

Are We Living in the Last Days?

In times like these with all the uncertainties and turmoil going on around us it is not uncommon for us to hear prognosticators saying we are in the last days. So called prophets and date setters are caught up in the events of the times and warning us that “The end is near”. And they are certainly not alone. Anyone with Bible knowledge knows that times of upheaval and unprecedented troubles were often associated with the judgment of God, and thus they see a pandemic, a politically and morally divided nation, pure evil and hatred prevailing, and increased hostility toward the Christian faith and they think, “the end must be near” or “prepare, the Lord is coming back soon.” Let’s take some time and talk about this and answer the question, “Are we living in the last days?”

1. What do we mean?

- a. The question can be formulated in many ways. I mention here two of them.
Are we living in the last days? OR Are we living in the end times?
- b. What is often meant by such statements is that the return of the Lord is imminent. They see the times and see them as “signs” from the word of God pointing toward is immediate return.
- c. The Bible does speak about the last days, but is it talking about this? Do we have any material warnings in the Bible that tell us the end is near?

2. The Bible and the “Last days”

- a. Both the Old and New Testaments make references to the “last days” or similar phrases.
- b. In the Old Testament consider:
 - i. Isaiah 2:2-4, “It shall come to pass in the latter days...”
 - ii. Micah 4:1 repeats this passage. Both Isaiah and Micah were contemporaries in the 700s BC who prophesied during the destruction of Samaria. Both were warnings of judgment AND a future hope. That future hope was described as “the last days”
 - iii. Joel 2:28-32 – “it shall come to pass afterward...” We are going to address this in just a moment. Here we note some things that would happen then. This is a key OT verse to understanding “the last days”.
- c. Now consider the following verses in the New Testament
 - i. Acts 2:17 (16-23). On the day of Pentecost, after Jesus arose and ascended back to heaven, we find the beginning of the church/kingdom. As Peter and the others are preaching about the miraculous events they were witnessing notice what he says. “This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel.” He proceeds to quote Joel 2:28-32. Speaking of the “last days”, Peter declared they were now fulfilled.
NOTE: A study of Isaiah 2:2-4 & Micah 4:1ff will show that these were also prophetic of that day of Pentecost. Thus we see that day as the beginning of “the last days”
 - ii. Hebrews 1:1-2 – the writer would later declare to us how in times past God spoke in various ways, but “*has in these last days spoken to us through His Son.*” Notice the declaration that they were then In the last days.
 - iii. So, in whatever way the Bible speaks of “the last days”, They began nearly 2000 years ago and continue even to this day, and will be such until the Lord finally returns.
 - iv. So what was meant by the expression, “the last days”? It was a reference to the final age of time. Used in the Old Testament it was looking forward. In the texts previously mentioned it was looking forward to the coming of Jesus and the Christian age. Prior to that Biblical history records two other ages (or dispensations) – the patriarchal – where God spoke through the fathers (Genesis – Exodus 19), the Mosaic – where God’s chosen nation were under the Law of Moses given at Mt. Sinai (Exodus 20 -rest of OT, and up until the day of Pentecost). We are now living in “the last days” or the last dispensation. This is it. We have

the completed word of God, and Christ on the throne until the end (Acts 2:33-36, 1 Corinthians 15:25-26)

3. Some things we are told about the last days

- a. There are some interesting verses that address what the last days are going to be like. And they speak of future times. Consider the following:
 - i. 2 Timothy 3:1-5 – perilous times will come. Men will be selfish and ungodly in many ways.
 - ii. James 5:3 – rebuking the rich he noted that their gold and silver were corroded... “you have heaped up treasure in the last days.” In the time specified there would be great greed.
 - iii. 2 Peter 3:3 – Peter notes that “scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts” and mocking the delay of the Lord
 - iv. 1 John 2:18 – the “last hour” antichrists are coming – those who are opposed to Christ doctrinally. They change who He was and either follow that or they reject Him all together.
- b. Concerning such verses, consider that they do NOT specify a time but instead describe frequent periods of wickedness throughout history.
For example – consider 2 Timothy 3:5 again, “And from such people turn away” – Timothy AT THAT TIME might experience some of these people.
- c. CONSIDER: Is the time we are in so extraordinary it has never been worse, even in our nation? What about the division in our land that led to the civil war? What about the Spanish flu of the 1920s that killed more than 50 million worldwide and killed more than 675,000 in the US with half the deaths being young adults? Or various cholera outbreaks of the 1800s that killed between 5-10% of their populations. What about the great depression of 1929 that lasted for several years? What about examples of moral corruption that have peppered the history of our nation? And that’s just the US.
The POINT: Are times unprecedentedly bad? Yes? But this is NOT the only such time. And if truth be known, throughout world history we can find far greater corruption in every area that what we are seeing now.
- d. AND, in every one of those instances, if you study the history, you will likely find someone saying it is the end of the world and the “day of the Lord is coming”.

4. The Bible says NOTHING about the dating WHEN the Lord will return

- a. In fact, it says the absolute opposite.
 - i. 1 Thessalonians 5:2-3 – it will come as a thief in the night
 - ii. 2 Peter 3:10 – He will come as a thief in the night.
 - iii. Matthew 24:36 – where I believe contextually Jesus transitions from judgment against Jerusalem to the day of His return, He notes no one knows that day. He then proceeds to describe how things would be normal – eating and drinking, marrying, etc.
Jesus concludes this warning with verses 42-44 – you do not know the hour when the Lord is coming,... then basically Jesus said to always be prepared.
- b. What about the speculations?
 - i. How often do we hear of date setters (those who try to pinpoint exactly when the Lord will return, including the date and some cases the time)?
 - ii. Even more, people may not set a specific date but they are warning, “the end is near”
 - iii. Speculations have always been around – some of the more recent examples:
 1. Harold Camping said the Lord would return May 21, 2011. After several failed attempts he recanted trying to figure out the time.
 2. Ron Weinland said May 27, 2012
 3. William Miller of Seventh Day Adventists set the year of His return as 1843
 4. Charles T Russel, a founder of the Jehovah’s Witnesses said the Lord would return in 1914. When it did not occur, he said the Lord did return but invisibly.

5. John Hagee speculated the Lord would return on September 23, 2015 based upon the cycle of blood moons.
- iv. BRIEFLY, some of the arguments presented.
1. Consider Israel – many today believe that God is not done with physical Israel. This is contrary to Joshua 21:43-45, Deuteronomy 8:1 – it was conditional
 2. Sometimes a distinction is made between the church and kingdom and premillennialists believe that Jesus is going to return and establish an earthly kingdom.
The Bible does not teach that. Colossians 1:13 speaks of the kingdom being in existence. Jesus in Mark 9:1 noted clearly some present then would see “the kingdom present with power”
 3. What about Revelation – the playground of date setters and premillennialism – Consider Revelation 1:1, 3, 22:6, 10– these 4 verses note that these were things that would short take place and “the time is near”
This was a book written to Christians of the first century who were facing persecutions. Furthermore, it was a highly figurative book. The ultimate message of Revelation is that God wins!
 4. Matthew 24 is also used to show the signs that would happen for the Lord to return and reign on earth. However note also vs. 34-35 - *Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.*
Much of Matthew 24 was dealing with the destruction of Jerusalem. It is not until vs. 36 that Jesus transitions to His second coming AND THEN after speaking of its date being unknown, He begins to describe the judgment in chapter 25 with 2 parables and a picture of the judgment scene.
 5. Each of these points could be developed further in lessons dealing with the end times. But the point to make here is that we do not know when the Lord will return, and that when He does that will be the day of judgment.

What is the takeaway from all of this? We are not told when He will return, but we are told to always be ready. And that is His point.

Conclusion: Whether we are living in the days just prior to our Lord’s return or not is something we cannot definitively answer based upon God’s word. However, in uncertain times like these, it is certainly worthy to think about the Lord’s return and examine ourselves to see if we are ready. Another way of saying that is, **live AS IF it is the end times, but with the wisdom to live on in case it is not.** What about you? Are you prepared? Think about it!

(Based on a brief Bible talk by Mark Roberts, <https://www.justchristians.com/sermons/sermons/2020/10/23/are-we-living-in-the-last-days>)