

The First Edition

First Presbyterian Church, Ellerbe, NC

December 2020

www.pcanet.org
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From the Pastor:

There are all kinds of things people assume are taught in the Bible which are not really so. That is especially true when it comes to the subject of eschatology or the “doctrine of the last things.” One specific example of assumed yet unsubstantiated teaching is the so-called “secret rapture.” Another is a common misconception about the so-called “last days.” It is commonly assumed that the phrase “last days” refers to the very last sliver of history immediately prior to Jesus’ return (for some of course that would be the time just before the so-called “secret rapture”). But does the phrase “last days” actually refer to the very end of history? Let’s see what the Bible actually says.

And let’s start with Acts 2:17. It is Peter’s great Pentecost sermon and he proclaims, “And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams” (Acts 2:17 ESV). The noteworthy thing here is that Peter is not predicting some phenomena yet to come but rather quoting the prophet Joel. Peter is in effect saying that what Joel prophesied long ago is being fulfilled *now* “in the last days.” In other words, the events of Pentecost were a sign that the “last days” had begun.

Now let’s turn to 2 Timothy and the book that is probably the apostle Paul’s last before his martyrdom. He is exhorting his protegee Timothy to remain faithful in preaching the gospel, as well as warning Timothy that he will need to be on guard against false teachers sliding into the Ephesian church. In that context come those familiar words, “But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ... lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people” (2 Tim. 3:1-5). People “naturally” assume that Paul is warning us about godless people in our day; yet that would have made no sense to the one who read the letter first, namely Timothy. That, of course, does not mean there are not such people and teachers in our day. It is to say that Paul was first and foremost addressing a problem in his own day, which problem was a sign they were living in the “last days,” even in the *first* century.

And then there is that familiar opening to the book of Hebrews, where we read in chapter 1 verse 2, “But in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world” (Heb. 1:2 ESV). Does this mean that because someone announces that he or she has a new “word from the Lord” that we must be living in the “last days”? The Hebrew Christians to whom this letter was addressed certainly would not have understood these words this way. The writer of Hebrews, whoever he was, almost certainly has in mind Jesus’ upper room promise to his disciples that after his death and resurrection the Holy Spirit would bring to their minds the specifics of Jesus’ life, teaching, death and resurrection, and that it was their (the apostles) duty not only to preach these things but also to put them into writing (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13-5).

There is also James 5:3 in which the brother, or more technically the “half-brother,” of our Lord rebukes his wealthy and self-centered readers as follows, “Your gold and silver have corroded, and their corrosion will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure in the last days.” James is not of course denying that there will be wealthy persons who live for themselves at a later time or immediately before Jesus returns. However, he is clearly dealing with a problem which already existed in his day. He says such persons “*have* laid up treasure (it has already begun to happen) in the last days.” Clearly James thought he was already living in the “last days,” even in the *first* century. Furthermore, he was writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Sunday worship services may be heard live on radio station 87.9 FM at 11:00 a.m. on Sunday morning if you live within a few blocks of the church.

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Finally, let's go back to the apostle Peter and his second epistle. Most likely, he writes somewhere around 67-8 AD and shortly before his martyrdom. Among other things, Peter's desire is to warn his readers about false teachers who will twist the gospel message for personal gain. He writes, "You should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles, knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires" (2 Pet. 3:2-3). Here again, Peter's immediate concern isn't skeptics who would later infiltrate the church. As he prepares to die, he is primarily concerned with scoffers who are already scoffing in Peter's day. The fact they such persons were already causing problems in the church was evidence that Peter and his readers were already living in the *last days*. The application for us is that just as Peter's readers needed to be mindful of such scoffing, so do we.

What then does the phrase "last days" actually refer? The cumulative effect of the above passages seems to be that the period prior to Jesus' coming (BC) was the "former days" and that "last days" refers to the whole period of time between Jesus' first and second comings. According to the above definition, we are, even now, living in the "last days." However, so were the apostles, and so will those be who are alive when Jesus returns. One practical lesson we can take from this little exercise is simply that we always need to make sure that our understanding of biblical teaching is informed by scripture, as opposed to the latest best-seller in the Christian bookstore or a favorite television preacher. How does one make sure his or her understanding is biblical? Two things. First, make sure you are sitting under good biblical teaching in a faithful evangelical church; not just every now and then, but week in and week out. Second, don't take either your pastor or favorite teacher's word as your ultimate authority. Be a Berean; go home and search the scripture for yourself to "see if these things be so" (Acts 17:11).

Grace & Peace,
Pastor Stan

From the Session

The regular monthly stated Session meeting was held Wednesday evening, November 11. A season of prayer was held for the sick, shut-ins, our nation, our church family, as well as our PCA denomination. Teaching Elder Mr. Layton requested, and was granted, vacation for December 21-27 with Ruling Elder Timm Dazey occupying the pulpit during Sunday morning worship, December 27. Mr. Layton also reminded the Commissioners for the Central Carolina Presbytery of the meeting on November 17 at Christ Covenant PCA in Matthews. He also discussed the upcoming Communicants Class to be held with no dates set at this time. The Budget Committee Report for 2021 was presented and approved.

Due to the rise in the virus cases, no date has been set to return for inside worship services although weather conditions could play a role in this decision. However, there is a back-up plan in place if needed. A Congregational meeting has been set for December 13 following the worship service. The purpose is to approve the budget for 2021, approve the pastor's call, report of the church corporation, and appoint Trustees for 2021.

A called meeting of the Session was held Wednesday, November 18 for the purpose of reviewing records.

The Session, along with our church, are pleased to welcome Mrs. Jackie Wright into our church family. She met with our Session November 11 and was received into membership.

During this Christmas season, let us be reminded that no worldly gift can ever compare to the greatest gift of all, the Birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ, who died for His people with the promise of eternal life for all true believers. "Today, in the town of David, a Savior has been born to you; He is the Lord" (Luke 2:11) NIV. May each one have a joyful Christmas.

Ruling Elder Billy Carter



WIC Update

The WIC Administrative Council met Tuesday, November 12 at 7:00 pm. The WIC plan for 2021 along with new officers was finalized and has been sent to the Session for review. A new version of the church membership directory will be finalized soon and there will be copies available for everyone.

The annual business meeting will be held Tuesday, December 8 at 7:00 pm in the fellowship hall. The 2021 plan and installation of officers will occur at this time. All ladies are encouraged to attend. Thank you.

Sandra Futrell, *WIC President*

Announcements

- A congregational meeting has been scheduled for Sunday, December 13th. The purpose of this meeting is as follows: (1) to present the 2020 church budget, including voting on a change to the pastor's call; (2) to elect corporation directors for 2020; (3) to present the report of the church corporation for 2019. Copies of the 2021 approved budget are available and will be distributed prior to the meeting. Please direct any budget questions to chairman Richard Smith in writing prior to the 13th.
- The Layton family expresses its heartfelt gratitude to our First Presbyterian Church family for your thoughtfulness and kinds words during Pastor Appreciation month and throughout the year. Your generosity and encouragement are quite a blessing to our family.
- ♦ Pastor Stan would like to begin an Inquirers' Class in January for adults who are interested in joining the church. Please let him know if you are interested. He would also like to begin a Communicants' Class for youth who are interested in joining the church. Please let him know if you have children who are interested.
- ♦ The December issue of *The Church around the World* are available in the vestibule.
- ♦ In light of the recent spike in COVID-19 cases, the Session has determined that Lord's Day worship will continue outside for the immediate future. However, in anticipation of the eventual return to indoor worship, the Session has approved the suggested guidelines in the North Carolina Health and Human Services "Interim Guidance for Places of Worship and Religious Services (July 27, 2020)." Copies of these guidelines are on the church website and also in the vestibule.
- ♦ While working full-time, Timm Dazey continues to pursue seminary studies at Reformed Theological Seminary in Charlotte. The Session has set up a fund to help defray Timm's seminary costs. Persons wishing to contribute to this fund should so designate on their checks.
- ♦ PRAYER LIST: Please call the church or email Pastor Stan with concerns to add to the Prayer List.

Merry Christmas!



Anniversaries

24 M/M Jimmy Wagers



Happy
Birthday!
December

- 1 Beth Richardson
- 2 Jon Chappell
- 5 Abby Russell
- 6 Jack Fetter
- 7 Dale DeWitt
- 8 Brandon Smith
- 8 Johnathan DeWitt
- 9 Sharon DeWitt
- 10 Perry Dawkins
- 11 Tom Stewart
- 11 Sandra Futrell
- 13 Lisa Dawkins
- 13 Tony Yates
- 16 Garrett Yates
- 17 Amy Schrenker
- 18 Richard Brown
- 20 Susan DeWitt
- 23 Meggan Snead
- 25 Carol Chappell
- 27 Donna White
- 29 Josh Dazey
- 29 Debbie Abbott
- 29 Knox Layton
- 30 Rhonda Stewart



Prayer List:

Armed Forces and Families, Our President and other national leaders, the Persecuted Church and Christians worldwide, Peace and Unity in our country, Coronavirus concerns, Jack Berry, Donna Buckeridge, Austin Bryant, James Callicutt, Carol Chappell, Virgie Clark, Kevin Conner, A. T. Covington, Tom Covington, Evon Craven, Laura Cromer, Ken Crow, Alli Cundy, Casey Dawkins, Perry and Lisa Dawkins, Sharon DeWitt, Christina Greene Eller, Ellerbe First Responders, Nurah Fahmy, Jack Fetter, Mark Futrell, Roger Haden Family, Becky Henderson, Doris Hill, Melanie Johnson, Geraldine Legrand Family, Bobby Mabe, Betty McBride, Meredith McBride, Max McCormick, Janet Monroe, Barbara Moten, Damon Moten, Shannon McNeil, Peyton Monroe, Jewel Paul, Sophia Potterfield, Cozette Rush, Carolyn Sellers, Mark Sellers, Helen Simmons, Jane Smith, Herman and Naomi Stutts, Jean Stutts, Hayley White, Colton Williams, Curtis Wright, Unspoken Requests

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
Worship service remains at 11:00 am Sunday mornings outside unless notified otherwise.						
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8 7:00 pm Annual WIC meeting	9 7:00 pm Session meeting	10	11	12
13 12:00 pm Congrega- tional meeting (outside)	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25 Merry Christmas!	26
27	28	29	30	31	December 2020	

Church Officers:

Ruling Elders

- Austin Bryant
- Bill Carter
- Tim Clark
- Timm Dazey
- Rickie DeWitt
- Robert Mabe, Elder Emeritus
- Richard Smith
- Jimmy Wagers
- Tony Yates

WIC Officers

- Sandra Futrell, President
- Patricia McCormick, Vice-President
- Jan Stivers, Secretary
- Jane Carriker, Treasurer
- Barbara Wagers, Historian
- Beth Bryant, Mission to the World Chair
- Nancy Daugherty, Mission to North America Chair
- Lori Clark, Christian Growth Chair