

# Are We Living In the Last Days

By [Don Preston](#)

The website of the *Left Behind* organization, founded by Tim LaHaye, co-author of the popular book series *Left Behind*, has been running a poll. It should be noted that the *Left Behind* books, although they say they are fictional, state that the authors believe we are indeed in the last days. On the website, LaHaye informs us that the survey reveals that 74.9% of respondents believe that we are living in the last days. When these results were reported, over 20,000 voters had participated in the poll. These results can hardly be surprising since those who visit the site are readers of the books and committed, as a general rule, to the theology of the books. The question is, are we living in the last days? The answer to this is extremely important.

On November 25, 2001, I debated Thomas Ice, co-author with LaHaye, of the new book, *Charting the End Times*. This book says that we must be living in the last days, and that the Rapture and Great Tribulation are near. The topic of our debate was "Are We Living in the Last Days?" While his books strongly maintain that we are in the last days, Mr. Ice was reluctant to affirm this in the debate. He claimed, without offering proof, that the Bible speaks of *three* last days periods: the last days of Israel that are yet future, the last days as a referent to the entire Christian Age, and, the last days as a referent to the "last half" of the church age. The key to Mr. Ice's theology is the last days of Israel. He maintains that Israel's last days are yet future. Is this what the Bible says?

Joel 2:28-32 is one of the key Old Testament passage that predicted events for Israel's last days. Simply stated, if the events foretold by Joel have already occurred, then the last days foretold by him have already come and gone, and thus, any doctrine built on a yet future fulfillment of Joel is false.

On the great day of Pentecost, Acts 2, the Holy Spirit was poured out in a miraculous manner. The crowd was stunned and amazed, even accusing the apostles upon whom the Spirit fell of being drunk. However, Peter stood up with the 11 and said, "Men of Israel hear my words, these men are not drunken as you suppose, but, this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel." He then proceeded to directly quote Joel 2:28-32.

Joel said that in the last days the Spirit would be poured out as a sign of the Great and Terrible Day of the Lord. On the day of Pentecost, the Spirit was poured out, and Peter said, "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel!" During the debate with Mr. Ice, I emphasized that *Peter did not say*, "This is something like it will be when Joel is fulfilled" and, Peter did not say, "Joel 2:28-32 is being 'partially fulfilled,'" as stated in *Prophecy Watch*, co-authored by Ice and Timothy Demy. Peter's divine and inspired declaration that Joel was being fulfilled that day proves beyond a shadow

of a doubt that Israel's last days were in existence on the day of Pentecost, 2000 years ago! And, if Israel's last days were in existence then, they are not future to us today.

Tragically, many are willing to openly deny Peter's words. Ice says that what Peter *really* meant was that Pentecost was a *foretaste* of what it will be like when Israel's last days *actually* arrive! Kinda strange, isn't it, how modern readers of scripture claim to know what Peter meant better than he did? But Peter did not say "this is a foretaste of what it will be like when the last days come," he said, "**this is that** which was spoken by the prophet Joel!" Joel predicted events for Israel's last days, and Peter said *this is what Joel predicted*. It is simply wrong to take Peter's statement "This is that" and make it mean "This is **not** that!" How much clearer could that be? Israel's last days had arrived! They are not in the future. The prophetic clock was ticking off the climactic last time of Daniel's 70 weeks, the designated time for the consummation of Israel's hopes! More on this just below.

The New Testament is full of statements such as "The coming of the Lord is at hand" (James 5:8), "the end of all things is at hand" (1 Peter 4:7). Simply stated, if the New Testament writers were affirming and they clearly were-- that the coming of the Lord and the end of the age was near, they were affirming that the last days of Israel were present! These predictions were written 2000 years ago. However, because "the end" as perceived by most Bible students, did not occur quickly, attempts are made to mitigate these time statements. One such attempt is an appeal to Matthew 24:36.

In predicting His Parousia, Jesus said, "But of that day and hour no one knows, not the angels, but My Father only." One writer, desperate to avoid the imminence language of Peter, Paul, and John, recently said that the disciples could not have been predicting the soon coming of the Lord, because "such knowledge was not available to the Lord's penmen", and, "Not even Jesus himself knew the time of His return to earth (Matthew 24:36)." Such statements are lamentable.

First, the disciples certainly *claimed* that they had (inspired) knowledge that Christ's coming was near! If the knowledge that the "end of all things has drawn near" was not "given" to the writers by the Spirit, *where did they get the idea?* Did they just make it up? Were they wrong? For someone to claim that they could not have made such statements is more than a little arrogant. The words are not uncertain, they are emphatic and clear "The coming (Greek, *parousia*) of the Lord has drawn near." Interestingly, *the identical Greek word in the identical tense* is used in this verse that is used in Matthew 3:2 "The kingdom of heaven is at hand", and the writer just alluded to is adamant that the kingdom was near!

Now, it is true that in Matthew 24:36 Jesus did not know *the day or the hour* of His coming. It is *not true*, however, that He did not know the *generation*! He emphatically stated the contrary, "Verily I

say unto you, this generation shall by no means pass until all these things be fulfilled.' And the "all these things" included His coming on the clouds with power and great glory of verses 29-31!

Further, to appeal to Matthew 24:36 to prove that the time statements in the epistles were not true, is a denial of *the revelatory work of the Spirit after Christ's ascension*. In John 16, Jesus told His disciples that there were many things He could not yet tell them, but that the Father would send the Spirit. When the Spirit came, He would reveal to the disciples "things to come" (John 16:7). The Spirit was to reveal to the disciples what Jesus could not reveal to them while He was on earth, and what was to be revealed was "things to come." In other words, what Jesus did not know while He was on earth, was to be revealed by the Spirit after Christ's ascension! It is therefore, a denial of the revelatory work of the Spirit to insist that because Jesus did not know the time of His coming *while on earth*, that this same "ignorance" prevailed after His ascension, and the sending of the revelatory Spirit.

Finally, note especially Revelation 1:1 "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave to Him to show His servants--things which must shortly take place." The Father revealed to the Son, who in turn revealed it to the churches. And what was the revelation? It was "things which must *shortly* take place!", and, "Behold I come quickly!" (Revelation 22:6, 10, 12, 20).

We are not in the last days today, and Christ's coming is not "at hand" today, unless the revelatory Spirit was wrong 2000 years ago! The Father sent the Spirit to inspire, and inform Jesus's disciples to write with urgency "Now in a very little while, the one who is coming will come, and will not delay" (Hebrews 10:37). How dare we today to deny their words, to deny they could have known what they wrote, or to deny the meaning of their words?

Nonetheless, as we have seen above, most people today insist, in one form or another, that we are in the last days predicted by Scripture. The premillennialist says there are two "last days" in scripture, one is Israel's last days, the other is the last days of the Christian Age. According to this view, we are not in Israel's last days, those are yet future when the 70th week of Daniel 9 is supposedly to be fulfilled.

The amillennialists says there is only one last days period in scripture, and that is the Christian Age. We are told that the last days began on Pentecost, and continues until the so-called "end of time." What does scripture have to say?

The Bible knows only one "last days" period, and that was the last days of Israel's Old Covenant Age.

The last days did not begin on Pentecost. Hebrews 9:26 says Jesus appeared in "the end of the age." It should be abundantly clear that Jesus did not appear at the end of the Christian Age. I wonder, would the "*end of the age*" qualify as the "last days"? If not, why not? Hebrews 1:1-3 and Hebrews 2:1-5, speaking of Jesus' incarnate work, says that Jesus appeared in the "last days." See also 1 Peter 1:18-20. The point is that Jesus appeared "in the last days," *but Jesus appeared before Pentecost*, therefore, the "last days" did not begin on Pentecost!

Further, the Bible writers know *nothing* of two, and certainly not three, as suggested by Ice, last days periods. They knew only one, and they insisted they were in it! Paul said "the end of the ages has come on us!" (1 Corinthians 10:11). He patently did not mean "the end of time," or, "the end of the Christian Age" had come! It must be remembered that Paul taught *nothing* except the "hope of Israel" (Acts 24:13-16; 26; 28). He did not preach a Gentile gospel divorced from, or separate from the promises made to Israel! Was the "hope of Israel," the end of the Christian Age? Thus, when Paul spoke of the last days, he was speaking of Israel's last days.

It is long past time for Bible students to honor the time statements of scripture, and stop extending those statements into the future. Paul told the Corinthians "brethren we shall not all sleep" (1 Corinthians 15:50-51) in anticipation of the end of the age, and *parousia* of Christ. John said "It is the last hour!" (1 John 2:18), and the "last hour" anticipated by John in his writings was the time of end (John 5:28-29). These writers were either right or wrong in their predictions! There is no middle ground. If they were right, *we are not in the last days*. (And hey, that is good news!) If they were wrong, it does not matter what they said!

From the above, it is evident that the identity of the last days is important. If we are in the last days, then prophecy should be fulfilled in this generation. If the last days existed in the first century, then prophecy should have been fulfilled then, and therefore the last days do not exist today. Tim LaHaye and Thomas Ice, co-authors of the colorful new *Charting the End Times* book, insist that since 1948 there has been a veritable "parade of fulfilled prophecy." They even call the establishment of the nation of Israel in 1948 the "super sign" to prove that we are near the end of the church age. Further, to listen to the TV prophecy "experts" such as Hal Lindsay, the bombing of the Twin Towers is proof positive that we are near the end.

It is important to understand that one of the most popular views concerning the last days involves the 70 week countdown of Daniel 9:24-27. Daniel's prophecy said that 70 prophetic weeks had been determined by Jehovah to bring Israel's salvation history to its climax. My premillennial friends insist that the first 69 weeks ended, during the personal ministry of Jesus, but that God stopped "the prophetic clock" when the Jews rejected Jesus. The 70<sup>th</sup> week is now waiting for the Rapture to happen, and immediately thereafter, when the Man of Sin signs a peace treaty with Israel, the 70<sup>th</sup>

week will begin its countdown. Thus, Israel's last days were suspended just before the Cross, and will not begin again until after the Rapture.

However, in Deuteronomy 21:29 Moses predicted that in Israel's last days, she would fill up the measure of her sin, and be judged by Jehovah. Jesus said that Israel would fill up the measure of her sin, *in his generation*, but after the Cross, by persecuting the church. This means, unequivocally, that Israel's last days, in which she would fill up her sin, were in existence well after the time when they were supposedly suspended.

Further, in Deuteronomy 32, the Song of Moses, Jehovah spoke of Israel's last days (v. 20, 29). He said that in the last days he would provoke Israel to jealousy "by those who are not a nation, I will move them to anger by a foolish nation" (Deuteronomy 32:21).

Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, directly quotes from Deuteronomy 32:21, in Romans 10:19, and Romans 11:11, 14) to justify his ministry to the Gentiles! In other words, Paul believed that his ministry of provoking Israel to jealousy was the fulfillment of the prophecy of Deuteronomy 32! Of course, Paul also believed that the last days were present. He said the end of the age had arrived (1 Corinthians 10:11).

Paul wrote Romans in approximately 57 A.D.. This is almost 25 years after the time when Israel's last days were supposedly suspended. In other words, there is no way that any of Israel's last days prophecies should have been being fulfilled when Paul wrote! Yet, Paul said his ministry to the Gentiles was the fulfillment of Deuteronomy 32, one of the most foundational of all of Israel's last days prophecies!

In Israel's last days God would provoke Israel to jealousy by converting the Gentiles (Deuteronomy 32:21). Paul, when he wrote Romans, circa A.D. 57, was converting the Gentiles, to provoke Israel to jealousy, in fulfillment of Deuteronomy 32:21 (Romans 10:19; 11:11, 14). Therefore, Israel's last days existed at the time Paul wrote Romans, circa A. D. 57.

Since Israel's last days existed during the time of Paul's ministry, then Israel's last days did not end at the Cross. They were not suspended just before the Cross. Israel's last days were to be consummated at the Day of the Lord when Jesus came in judgment against her at the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

Deuteronomy 32 is admittedly a prophecy of Israel's last days. Keep in mind please that the millennialists claim that Israel's last days were suspended due to the rejection of Jesus, and that Israel's last days will not start counting again until the signing of the so-called peace treaty with the

Man of Sin. However, this is untenable since the New Testament writers clearly say that the things foretold by Deuteronomy 32 were being, or were to be, fulfilled in the first century, *well after the Cross*. This proves that Israel's last days were not suspended and it proves that Israel's last days are not still in the future. Let's take one more look at Deuteronomy 32.

In verses 36-43, Jehovah said "the Lord shall judge His people," and, "He will avenge the blood of His servants and render vengeance to His adversaries." Significantly, the writer of Hebrews quotes verse 36 verbatim in Hebrews 10:30, and promises, "Now in a very little while, the one that is coming, will come, and will not tarry" ( Hebrews 10:37). Thus, Deuteronomy 32 said that in Israel's last days, Jehovah would judge His people. Hebrews says Jesus appeared in the last days (Hebrews 1:1), at the end of the age (Hebrews 9:26), and that he was coming "in a very little while" in fulfillment of Deuteronomy 32:36! Patently the Hebrew writer believed that Israel's last days were present, and he wrote in the A.D. 60s, well after the time when, we are told, Israel's last days were suspended. The Hebrew writer knew *nothing* of a suspended prophetic clock.

Finally, in Deuteronomy 32:43 Jehovah said He was going to avenge the blood of His servants, and of course this was to be "the latter end" of Israel. As we saw in the first of this series, Jesus had something to say about this subject.

In Matthew 23, Jesus rehearsed Israel's bloody history of killing the prophets. They had killed all of God's servants sent to them. Further, Jesus was going to send his apostles and prophets (Luke 11:49) to Israel, and she would kill them as well. In so doing, she was going to fill up the measure of her sin. As a result, Jesus said "that upon you may come all the righteous blood of shed on the earth, from righteous Abel unto Zecharias son of Berechias, whom you slew between the temple and the altar." When was the judgment for shedding the blood of God's servants to be avenged? Jesus' answer is unambiguous: "Verily I say unto you, all of these things shall come on this generation." Even Thomas Ice says "this is an undeniable reference to the A.D. 70 judgment."

Moses said in Israel's last days, God would avenge the blood of his martyred saints. Jesus said all the blood of the martyred saints would be avenged *in his generation*, referring to the judgment on Israel in A.D. 70. Therefore, Israel's last days existed at the time of the judgment on Israel in A.D. 70, the time when God judged His people.

You and I do not live in the last days. The last days are past, and we need not fear.