

The Last Days re-visited

Lloyd Dale - 2002

Chapter five

In the historical context of the passages below, Paul is writing to first century Christians that are living in Rome c. 60 AD. For almost thirty (30) years the Christians within the Roman Empire had been undergoing bitter opposition and persecution at the hands of that faction of Judaism that had rejected their Messiah. This persecution had begun in Jerusalem with the stoning of Stephen (Acts 7) and continued to escalate as the persecutors followed the Christians wherever they went (Acts 8:1, etc.) throughout the Roman Empire. Many Christians that had fled to Rome had experienced this persecution and **Paul Knew that it was going to get a lot worse in the days ahead of them.**

“THE LAST DAYS”

With that thought in mind, Paul would later write to Timothy:

Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in **the latter times** some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; ... This know also, that in **the last days** perilous times shall come. (1 Timothy 4:1-2 & 2 Timothy 3:1)

Contrary to modern opinion, Paul was not writing these words to Timothy about some event that was going to take place 2000 or more years in the future. He wrote these words to Timothy to explain to him the things that were going to come to pass in **Timothy’s lifetime**. The “latter times (days)” of which Paul spoke were the same “last days” that Peter spoke of in Acts 2:17 and 2Peter 3:3, the writer of Hebrews wrote of in Hebrews 1:2, and that James referred to in James 5:3. Each of these writers as well as Paul lived and wrote in the first century. Their writings were intended to inform the other followers of Jesus who **LIVED IN THE FIRST CENTURY ABOUT EVENTS THAT WERE GOING TO TAKE PLACE SOON, i.e. within their generation** (Rev.1:1,3; 22:6-7, 10, 12, & 20, et. al.), **WHILE MANY OF THE PEOPLE THEN LIVING** (Matt.16:27-28; Lu.9:26-27, et. al.) **WOULD STILL BE ALIVE.**

All of those first century people lived in the “last days” of the Mosaic Marriage Covenant which was given at mount Sinai c.1491 BC (Exodus 19ff) as an addendum to the Covenant Yahweh had made with Abraham 430 years earlier (Galatians 3:17). Moses repeatedly told the Israelites who received “the Law” at Sinai that it would end at a period of time which Moses referred to as the “latter days (note the similarity to the NT phrase “last days”; Nu.24:14, Deut.4:30, 31:29), as did

Jeremiah [23:20, 30:24, 48:47, 49:39], Ezekiel [38:16], Daniel [2:28, 10:14] and Hosea [3:5].” Also, it is obvious from Paul’s writings that he understood that **the people of his day** were living in *an age that was about to end* and that **another age without an end was about to begin**. (For an extensive study of the Old Testament references to the “last days” see Appendix one in this book.)

Note what Paul wrote:

Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in **THIS AGE (the age in which Jesus Christ, the apostles and all first century Christians lived)**, but also in **THAT (age) which is to come** (the kingdom age which followed immediately after “this age” ended in 70 AD):...That in the ages **TO COME** He might shew the exceeding riches of His grace in *His* kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 1:21 & 2:7, emphasis and comment added)

AT THE LAST DAY

Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead. **And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent you may believe;** nevertheless let us go unto him. (John 11:14-15, emphasis added)

Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him: but Mary sat in the house. Then Martha said unto Jesus, Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But I know, that even now, whatsoever you will ask of God, God will give *it to you*. Then Jesus said unto her, **your brother shall rise again**. Martha said unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the **resurrection at the last day**. Jesus said unto her, I am the **resurrection**, and **the life**: he that believes in me, though he dies, yet shall he live: **And whosoever lives and believes in me shall never die**. *Do you believe this?* (John 11:20-26, emphasis and comments added)

From this passage of Scripture we wish to consider following four phrases as they pertain to these first century believers:

1. **The last day** (of the last days) is resurrection day for believers [1Cor 15:23c]).
2. Whoever **dies shall live again** (Lazarus was a believer and he had died, but Jesus said, “your brother *Lazarus* shall rise to live again. After his being raised from the dead Lazarus lived again and continued to believe)

3. Whoever **lives** (after being raised from the dead) **and believes in Jesus Christ shall never die**. (Therefore Jesus clearly said that he (Lazarus) would never die *again*)
4. **Resurrection and life**.

I. “At the last day”

What does the phrase “*the last day*” really mean?

- Many Christians have assumed that it had reference to the last day of life on this earth, but is this really the meaning of this phrase?
- Could it actually be referring to another event and time?
- **The only correct answer must come from the Scriptures**; so let us see what the Scriptures have to say about this!

Many Scriptures provide us with instruction in this matter; however because of time and space constraints, we will only be able to look at a few of them.

The first passages we shall look at are found in the book of Daniel. In Daniel chapter two (2) we read that Nebuchadnezzar, the Chaldean king of the Great Babylonian Empire, had a dream that troubled him greatly. Thus he ordered the wise men of his empire to tell him what the dream was, and then to explain what the dream meant. None of them could tell the king his dream, and the king ordered them slain, however, Daniel intervened and saved them.

The dream and the explanation of the dream were “revealed unto Daniel in a night vision.” (2:19) Daniel informed the king that he dreamed of a great, bright image that resembled a man. The head of the image was of gold, the chest and arms were of silver, his thighs were of brass (32), the legs were iron, and the feet were of iron and clay mixed (33). Then the king saw a stone, cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet and broke the feet into pieces (34), and the entire image crumbled into pieces and disappeared.

However, the stone that smote the image became a great kingdom, and filled the whole earth (35).

Daniel informs the king that the image represented four great kingdoms that would each in turn rule the know world, and the he was the “head of gold, or the first and greatest kingdom.”(38) And after him there shall arise another kingdom (silver) inferior to him, and the third kingdom (brass) would precede the kingdom of iron which had the feet of iron and clay which symbolized a kingdom which would be

partly strong and partly broken (v.42) because of Daniel's people the Jews being intermingled with the other people of the kingdom (v.43).

In Daniel chapter seven we read of a vision Daniel had during the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar of Babylon. In this vision he saw four great kingdoms, which were depicted as great beasts. These great kingdoms were the same kingdoms that were represented by Nebuchadnezzar's great image. A messenger from Yahweh explained the meaning of the vision to Daniel.

According to Yahweh's messenger "the fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom" (7:23). This fourth kingdom of "iron teeth" (7:7) is the same kingdom of iron of Nebuchadnezzar's great image. Daniel's vision reveals the additional information that this kingdom has eleven kings and that this eleventh king will make war with the saints for three and one half years (7:21-25).

In Daniel 2:44 we read that:

...in the days of these (11) kings (the Caesars of the forth kingdom-the Roman empire) the God of heaven shall set up **a kingdom (the 5th), which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people**, *but* it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, **and it shall stand for ever**. Forasmuch as you saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God has made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream *is* certain, and the interpretation thereof sure. (Daniel 2:44-45 , emphasis and comments added)

Please note that this kingdom of heaven as established by Yahweh through Jesus Christ **has no end**. It is an everlasting kingdom. The apostle Paul refers to this kingdom in Ephesians 3:21 as the congregation of Jesus Christ for all generations, age (kingdom) of the ages.

In the seventh chapter Daniel describes his own vision about these kingdoms: The first portion of his vision looks far into the future to the time of the ascension of Jesus Christ!

I saw in the night visions, and, behold, *one* like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And **there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom**, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: **his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom which shall not be destroyed**. (Daniel 7:13-14, emphasis and comments added)

The second portion covers that period of time that effectually brings an end to the authority of four human kingdoms over the house of Judah (Jews), and the full implementation of the new kingdom both of which occurred with the destruction of the Jewish temple, the city of Jerusalem, and the breaking of the power of the Jews (Daniel 12:7) in the first century.

But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his (the man of sin) dominion, to consume and to destroy *it* unto the end (end of what? The end of the Mosaic Marriage Covenant; not the end of planet earth [world] as so many have assumed). (Daniel 7:26-27, emphasis and comments added)

In the N. T. the apostle Paul speaks about this 5th kingdom and confirms its duration.

Unto him glory in the congregation by Christ Jesus throughout all generations, **the age** (*without end*) of the ages. Amen. (Ephesians 3:21)

We have now discovered from Yahweh's Holy Word that **there is no end to the 5th kingdom that was established by Jesus Christ** during the days of the kings of fourth kingdom which was the Roman kingdom. Because this 5th kingdom **does not have an end**, Martha's phrase "at the last day" in John 11 cannot possibly be referring to the last day of life on planet earth! What, then, is the true meaning and referent of Martha's statement "at the last day".

It appears that many Christians have misunderstood and misapplied the phrase "the last day(s)" as it is used in the New Testament. This may have occurred because *we have neglected to properly study the Old Testament*.

From the Old Testament we can learn the true identity and timing of the "last days".

And Jacob called unto his sons, and said; Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you *that* which shall befall you in the **last days**. (Genesis 49:1)

And it shall come to pass in the **last days**, *that* the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all gentiles shall flow unto it. (Isaiah 2:2, the mountain of the Yahweh's house if the New Testament kingdom of Yahweh)

But in the **last days** it shall come to pass, *that* the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. (Micah 4:1)

By comparing these Old Testament¹ passages which use the phrase “the last days” with the Old Testament passages that use the phrase “the latter days” (same words in the Hebrew) we learn that the meaning of these two English phrases are identical in the Hebrew Old Testament (any emphasis or comments in these verses are this writers)

And now, behold, I go unto my people: come *therefore*, and I will advertise thee what this people shall do to thy people in the latter days. (Numbers 24:14)

When thou art in tribulation, and all these things are come upon thee, *even* in the latter days, if thou turn to Yahweh thy God, and shalt be obedient unto his voice; ...He will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee...(Deuteronomy 4:30)

For I know that after my death ye will utterly corrupt *yourselves*, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will befall you in the latter days; because ye will do evil in the sight of Yahweh, to provoke him to anger through the work of your hands. (Deuteronomy 31:29, this “evil” is the great tribulation of 66 - 70 AD)

The anger of Yahweh shall not return, until He have executed, and till He have performed the thoughts of His heart: in the latter days ye shall consider it perfectly. (Jeremiah 23:20)

The fierce anger of Yahweh shall not return, until he have done *it*, and until he have performed the intents of his heart: in the latter days ye shall consider it. (Jeremiah 30:24)

Yet will I bring again the captivity of Moab in the latter days, saith Yahweh. Thus far *is* the judgment of Moab. (Jeremiah 48:47)

But it shall come to pass in the latter days, *that* I will bring again the captivity of Elam, saith Yahweh. (Jeremiah 49:39)

And thou shalt come up against my people of Israel, as a cloud to cover the land; it shall be in the latter days, and I will bring thee against my land, that the heathen may know me, when I shall be sanctified in thee, O Gog, before their eyes. (Ezekiel 38:16)

But there is a God in heaven that reveals secrets, and makes known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days. Thy dream, and the visions of thy head upon thy bed, are these; (Daniel 2:28)

Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days: for yet the vision *is* for *many* days. (Daniel 10:14)

Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek Yahweh their God and David their king; and shall fear Yahweh and his goodness in the latter days. (Hosea 3:5)

¹ For a much expanded examination of the “last days/latter days within the Old Testament texts” see Appendix one in this book.

The New Testament author of the letter to the Hebrews, picking up where the writers of the Old Testament left off, provides us with additional information we need to determine **the true meaning and referent of the phrase “the last day.”** He states:

God, who at various times and in different ways spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Has **in these last days** spoken unto us by *his* Son, whom he has appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the ages; (Hebrews 1:1-2)

The apostle Peter also confirmed this.

(Jesus) who was foreordained before the foundation of the world was **manifest in these last times for you...** (1Peter 1:20)

And then a little later in this same letter Peter said:

...**the end of all things is at hand:** (1Peter 4:7)

At this point every student of the Bible should ask a very pertinent question. **The end of what?**

The author of the letter to the Hebrews expresses the same conclusion about the end, and gives us the additional information of what is to end in the first century as follows:

For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once **in the end of the age he has appeared** to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. (Hebrews 9:26)

The apostle Paul also confirms that the “end of the age” came during the first century.

Now all these things happened unto them for examples: and they are written for our (Paul and those he wrote to in the first century) admonition, **upon whom the end of the age has come.** (1 Corinthians 10:11)

From the two passages of Scripture quoted above, we can clearly see that the writers of the New Testament certainly understood **that they, the first century Christians,** were living in “**the end of the age.**” The Scriptures also make it clear that a new age would come as soon as that present age (the age they lived in) ended. The author of Hebrews wrote about this “**age to come**” in Hebrews 2:5 & 6:5 when he wrote:

For unto the messengers he has not put in subjection **the world to come**, whereof we speak. (Hebrews 2:5)

For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, 5 And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of **the age about to come**,...(Hebrews 6:4-5, "about" - Gk. mello, is in the original)

In Hebrews 6:5 the Greek word "aion" translated "world" in the KJV means "age" and should be so translated wherever it is found.

This "**age (KJV, world) about to come**" is also mentioned in the following passages:

And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this age (KJV, world), nor in **the age (KJV, world) about to come**. (Mt. 12:32)

But he shall receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in **the age (KJV, world) to come** eternal life. (Mr. 10:30)

Who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in **the age (KJV, world) to come** life everlasting. (Lu. 18:30)

At this point the question is: **what age was about to end, there and then, in the first century?** It obviously could not have been the end of "the 'church' age" because it was the age "about to come" at that time in the first century as we have demonstrated above. Without going into all the details here, it should be obvious to all good students of the Bible that **Christ was to appear at the end of the age that began at Mount Sinai** when Moses mediated the Marriage Covenant between Yahweh and Israel. This Marriage Covenant age which we could call "the law age" began with the giving of the Marriage Law at mount Sinai and ended with the destruction of the temple of the law and the city of the law (Jerusalem) in 70 AD **just as Yahweh, through the prophets had prophesied that it would. It was also at that time that the New Marriage Covenant established in the Blood of Jesus Christ became fully operational through the resurrection of those that were Christ's at his 70 AD coming** (1 Cor. 15:20-23) **and the marriage supper of the Lamb which followed** (Matt.22:1-10; Lu.12:36-40; Rev.19:1-9, 21:1-2 & 9-27).

The Scriptures declare that **"...Christ is the end of the law** (i.e. age of the law) for righteousness **to every one that believes."** (Rom.10:4) However, Paul and the author of the letter to the Hebrews makes it very clear that although the New Marriage

Covenant had begun with a betrothal (2 Cor. 11:2) of the faithful, to Christ, the husband, the old marriage covenant relationship was still “**decaying and waxing old and was about ready to vanish away**” (Heb. 8:13) when he wrote his letter to those first century Hebrew Christians in c. 64 AD. The Mosaic Marriage Covenant relationship was ended in September of 70 AD when the Jewish temple, the city of Jerusalem, and the land of Judah were completely destroyed, and the power of the Jews was broken (Dan.12:7).

With the above in mind we can now see that Jesus Christ Himself clearly tells us when the “last day” would occur. In Matthew 24 the disciples come to Jesus and ask him a very important and often misunderstood three part question:

And as he sat upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? And what *shall be* the sign of your Parousia, and of the **end of the age** (Strong's #165)? (Matthew 24:3)

In His answer to that portion of the question about the “end of the age,” Jesus stated:

And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the entire world² for a witness unto all nations; and **then shall the end come**. (Matthew 24:14)

Now all we need to do is find out when the Gospel was “preached in the entire world” and we will know when the end was **about** to occur. **The “last day” of course, will be the last day of that age, the Mosaic Marriage Covenant age.**

The apostle Paul clearly established when the Gospel of the Kingdom was preached in the entire world.

First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of **throughout the whole world**. (Romans 1:8)

But, I say, have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went **into all the earth**, and their words unto **the ends of the world** (Gk. Oikoumene, meaning Roman Empire and beyond). (Romans 10:18)

But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to **all nations** for the obedience of faith: (Romans 16:26)

² The word translated “world” here is the Greek word “οἰκουμένη” oikoumene, pronounced, oy-kou-men'-ay and means “the inhabited earth” and in this passage refers to “the Roman Empire.”

Which is come unto you, as *it is* in **all the world**; and bringeth forth fruit, as *it does* also in you, since the day ye heard *of it*, and knew the grace of God in truth: (Colossians 1:6)

If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and *be* not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, *and* which was preached to **every creature which is under heaven**; whereof I Paul am made a minister; (Colossians 1:23)

From these passages of Scripture we have now learned that the “Gospel of the kingdom” was preached to **“the entire world”** during Paul’s life and ministry to the Nations (sometimes erroneously translated Gentiles).

The “end of the age” which the disciples asked about as recorded in Matthew, Mark, and Luke came right on schedule, just when Jesus Christ said it would soon after Paul’s death when the Jewish temple and their city, Jerusalem was destroyed by the Roman army in 70 AD.

A very carefully comparison of the usage of the phrases “the last days” and the “latter days” as found in the Old Testament with the phrase the “last days” and similar phrases found in the New Testament clearly demonstrates the meaning of these phrases in both Testaments are the same and their referent is the same. **The last days of the Mosaic Marriage Covenant which Yahweh made with Israel at Mt. Sinai and not the last days of the 5th kingdom (church) age set up through Jesus Christ during the days of the kings of the Roman empire at the end of the Mosaic Marriage Covenant age; just as Daniel had prophesied!**

If you have a problem with my conclusions on this matter I respectfully request that you take it up with the apostle Paul as he clearly taught that the “Gospel of the Kingdom *was* preached in all the world” before his ministry to the Nations was concluded, and Jesus said that the end of the age would come soon after the Gospel of the kingdom had been “preached in all the world.” **Accordingly “the end of age” of the Mosaic Marriage covenant arrived: Jerusalem was destroyed as promised, the temple was destroyed as promised, the power of the Jews was broken as promised, and the promised resurrection at “the last day” of that covenant arrived right on schedule just as it had been prophesied by the prophets (Dan. 12:2 & 13, et al.) and confirmed by Jesus Christ!**