

MSB273

MORE Seed and Bread

BRIEF BIBLICAL MESSAGES FROM

THE WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRY

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EXPLORING THE "LAST DAYS"

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The expression "last days" occurs many times in Scripture. In fact, there are so many "last days" that Bible students must be very careful to consider the Scriptural contexts thoroughly before deciding to what the term refers. This term, so specific in the minds of most men, may be ambiguous to Bible students who are not aware of what God is talking about

The Hebrew and Greek terms for "last days" are *arcaryth yom* and *eschatos emeron*, respectively. *The Septuagint Version* of the Bible, which often gives the Greek equivalent for the Hebrew, establishes that these two words mean the same thing. The "last days" should not be considered the last in a sequence, but, rather, the "resultant days" or "concluding days" of something that equals a sequel to come. The "last days" can indicate great blessing or great evil for men, and the context in which it is found is the key. A type of "last days" occurred just before the great flood of Noah's day. Also, there were "last days" at the end of the Acts Period, as well as "last days" for the Dispensation of Grace in which we live today, the Day of Man. "Last days" describes the entire period of the premillennial Kingdom of God, which is the Day of Christ. The "last days" of the Kingdom, including the Tribulation and called the "Day of the Lord," continue on into the 1000-year-reign of Christ (Rev. 20:7-9). A representation of the "last days" of the millennial kingdom also describes "the Little Season" in Revelation 20:3. In John 6, Christ refers four times to the "last day" as the "day of resurrection" for the believers (John 6:39-40,44,54: "And I will raise him up at the last day."). With so many references and different occasions, it is extremely important for the student to carefully consider the contexts in which these words occur. It is appropriate here to work to understand everything God has given for us to know about His future blessings of mankind.

God described the "last days" of the original creation (before the flood) to Noah, who was preserved with his family after "fallen angels" had polluted the earth's population. They had intermingled with the daughters of men, produced offspring (the giants of old) who were sterile.

They were rebellious to God, who spoke to Noah (Gen. 6:12-13): **God looked upon the earth, and, behold it was corrupt... and God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth.** While it is not normally called the "last days," the time when Noah was building the ark, according to God's instructions, was a time of imminent judgment on all living beings and beasts.

In the New Testament, the Greek words for "last day(s)" are *eschatos emeron*. In John 7:37-38, it describes the "last day" just before the high Holy Day, the Passover: **In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living waters.**

The Acts Period had "last days" too. During this time the Kingdom was present in its infancy or "the blade stage," as the parable of Christ in Mark 4:26-29 indicates: ... **So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground;... first the blade then the ear, after that the full corn (grain) in the ear.** We infer these "last days" from passages in the Epistles that were written in the end of this time period. The believers were expecting the Kingdom to come in its full bloom, which accounts for Paul's statement in Romans 13:12: "The night is far spent, the day is at hand" And in 1 John 2:18 the writer says, **Little children, it is the last time: and as ye had heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.** So Christ's followers were expecting something spectacular at the end of this time period. They were waiting for the Kingdom, but knew they would face rebellion, too, at the end of that time period (the Tribulation).

Another example of "last days" in the Acts Period is shown clearly in Philippians 1:6, where Paul says, (I am) **being confident of this very thing, that He which began a good work in you will perform it** (bring it to a full end) **until the day of Jesus Christ** Note that the Greek term *epitileo* does not mean "to perform (or perfect)," but means "**to suspend**" the manifest gifts of the Holy Spirit of the Acts Period "until the Day of Jesus Christ."

In 2 Timothy 3:1-9 Paul speaks of the "last days" of the present age, the Dispensation of Grace. The term "last days" means the concluding days of the given period of time. Here he begins a recitation of some 21 character flaws of men living today by saying, "Know this also, that in the last days perilous times shall come" (refer to **Seed & Bread** No. **SB014**, *What Are "The Last Days"?* and No. **SB016**, *Character of the Last Days*). Here Paul is talking about the abominable condition of our world and he provides a litany of vile and sinful behaviors that characterize mankind. By this we know that we are truly in the concluding days of the Day of Man. The next step in God's plan is the Day of Christ, the Kingdom of God on earth. This is the time when God's covenant with Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3 will be fulfilled. In this, God promises to make of him a great nation and in him will all the nations of the world be blessed. The Day of Christ is the subject of many prophecies in the Bible. It is the time which Peter speaks of in Acts 2:17-21: **And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh... before that great and notable day of the Lord come: and it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.**

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew words rendered "last days" (or sometimes "latter days") are *acaryth yom*, and can be rendered as the "concluding days" or the "sequel of the days." That this is a title for the premillennial Kingdom is clear from Isaiah 2:2-3: **And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain** (figuratively speaking for "kingdom/government") **of the Lord's house** (dynasty) **shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it And many peoples shall go and say, Come ye, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the Law, and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem.** This is repeated in Micah 4:1-2, and is also reflected in Acts 2:17, where Peter quotes from the prophet Joel, "**And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh....**" The things that were happening that day of Pentecost were ushering in the Acts Period, which was "the blade stage" of the Kingdom. Also, the statement in Jeremiah 23:20, repeated in 30:24, says, **The fierce anger of the Lord shall not return, until He has done it, and until He has performed the intents of His heart: in the latter days ye shall consider it**

The contexts of each of these passages refer to the Lord regathering Israel to the land and making them His people again. Even in Deuteronomy 4:29-30, God provides this prophesy. After declaring the penalties for disobedience to His commands, He says, **But if from thence thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find Him, if thou seek Him with all thy heart and with all thy soul. When thou art in tribulation and all these things are come upon thee, even in the latter days, if thou turn to the Lord thy God, and shalt be obedient unto His voice.** And so it is that in Malachi 4:5-6, **God says, Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and dreadful day of the Lord: and He shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.** The Day of the Lord begins with that testing of Israel in the Tribulation at the end of the Kingdom. Long before that occurs, Israel is regathered, the temple worship is restored and David is made king on earth in the Day of Christ. It is perhaps this regathering of the nation of Israel that is most misunderstood, in spite of the significant amount of text and comment our Lord devotes to it in both the New and Old Testaments. The Lord Jesus makes it the primary topic of His three years of teaching. Matthew 4:23 says, **And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among people.** It is also of note that this was the message of the Apostle Paul in Acts 28:30-31 where it says, **And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house,... preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with confidence, no man forbidding him.** It seems sad that men can take the "dry bones" of Ezekiel 37 and make a popular song out of what is a very explicit promise of God to raise to life those Israelites who had died without seeing the great promises of God accomplished.

God says in Ezekiel 37:12-14: . . . **Behold, O My people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. And ye shall know that I am the Lord,... And shall put My spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the Lord have spoken it, and performed it, saith the Lord.**

Finally, there are "last days" of the Kingdom, identified as the Great Tribulation, and are connected with the Day of the Lord. In Ezekiel 38:8 the Lord speaks with Gog (who appears to be the beast of Rev. 20:7-10 and the vile person of Dan. 11:21 -26): **After many days thou shalt be visited (summoned): in the latter years you shall come into the land that is brought back from the sword** Then in Ezekiel 38:16 it says, **And thou shalt come up against My people Israel, as cloud to cover the land; it shall be in the latter days, and I will bring thee against My land, that the heathen (nations) may know Me, when I shall be sanctified in thee O Gog before their eyes. (Ed. Note: the understanding of Gog/Magog changed significantly in the year 2010 from studies by Messr Hetteema, then also Hammond)**

The Battle of Armageddon describes how God destroys His enemies before the very eyes of His faithful. And Revelation 19 also pictures Jesus Christ returning to the earth in all His majesty and power, wrecking vengeance on all those who rebel against Him. In Revelation 1:10-11 John says, **I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day** (literally the Day of the Lord) **and heard behind me a great voice,... saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, what thou seest, write in a book....** The Apocalypse deals in word pictures with events which happen in that end time, the "last days" of the Kingdom, when God tests all men to identify those who have learned the Law of Christ, or the Law of Love, permitting righteous ones to go into the millennial Kingdom, with Christ the King here on earth for all men to see.

Here we have attempted to explore the many differing "last days" of Scripture. It is appropriate for Bible students to understand as much as possible everything God has given for us to know about His future blessings of Israel and mankind, as found within His Word.

END

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