corrupted in their minds. Christians, you do well to take note of how deeply your leaders regard, believe, preach and practice the Word of God.

D. All will be stopped & spotlighted (9) - "But they will not get very far, for their folly will be plain to all..."

Thankfully, Paul declares with no fanfare that there will be a great exposing of these leaders at the end of the age. It will be public as their foolishness will be made plain to all people. We do not have to wait for a scandal to break. We are equipped now by Holy Spirit to discern the deceptive spirits working through false leaders today. It is not a witch-hunt, but there is a clear expectation for us to be proactive and not be deceived by religious leaders as we approach the end of the age. God will see to it that these people are brought down, but we must not be brought down with them due to a lack of proactively discerning the truth about them.

III. The Righteous Lovers in the Last Generation (10-16)

A. We love God's call (10-11) - "You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions, sufferings...which persecutions I endured: yet from them all the Lord rescued me." **Run with those who love the King & His Kingdom**

Now, Paul talks to the genuine followers of Christ living at the end of the age. In his words to Timothy, we find instruction for ourselves as those who have aligned with Jesus, with the Word of God, and with the prophetic clarity about the generation in which we live. **Paul highlights some things that Timothy was wise to follow:** Paul's doctrine, Paul's conduct, Paul's goals and direction, Paul's faithfulness, Paul's patience, and Paul's love of God and others. Additionally, Paul commends Timothy for emulating Paul's steadfastness in trials and Paul's persecutions with suffering. Paul endured these things as they found him until the Lord brought breakthrough. We should expect these same types of things in our own lives as Jesus-followers. Doctrine is important! How we live matters much! Our aim in life must be consistent with the road Jesus walked! Loving God foremost and others secondarily is not an option. We must expect suffering, persecution and trials which demand our patient endurance. We must endure until the end as faithful followers of Jesus.

B. We love God's glory (12) - "Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted."

This might be the most unexamined verse in the New Testament. The modern notion that Christians are and will remain immune from suffering is completely unbiblical. If you will live a godly life, you will experience some level of persecution from those who reject Jesus. At the end of the age (which is the entire context for this verse) there WILL BE increasing persecution. We do not have any promises to be preserved from it. While the wrath of God will not land upon us, the wrath of man most certainly will if we are living unashamedly for Christ. Godliness and faithfulness to Jesus invites opposition from the world system. People will hate you for manifesting the life and values of Jesus Christ. During the Tribulation period, more Jesus-followers will be martyred than at any other time in history. While that specific time period has not yet begun, the precursors already have. We do well to ask ourselves if our faith is authentic and strong enough to endure what is coming our way. If we are not committed, unapologetic and proactively loyal to Jesus now when it is comparatively easy, what reason do we have to be confident that we will endure when the heat of persecution rises?

C. We love living in distinction (13) - "...while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived."

And there you have it. The end of the age is not marked by people getting better, circumstances becoming easier and the glory of God seeping into slowly usher in the fulness of the Kingdom. No, Paul declares that evil will continue to increase. Deception will be offered more frequently and embraced more eagerly. Impostors in the Church will continue to arise and mar the testimony of Jesus and His people. There is a massive collision coming between authenticity and falsehood. Again, do we know that we ourselves are prepared?

C. We love God's words (14-17) - "But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it 15 and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."

Paul's instructions to Timothy are God's instructions to us today. Continue in the Truth of His Word. Lean into the Scripture for wisdom. Offer and receive the teaching of the Word. Reprove and be reprovved by it. Allow it to correct you in every single necessary way. Be trained perpetually for righteous believes and living. God's Word will bring maturity or completion to your soul so that you are have everything you need for any good work God assigns you. He has breathed out His Word to us. ALL SCRIPTURE is given to profit us in our callings. Anyone who lives godly and leans hard upon the Word of God will endure until the end and experience breakthrough. The Bible is not an option. If we do not know the Word, then we are perilously vulnerable to the deception that will be unleashed at the end of the age. Our end-times on-ramp exits us from the coming deception and evil that will swallow our generation. We are here. This is clearly the beginning of the last days. How are you responding?

11:15 Notes Below

"A Sober Generation" Jeremiah 12:1-5 | 11:15 AM

If you got down-deep honest with God about what we see happening in our world today, what might that conversation with Him look like? If we recounted in detail our growing concern, disgust, outrage or fear about the spread of unholy ideas and ungodly actions in our generation, how do we think God might reply? More than 2,500 years ago, a prophet named Jeremiah had that kind of heart-to-heart with God. As Jeremiah poured out his heart to the Father, the reply he received might surprise us. This message explains why we might need to pay specific attention to all that Jeremiah spilled out and the two questions that God answered Jeremiah with. Those two questions point towards something that all living Christians need to soberly consider.

I. Where Jeremiah Went (1a)

"Righteous are you, O Lord, when I complain to you; yet I would plead my case before You."

Jeremiah, the man known as the weeping prophet, had one of the heaviest assignments from God that any one of His servants ever received. For multiple decades, Jeremiah called his people to repent from their idolatry. His messages burned with passion and tears. He was hearing the Lord's voice promise impending doom upon Israel because of their idolatry and indifference to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. By the time his ministry concluded, there is not a single record of anyone repenting and believing his word. Imagine the immense burden we might feel if nobody believed the messages that God gave to us? As Jeremiah rode an emotional roller-coaster all throughout his long prophetic book, he finally reaches a point where he needed to address God with some questions. He prefaces his words with an admission that he was coming before the Lord to pour out his complaint and plead his case. The vibe of his words is that he was frustrated and concerned and needed God to help him understand in order to make sense of all that Jeremiah was seeing happen in his generation.

II. What Jeremiah Was Seeing (1b-2)

**"Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why do all who are treacherous thrive?
2 You plant them, and they take root; they grow and produce fruit; You are near in their mouth and far from their heart."**

Frequently in Scripture we see that the Hebrew people did not communicate with God the way that modern-day Western evangelicals do. The Jews would be so open and bold with the Almighty that, at times, modern readers may squirm, feeling like our fathers in the faith from long ago were bordering on being irreverent. So open was Jeremiah with the Lord about his concerns that it seems that he is accusing God of falling down on the job. Note the three areas that Jeremiah highlights as he pours out his complaint before the Lord:

1. INJUSTICE - Jeremiah demanded to know why all the wicked people in his generation continued to prosper. Why did their lives seem immune to trouble? How is it that God allowed them to have pleasure and riches while Jeremiah, a faithful man of God, was suffering, seemingly in the midst of God's indifference toward him? Jeremiah turns it up a notch when he describes his observation that people who were treacherous were thriving while Jeremiah was languishing. He is asking God about why He allows injustice to continue.

2. FRUSTRATION WITH GOD - This is where it gets a little awkward. Jeremiah seems to be accusing God of acting wrongly. He declares that GOD planted these wicked, treacherous people. God caused them to root down and live in stability while Jeremiah's life was one of persecution and denial. God was even, according to Jeremiah, causing these people to be fruitful, thus providing for their stability in the future. What a bold complaint before a holy God! We might want to note that God did not blast Jeremiah into pieces. He does not even stop to correct him here. He allows Jeremiah to fully process how he felt about what he believed God was doing. God allowed Jeremiah to lay out all his spreadsheets with all the data that he had observed. In the end, Jeremiah was demanding that God make sense of everything that Jeremiah was beholding.

3. HYPOCRISY - in the final portion of Jeremiah's vent, he hits a common target. He expresses his outrage at his generation's clear hypocrisy. For those who live in authenticity before God, few things will cause their stomachs to turn more so than those who say one thing about God with their mouths while living the opposite thing in their day-to-day lives. You can almost picture Jeremiah slamming his fist on his table as he wonders how God could possibly let this level of hypocrisy run so deeply for so long. When would God step up and make things right, exposing the hypocrites that were coming against his faithful prophet?

III. What Jeremiah Recognized (3a)

"But You, O Lord, know me; You see me, and test my heart toward You..."

In contrast to the hearts of the hypocrites, Jeremiah was able to lay his heart open before his God with nothing to hide. I personally believe this is the reason why God did respond in holy anger to his prophet's words. Jeremiah may have been missing the heart of God as he wondered aloud why God was not doing something about the major issues in his generation but, as Jeremiah did so, he was acting with a pure and open heart. Jeremiah also seemed to recognize that God was testing him through all that he was seeing, hearing and experiencing. Jeremiah was wise to view his dilemma as an opportunity for his own heart to be tested and purified. It is one thing to know that we are known by God. It is another thing to recognize that we are seen by God. It is an awakening thing to recognize that God is presently testing us through circumstances that are overwhelming us. Can we, like Jeremiah, maintain our openness and trust of God, even as we experience the severe testings of rejection, misunderstanding, slander and persecution? Jeremiah had passed God's tests up to this point, but he was wise to recognize that the tests were not yet concluded.

IV. What Jeremiah Longed For (3b-4)

"Pull them out like sheep for the slaughter and set them apart for the day of slaughter. 4 How long will the land mourn and the grass of every field wither? For the evil of those who dwell in it the beasts and the birds are swept away, because they said, "He will not see our latter end."

Like many believers who live in a certain level of moral outrage, Jeremiah had reached a point where he started giving an Omniscient, Omnipotent advice on what He needed to do. Revealing that none of us are as patient and compassionate as God when it comes to the lives of overt rebels, Jeremiah tells God that the time has arrived for him to destroy the wicked. Make no mistake, the man of God is telling God to kill everyone who opposes Him (who also happen to be opposing Jeremiah!) Jeremiah also shares insight that, when a land is marked by ongoing,

unrepentant rebellion against God, the effects of that rebellion will eventually begin to show up everywhere. Jeremiah was seeing it begin to hit his nation's economy as referenced by the land, grass, beasts and birds. In an agricultural society, the farmlands were key. No crops, no future. Even the livestock and fowls of the air were beginning to suffer as God removed His hand of blessing. Jeremiah felt the injustice afresh and, instead of allowing everyone to suffer, he asks God to destroy the chief offenders. They were the ones who defied God by living as if God was unable to witness their evil deeds and would fail to act in accordance with the word he was releasing through Jeremiah. Their words betrayed their arrogant assumption that neither God nor Jeremiah would be around at the end, and that they would continue to be able to live their lives as they pleased.

V. How God Responded to Jeremiah (5)

Up unto this point, Jeremiah has been doing all of the talking. His opening words revealed three areas wherein he was tired of waiting for God to move decisively. He has also asked God three questions. As a patient Father, God listened to Jeremiah's vent and now answers Him. In customary fashion, God answers Jeremiah's questions with a couple of questions of His own. It is from these questions that we modern believers must consider something similar about our own generation. As we witness rampant injustice, abounding immorality, blasphemous attitudes toward God, hypocrisy in the Church, and a growing persecution against godly people all over the globe, we are not likely thinking along the lines of what God says to Jeremiah. Let's examine what the Almighty says.

"If you have raced with men on foot, and they have wearied you, how will you compete with horses? And if in a safe land you are so trusting, what will you do in the thicket of the Jordan?" - Jeremiah 12:5

1. "Your enemy's opposition will become more difficult, Jeremiah." This is what God is saying when he questions Jeremiah and uses the terms that refer to foot-soldiers and horse-soldiers. God is saying that, up to this point, the affliction that Jeremiah was enduring was little more than hand to hand combat with his enemies. It was hard and painful for sure, but it was nothing compared to what was coming. The Babylonians were coming and there would soon be the sound of their military horses coming in violence. Notice that Jeremiah did not receive comfort, reassurance, sympathy or apology from God. Nor did God offer a defense against Jeremiah's insinuations that God was acting righteously by allowing all the bad things to happen. In essence God says to his struggling servant, "Jeremiah, things will get worse. You need to prepare for that. If you are growing weary at this level, then you are not ready for what is coming next."

2. "Your circumstances will prove more challenging, Jeremiah." God next makes reference to the land. Jeremiah was dwelling in relatively easy terrain. God described what Jeremiah had endured up to this point as being "safe land". Yes, he had struggled and even suffered a bit. Yet, what was coming to Israel was going to feel like being caught in the thickets that surrounded the banks of the Jordan. There would be no easy escape routes. There would be nowhere to run. When the circumstantial floodwaters began to rise, Jeremiah would know that things had immeasurably intensified. Again, as God told Jeremiah that his enemies were going to become even more vicious, so also would his circumstances grow in difficulty. This was no feel-good message that God was releasing. He was calling His prophet to prepare himself and also, by way of his messaging, to prepare the nation.

So, in summary, God responded to Jeremiah's complaint about how awful things were with two primary questions: How do you intend to battle to victory against your opposition, and how do you intend to endure through impossibility? He is likely asking these same questions today to the Church in the West. We live in days of ease with nearly no suffering. Yet we are prone to complain about our culture, unbelievers, opposition and a whole host of other things which are comparatively nothing to what is said in Scripture concerning what is coming. God may very well be looking at us in love (tough love!) and calling us to consider how we could reasonably think we will make it in the truest days of difficulty when we are already wearied so easily in relative days of ease. I believe these are days in which God is clearly calling us to become the sobered generation. I am speaking primarily of the need for sobered Christians. We must get reacquainted with what the Scriptures declare is heading our way as the end of the age approaches. Instead of doing this, we are drunk on the spirit of the age. We must become spiritually sobered again.

- **We need a baptism of sobriety because we are intoxicated with:**

Self - what validates our natural instinct to place ourselves in the center of our own orbit

Success - what makes us feel valid

Sex - what brings us pleasure and/or power

Status - what assures us that we keep up with our outpace others

Security - what convinces us that we are safe for another day

- **Lessons About Kingdom Living that we learn as we endure current days:**

1. True Kingdom living is not easy. It's not glamorous. It's not professional. It's not a career. It's never finished. **You never are actually done.** There are always challenges, needs, obstacles and opposition from human & spiritual enemies.

2. True Kingdom living gets more intense the deeper you go. We grow stronger, for sure, but the deeper we forge into enemy territory, the more intense the warfare becomes. We should embrace that these days are actually **the easier days** compared to what is coming as we continue to advance the Gospel and God's Kingdom. If we cannot endure in days of relative ease, we are poorly prepared for what God entrusts and assigns to us to us later.

3. Faithful enduring Kingdom living **will result in adding spiritual maturity to us.** Paul described this life as involving toil, striving, fighting, suffering, wearying, perplexing, and dying daily. In the end, we are transformed inwardly to enjoy our labors much more deeply as we learn the difference between living for Jesus and living in Jesus.