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Last Days *in the* *Old and New Testaments*

The “last days” in Scripture concerns the final destruction of the nation of Judah in AD 70 with the coming of the new heaven and the new earth. Have we ever said, “We are living in the last days”? If so, we are not alone. The New Testament speaks of the “last days.” The Old Testament speaks of the “last days.” What does this phrase mean? We, as Christians, frequently speak of the “end of time” as the “last days” of planet earth, even though neither the Old nor New Testament writings ever speak of the “end of time,” but rather of the “time of the end” (Daniel 12:4).¹ Some apply this phrase to the Christian age. In other words, we are still living in the “last days” in the twenty-first century. Since both the Old and the New Testaments address the “last days,” we must seek to understand this terminology in light of the overall view of God’s Word.²

One of the most popular views of the “last days” centers on the so-called final conflict that is commonly called the Battle of Armageddon³ in the Book of Revelation (Revelation

¹The date that is assigned to Daniel is 605 BC, which is the time of deportation to Babylon. I normally do not give the dates that a particular prophecy or vision are received or seen. Daniel 12: 4 is an example. Since Chapter 12 is the third year of Cyrus, the date for Chapter 12 should be about 536 BC, not 605 BC. The events reported in Chapter 12 starts in Chapter 10, which date should be about 536 BC. I thank Jim Hopkins for calling attention to my failure to take into consideration a closer date for Chapter 12. Since I have not taken into deliberation this time difference (even though I am conscious of the division in the time span), I will endeavor to be more mindful of the need to give, as close as possible, the date of the events reported by the prophets if there are time factors present in the text.

²Since the study of “last days” is frequently misunderstood by many sincere Christians, it is necessary to cite certain Scriptures over and over again in order to reinforce the original intent of the phrase “last days.” Repetition is one of the three laws of learning. The other two laws of learning are: repetition and repetition.

³ The Battle of Armageddon is called “the war of the great day of the Almighty God” in Revelation 16:14 (“**the war of the great day**” in Greek is τὸν πόλεμον τῆς ἡμέρας τῆς μεγάλης, *ton polemon tēs hēmeras tēs megalē*). The word *Armageddon* is incorrectly transliterated into English. The English translators left off the letter “h.” The word in the Greek text is Ἀρμαγεδών (*Harmagedōn*). John writes: τὸν καλούμενον Ἑβραϊστὶ Ἀρμαγεδών (*ton kaloumenon Hebraisti Harmagedōn*). The word that is transliterated as Armageddon means “Mount of Megiddo.” Megiddo was a city located in the northern section of Palestine. Arthur M. Ogden in his

16:16). If we are to arrive at a biblical concept, we must approach the subject from its use by both Old and New Testament writers. If we fail to understand the author's intent, we can attach a meaning that is totally lacking in biblical signification. Too many Christians are so used to reading the Bible from earlier generations of interpreters that they no longer focus on the original intent of the author. As we approach this subject of the "last days," we must learn to reinterpret the hand-me-down interpretations from our own culture.⁴

Frequently, church leaders become the watchword for the interpretation of a particular text. Presuppositions often stand in the way of listening anew to the passage under scrutiny. Scholars as well as individuals often prune or crop the text in order to justify their interpretation of a specific text or texts, even though this may not be intentional. **We may prune the wording of a verse by failing to take into consideration the historical background leading up to the comments of the inspired writer dealing with issues spoken of by various prophets.** Unfortunately, uninspired individuals take great liberties with texts in order to give validity to their opinions, which interpretations often border on the fringes of one's wild imagination.

It is not uncommon for us, as Christians, to isolate a passage from its context, which separation supports, so it seems, bizarre interpretations of prophecies concerning the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. Cropping of a text is similar in nature to the pruning of a text. **When we crop a text, we fail to read the text in its narrative setting.** We in essence break the connection between the verse cited and the verses preceding and following. In order to interpret the Word of God more accurately, we must step outside our frame of reference; otherwise, we will experience subjective distortions of the intended text of study. We must seek to eliminate our strong personal subjective biases, that is to say, we should avoid looking through our own colored glasses.

book *The avenging of the Apostles and Prophets: Commentary on Revelation* (Pinson, AL: Ogden Publications, 1991, 1996, 2006), 319, writes:

Megiddo was a city located in the northern section of Palestine near the border separating between Galilee and Samaria. It was situated at the southeastern corner of Mt. Carmel which runs in a north-westernly direction for about 15 to 20 miles before dropping off into the Mediterranean Sea. The northeastern slopes of Mt. Carmel descend into the Plain of Esdraelon or Jezreel. This long, fertile valley was the battle ground for many wars in Bible times. In fact, it has been the site of many wars since. Megiddo was located at the foot of Mt. Carmel where its eastern slope spreads out into the Plain.... The mountain of Megiddo, Armageddon, identifies **Mt. Carmel** because it was the mountain to which Megiddo was attached and, furthermore, Megiddo was the only city of prominence associated with Mt. Carmel.

The NIV translates 16:14: "Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon." Many battles took place in Israel's history in the valley of Megiddo. This battle is descriptive of the time given to the Gentiles to tread underfoot the Holy city for a period of forty-two months.

⁴This chapter is not intended to be an exhaustive study of the "last days," but rather a brief overview. For a comprehensive study in this field, one should consult Don K. Preston, *The Last Days Identified* (Ardmore, OK: JaDon Productions, 2004). This book may be ordered directly from Don Preston (see his website: www.eschatology.org).

The observation set forth in this chapter is that the phrase “last days” pictures the “last days” of the Old Covenant world of Judaism, which days were foretold by Jacob (2006-1859 BC) to Judah. Listen to Jacob as he speaks concerning Judah:

Genesis 49:1

Then Jacob called for his sons and said: “Gather around so I can tell you what will happen to you in days to come.”

Genesis 49:10

The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs^c and the obedience of the nations is his.

The “last days” (“days to come”) dealt with the first century Jews, not with twenty-first century Christians. In other words, the “last days” spoken of by Jacob have come and gone for the church today. The “last days” of Judah (Judaism) culminated in the downfall of Jerusalem in AD 70 by the Romans. The “last days” are not the end of the world, but rather the end of that system set up in types and shadows—the old heaven and earth. **I, too, taught for many years that the “last days” pertained to the Messianic age, that is to say, the Christian dispensation, or the entirety of the Christian age, not the “last days” of the Old Covenant world of Judaism addressed by Jacob, Daniel, and many other prophets.** The traditional interpretation (Christian dispensation) allows for the “last days” to continue for thousands of years, which ultimately will transpire in the end of the physical universe. **Yet, the Scriptures do not uphold this interpretation, that is to say, that Christians are still living in the “last days.”**⁵

BOOK OF HEBREWS

The “last days” are a reference to the “last days” of Judah’s judgment that came to an end in AD 70. A proper understanding of this expression should assist us in the interpretation of many texts that are presently misapplied by many sincere believers. The Book of Hebrews begins its comments about the “last days” of Judah’s demise with the following words:

In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. (Hebrews 1:1-2)

“In these last days” identifies the ministry of Jesus to the period of the “last days” of Judah’s existence as a political power.⁶ “In these last days” is also buttressed with “through

^c Or *until Shiloh comes*; or *until he comes to whom tribute belongs*

⁵See John Noe, “The End that Was, the Last Days that Were,” in John Noe, *Beyond the End Times* (Bradford, PA: Preterist Resources, 1999).

⁶“In these last days” (ἐπ’ ἐσχάτου τῶν ἡμερῶν τούτων, *ep’ eschatou tōn hēmerōn toutōn*)

whom he made the universe,” which translation is misleading. The KJV translates “by whom also he made the worlds.” The Greek text speaks of “the ages” (τοὺς αἰῶνας, *tous aiōnas*), not “worlds.”⁷ Just a perusal of the Book of Hebrews reveals that the “ages” represent the old covenant and new covenant ages. Christians today are **not** living in the “last days,” but rather they are living in the age of grace.

The English word *world* is employed again in 1:6 (KJV), but the Greek word is οἰκουμένη (*oikoumenē*, “inhabited earth, Roman Empire”), not αἰών (*aiōn*, “age”). The author of Hebrews does not employ the same Greek word that is translated “world” in 1:6 that is employed in 1:2. The writer pens: “And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world,⁸ he says, ‘**Let all God’s angels worship him.**’”^d

The word that the author writes in 1:2 (τοὺς αἰῶνας, *tous aiōnas*, “the ages”) is the same word that Jesus uses in His discourse about the destruction of Jerusalem in Matthew 24:3:

As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. ‘Tell us,’ they said, ‘when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age (τοῦ αἰῶνος, *tou aiōnos*)?’

Unfortunately, the KJV translates the word *age* as *world* in 24:3. The Greek word for *world* is κόσμος (*kosmos*, “world or universe”). **The Twelve apostles were not inquiring about the end of the world (literal heavens and earth), but rather, they were asking about the end of the Old Covenant world of Judaism, that is to say, “the time of the end,” not the “end of time.”** Daniel speaks of the power of the Holy City being overthrown as “the time of the end.” He writes the words spoken to him by an angel: “But you, Daniel, close up and seal the words of the scroll until the **time of the end**” (“end of Judaism as a political power,” Daniel 12:4,7).

Again, Hebrews 1:10-12 sheds light on the earlier verses (1:1-2). Listen once more to the writer of Hebrews as he pens:

In the beginning, O Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. ¹¹They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. ¹²You **will roll them up** like a robe; like a garment **they will be changed**. But you remain the same, and your years will never end.^g

These words are reminiscent of the words of John in his Revelation book. He graphically depicts the final overthrow of Judah with similar apocalyptic language:

I watched as he opened the sixth seal. There was a great earthquake. The sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair, the whole moon turned blood red, ¹³ and the stars in the sky fell to earth, as late figs drop from a fig tree when shaken by a strong wind. ¹⁴ **The sky receded like a scroll, rolling up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place.** ¹⁵ Then the kings of the

⁷The Greek text reads: δι’ οὗ καὶ ἐποίησεν τοὺς αἰῶνας (*di’ hou kai epoiēsen tous aiōnas*) “through whom also [indeed] he made the ages”)

⁸τὴν οἰκουμένην, *tēn oikoumenēn*, “the inhabited earth”).

^dDeut. 32:43 (see Dead Sea Scrolls and Septuagint).

^gPsalms 102:25-27

earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. ¹⁶ They called to the mountains and the rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! ¹⁷ For **the great day of their wrath has come**, and who can stand?” (Revelation 6:12-17)

We are confronted with apocalyptic language that is descriptive of the overthrow, or downfall, of governments. Isaiah uses the same type imagery when he writes about the removal of Babylon (Isaiah 13:9-13) and Idumea (34:1-5) from their political power of government. Isaiah writes with apocalyptic language that is similar to the author of the Book of Hebrews as well as the Book of Revelation by John. We should pay close attention to the following account of Babylon’s downfall by Isaiah:

See, **the day of the LORD is coming**—a cruel day, with wrath and fierce anger—to make the land desolate and destroy the sinners within it. ¹⁰The stars of heaven and their constellations will not show their light. The **rising sun will be darkened** and the **moon will not give its light**. ¹¹**I will punish the world for its evil, the wicked for their sins**. I will put an end to the arrogance of the haughty and will humble the pride of the ruthless. ¹²I will make man scarcer than pure gold, more rare than the gold of Ophir. ¹³Therefore **I will make the heavens tremble; and the earth will shake from its place** at the wrath of the LORD Almighty, in the day of his burning anger. (Isaiah 13:9-13)⁹

This account of Babylon’s demise is referred to as “the day of the LORD is coming” (13:9). Also, Isaiah speaks of the “rising sun will be darkened” and the “moon will not give its light” (13:10). This removal of Babylon is referred to as the “heavens” trembling and the “earth” shaking (13:13), which comes about as a result of God’s wrath. Isaiah’s account of the fall of Idumea is also filled with apocalyptic language—the same language employed by John in his Revelation (Revelation 6:12-17) as he describes the defeat of apostate Judah. Once more, pay attention to Isaiah’s words:

Come near, you nations, and listen; pay attention, you peoples! **Let the earth hear**, and all that is in it, the world, and all that comes out of it! ²The LORD is angry with all nations; his wrath is upon all their armies. **He will totally destroy^a them**, he will give them over to slaughter. ³Their slain will be thrown out, their dead bodies will send up a stench; the mountains will be soaked with their blood. **All the stars of the heavens will be dissolved and the sky rolled up like a scroll; all the starry host will fall like withered leaves from the vine, like shriveled figs from the fig tree**. ⁵My sword has drunk its fill in the heavens; see, it descends in judgment on Edom, the people I have totally destroyed. (Isaiah 34:1-5)

This language is the same language that Jesus employed in His discourse on the “End of the Age” as recorded in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21. Jesus, in His Olivet Discourse,

⁹In order to compensate for speech intonation, I decided to compensate for this loss by highlighting certain phrases or words with “bold” print. Hopefully, this technique will help us to hear more clearly the Word of God.

^aThe Hebrew term refers to the irrevocable giving over of things or persons to the LORD, often by totally destroying them; also in verse 5.

alludes to Joel 2:28 in His announcement of the overthrow of apostate Judah. Matthew captures the words of Jesus concerning this impending event, when he writes:

Immediately after the distress of those days, **‘the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.’**^c (Matthew 24:29)

Joel, too, writes with apocalyptic language. A fuller, or more complete, citation from Joel should assist us in our understanding more clearly the words of Jesus in Matthew 24:29.

And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. ²⁹Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days. ³⁰I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke. ³¹**The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.** (Joel 2:28-31)

Isaiah (739 BC) and Joel (835 BC) and Jesus shed light on the Book of Hebrews. Surface reading of Hebrews 1:10-12 seems to imply that the author is writing about the literal heavens and earth. Yet, the Book of Hebrews is not discussing the literal heavens and earth, but rather, the author is speaking of the Old Covenant world of Judaism as “heavens” and “earth.” Gene Fadeley is on target, so it seems, when he writes:

Beginning in verse ten, the term “**heaven and earth**” has been the source of much misunderstanding. Some words used in the Bible are peculiar to our thinking. When we read these words we need to understand them in the way they were used. The term “**heaven and earth**” was sometimes used to denote the Jewish Old Covenant world. It was that old Jewish system that was about to end. The physical universe was not the topic shown in verse 11 when he says, “**They will perish**, but you will remain [σὺ δὲ διαμένεις, *su de diameneis*].” If the physical earth was to be destroyed, where were the Jewish Christians to remain?¹⁰

In order to express more clearly the point that the concept of the “heavens and earth” refers to the kingdom of Judah, we should, once more, consult the Book of Isaiah to confirm this understanding. Isaiah speaks of Judah and Jerusalem in symbolic terms in the introduction of his book (Isaiah 1:1-2). He employs the words *heaven* and *earth* as descriptive terms of Judah in order to convey to the nation of Judah that they should listen to God’s warnings. Pay attention to Isaiah as he rebukes a rebellious nation:

Hear, O heavens! Listen, O earth! For the LORD has spoken: “**I reared children and brought them up, but they have rebelled against me.**”³The ox knows his master, the donkey his owner’s manger, but Israel does not know, my people do not understand.”⁴Ah, **sinful nation, a people loaded with guilt, a**

^c Isaiah 13:10; 34:4

¹⁰Gene Fadeley, *Hebrews: Covenants in Contrast* (1996, 2000), 9. To order this book, contact www.bibleprophecy.com.

brood of evildoers, children given to corruption! They have forsaken the LORD; they have spurned the Holy One of Israel and turned their backs on him. (1:2-4)

From this citation, we are immediately aware that Isaiah calls Judah “heavens and earth.” We can hardly reflect upon these words without recalling the words of Jesus in His Sermon on the Mount as He rebukes the religious leaders for tampering with the true intent of Holy Scripture. Jesus calls attention to the fact that Judaism (heaven and earth) would disappear before the “least stroke of a pen” would disappear from the Law, that is to say, until everything the Law and the prophets had foretold would come to past.

Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. ¹⁸ I tell you the truth, **until heaven and earth disappear**, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. ¹⁹ Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. ²⁰ For I tell you that **unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law**, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:17-20)

We are conscious that Jesus is referring to the passing away of the scepter (power) of Judah, which He describes as “heaven and earth.” Toward the end of Christ’s ministry, He once more addresses this same issue of the falling away of the Old Covenant world of Judaism. Just a brief reading of the three accounts given in Matthew 24-25, Mark 13, and Luke 21, which scenarios reveal the full story of what is in “kernel” form in Matthew 5:17-20, should enhance our comprehension of the “last days.” Again, the following words by Gene Fadeley are on target as he seeks to unravel the true meaning of “heaven and earth”:

If the terms “heaven and earth” had reference to the physical heaven and earth, one must conclude that until the physical heaven and earth are destroyed, the old Mosaic law would be in force. However the terms “heaven and earth” had reference to the old and new covenant worlds. The old Jewish covenant could not pass until everything was accomplished. The final promises, prophecies, and judgments were about to be completed. Once these things were completed, the old covenant, having been fulfilled, would pass away. When we view these events in their correct first century setting, Matthew 5:18 and many other passages become easy to understand.¹¹

The covenant world of Judaism would cease to exist, which is called “heaven and earth.” God foretold the destruction of Judaism in Deuteronomy 32,¹² which is known as the Song of Moses. Fourteen hundred years before Judaism ceased to exist, Moses (1526-1406 BC) records the words of God in his song concerning the ultimate destruction of Jerusalem:

¹¹ Ibid., 33

¹²We may place a date at the end of the Book of Deuteronomy as 1406 BC. The Book of Leviticus has no chronology, but the Book of Numbers covers a period of thirty-nine years, which book begins with 1445 BC. The Book of Exodus begins in flashback to 1876 BC until the birth of Moses in 1526 BC. Between Exodus 2:1 and 3:2, we observe a period of eighty years transpiring.

For a fire has been kindled by my wrath, one that burns to the realm of death^e below. It will devour the earth and its harvests and set afire the foundations of the mountains. (32:22)

Paul cites Deuteronomy 32:21 to justify his ministry to the Gentiles in his Book of Romans (10:19), which context reveals that God refers to the destruction of Judah. Moses pens these informative words from God:

They made me jealous by what is no god and angered me with their worthless idols. **I will make them envious by those who are not a people; I will make them angry by a nation that has no understanding.** ²² For a fire has been kindled by my wrath, one that burns to the realm of death^e below. It will devour the earth and its harvests and set afire the foundations of the mountains. (Deuteronomy 32:21-22)

Paul cites the fulfillment of Deuteronomy 32:21 in his own day. Listen to Paul as he reflects upon the words of Moses:

Again I ask: Did Israel not understand? First, Moses says, “**I will make you envious by those who are not a nation; I will make you angry by a nation that has no understanding.**”^k(Romans 10:19)

This Song of Moses begins with the following words: “**Listen, O heavens,** and I will speak; **hear, O earth,** the words of my mouth” (Deuteronomy 32:1). About six hundred years later, Isaiah addressed Judah and Jerusalem with similar phraseology, which terminology referred to Judah and Jerusalem as “heavens” and “earth.” Isaiah begins with metaphorical language:

Hear, O heavens! Listen, O earth! For the LORD has spoken: “I reared children and brought them up, but they have rebelled against me. ³ The ox knows his master, the donkey his owner’s manger, but Israel does not know, my people do not understand. ⁴ Ah, sinful nation, a people loaded with guilt, a brood of evildoers, children given to corruption! They have forsaken the LORD; they have spurned the Holy One of Israel and turned their backs on him.” (Isaiah 1:2-4)

The background of the Song of Moses and the words of Isaiah gives a greater understanding of Hebrews 1:1-2, and, at the same time, gives clarity to the author’s warning in Hebrews 10:25 concerning the judgment that Moses foretold. In this passage (10:25), the author of the Book of Hebrews warns his readers about the impending destruction of Judaism. The author writes:

Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more **as you see the Day approaching** (AD 70, 10:25).¹³

^e Hebrew to *Sheol*

^e Hebrew to *Sheol*

^k Deut. 32:21

The “Day approaching” is not Sunday, but rather it is the complete overthrow of apostate Judaism by the Romans in AD 70. The Book of Malachi announces the coming of Elijah “before that great and dreadful day.” John the Baptist came as the Elijah of Malachi. The following chart should assist us in grasping the significance of Hebrews 10:25:

Malachi 4:5-6

Matthew 3:7

See, I will send you the prophet Elijah **before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes.** ⁶ He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse.

But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: “You brood of vipers! Who warned you **to flee from the coming wrath?**”

Paul, too, addresses this great day of God’s wrath in his First and Second Epistle to Timothy. Listen to Paul: “The Spirit clearly says that in later times (*ἐν ὑστέροσ καιροῖς, en hysteros kairois*) some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons” (1 Timothy 4:1). Again, in his Second Epistle, he writes: “But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days (*ἐν ἐσχάταις ἡμέραις, en eschatais hēmeras*)” (2 Timothy 3:1). To the Corinthians, he penned the following words: “For this world in its present form is passing away” (1 Corinthians 7:30).

It is in this same vein that the author of Hebrews alerts his readers to the passing away of this Old Covenant world of Judaism: “By calling this covenant ‘new,’ he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will **soon disappear**” (Hebrews 8:13).¹⁴ This expression (“**last days**”) refers to the time frame of the first century, not the twenty-first century. The author of Hebrews closes his book with a reference to the “heavenly Jerusalem” (12:22). The writer deals with the “new heaven” and the “new earth” that represents the New Covenant world, not the physical universe. The author writes with conciseness as he describes the full-bloom of God’s coming kingdom, which kingdom John also depicts as he follows up his remarks concerning the downfall of “Babylon” in Revelation 18 and 21:

But you have **come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God.** You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, ²³ to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, ²⁴ **to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant,** and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. (12:22-24)

¹³ ὄσῳ βλέπετε ἐγγίζουσιν τὴν ἡμέραν, *hosō blepete engizousan tēn hēmeran*, “as you see the day approaching.”

¹⁴ ἐγγὺς ἀφανισμοῦ, *engys aphanismou*, “(is) near vanishing.”

This “heavenly Jerusalem” is the one that John describes in the Book of Revelation:

Then I saw a **new heaven and a new earth**, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. ² I saw the Holy City, the **new Jerusalem**, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴ He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for **the old order of things has passed away.**” (Revelation 21:1-4)

This “new heaven and a new earth” (21:1) is identical to the “new heavens and new earth” that Isaiah (65:17), seven hundred years earlier, wrote about. Isaiah carved the following words into the minds of his readers about the ultimate glory of God’s initiative in the redemption of humanity: “Behold, **I will create new heavens and a new earth.** The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind” (Isaiah 65:17). In 65:1-16, Isaiah describes the utter destruction of the kingdom of Judah and then announces the “new heavens and a new earth.” The “new heavens and a new earth” represents the New Covenant world and “the first heaven and the first earth” represents the Old Covenant world of Judaism.

The following chart should assist us in comprehending the significance of Isaiah’s remarks about the abolition of the old covenant world of Judaism and the incoming of the new covenant world. Jesus words placed side-by-side with Isaiah’s words helps to clarify the import of utter destruction of Judah for their rejection of Jesus as God’s Messiah:

Isaiah 65:6-7

“See, it stands written before me: I will not keep silent but will pay back in full; I will pay it back into their laps— ⁷ both your sins and the sins of your fathers,” says the LORD. “Because they burned sacrifices on the mountains and defied me on the hills, I will measure into their laps the full payment for their former deeds.”

Matthew 23:34-36

Therefore I am sending you prophets and wise men and teachers. Some of them you will kill and crucify; others you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town. ³⁵ And so upon you will come all the righteous blood that has been shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Berekiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. ³⁶ I tell you the truth, all this will come upon this generation. ³⁷ O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her

wings, but you were not willing. ³⁸ Look, your house is left to you desolate.

In the destruction of Judah in AD 70, God poured out His wrath upon the nation of Judah for their former deeds. In order to appreciate more fully the words of Jesus in Matthew 24 and 25, it is necessary to reread His statement, as just cited, about the “time of the end” of Judaism in Matthew 23. Repetition is one of the three laws of learning. Again, the remarks of Jesus set the tone for the response of His Apostles:

Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You build tombs for the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous. ³⁰ And you say, ‘If we had lived in the days of our forefathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’ ³¹ So you testify against yourselves that you are the descendants of those who murdered the prophets. ³² Fill up, then, the measure of the sin of your forefathers! ³³ You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell? ³⁴ Therefore I am sending you prophets and wise men and teachers. Some of them you will kill and crucify; others you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town. ³⁵ And so upon you will come all the righteous blood that has been shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Berekiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. ³⁶ I tell you the truth, all this will come upon **this generation**. ³⁷ O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. ³⁸ Look, **your house is left to you desolate.** ³⁹ For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, ‘**Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.**’^d (Matthew 23:29-39)

Approximately, seven hundred years after Isaiah issued his prophecy, Jesus spoke of the house of Judah as being “left to you desolate.” In Matthew 23 and 24, Jesus refers to Daniel 9 concerning the abomination of desolation, which had its fulfillment in AD 70. Listen once more to Jesus as he predicts the overthrowing of the Holy City:

So when you see standing in the holy place ‘**the abomination that causes desolation,**^b **spoken of through the prophet Daniel**—let the reader understand—¹⁶ then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. ¹⁷ Let no one on the roof of his house go down to take anything out of the house. ¹⁸ Let no one in the field go back to get his cloak. ¹⁹ How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! ²⁰ Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath. ²¹ For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again. (Matthew 24:15-21)

“The abomination that causes desolation” refers to AD 70. The entire chapter of Matthew 24 describes the complete overthrow of Jerusalem, which city is called Babylon in Revelation 18. Luke gives additional information from the words of Jesus, words not cited by Matthew. In Luke’s record, Jesus specifically and purposely depicts this war against Jerusalem as involving Rome, which is the beast of Revelation 17:3, 9-12:

^d Psalm 118:26

^b Daniel 9:27; 11:31; 12:11

When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near. ²¹ Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those in the city get out, and let those in the country not enter the city. ²² **For this is the time of punishment in fulfillment of all that has been written.** ²³ How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! There will be great distress in the land and wrath against this people. ²⁴ They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. **Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.** ²⁵ There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. ²⁶ Men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken. ²⁷ At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. ²⁸ When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near. ²⁹ He told them this parable: “Look at the fig tree and all the trees. ³⁰ When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near. ³¹ Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near. ³² I tell you the truth, **this generation**^a will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. ³³ **Heaven and earth will pass away,** but my words will never pass away. (Luke 21:20-33)

Jesus said that “Heaven and earth will pass away.” What does this mean? The heaven and earth depicts the holy city. In Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, He also spoke of the demise of the holy city:

Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. ¹⁸ I tell you the truth, **until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.** (Matthew 5:17-18)

The destruction of Jerusalem would be the fulfillment of all that had been written by the prophets. A citation from Daniel the prophet sets the tone for a clear example of His statements concerning “**until everything is accomplished**” that the prophets had foretold would happen. Listen to Daniel as he reveals to his readers the events that would transpire in the future concerning the coming of the Messiah:

Seventy ‘sevens’^a are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish^b transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy.^c ²⁵ “Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree^d to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One,^e the ruler, comes, there will be seven ‘sevens,’ and sixty-two ‘sevens.’ It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble. ²⁶ After the sixty-two ‘sevens,’ the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing.^f The people of

^a Or *race*

^a Or ‘*weeks*’; also in verses 25 and 26

^b Or *restrain*

^c Or *Most Holy Place*; or *most holy One*

^d Or *word*

^e Or *an anointed one*; also in verse 26

^f Or *off and will have no one*; or *off, but not for himself*

the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed. ²⁷ He will confirm a covenant with many for one ‘seven.’^g In the middle of the ‘seven’^h he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing of the temple he will set up an **abomination that causes desolation**, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him.^{i,j} (Daniel 9:24-27)

BOOK OF JOEL

Another book that sheds light on the “last days” is the Book of Joel (835 BC). The Holy Spirit, through Joel, calls attention to events that will transpire during the final days (“last days”) of the world of Judaism, which “last days,” Jesus explains in Matthew 24, Luke 21, and Mark 13. On the Day of Pentecost, Peter describes the events transpiring on that day as the beginning of the “last days” spoken of by Joel.

In the last days,¹⁵ God says, “**I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams.**” (Acts 2:17)

The Holy Spirit being poured out was the inauguration of the end of the nation of Judah. The full text of Peter’s citation from Joel 2:28-32 sheds light upon this phrase, “in the last days.” One recognizes apocalyptic language concerning the elements of the universe, elements that are metaphorical in meaning, not literal. Listen to Peter’s words as he cites Joel’s prophecy:

In the last days, God says, “I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your **sons and daughters** will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams.¹⁸ Even on my servants, **both men and women**, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.¹⁹ **I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke.**

²⁰ The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious [ἐπιφανῆ, *epiphanē*, manifest] day of the Lord.²¹ And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”^a (Acts 2:17-21)

“Before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord” is employed by Peter of judgment on the nation of Judah for its rejection of Jesus as God’s Messiah. The NIV translates ἐπιφανῆ (*epiphanē*) as “glorious.” This word is a compound adjective composed of ἐπί (*epi*, upon, over) and φανής (*phanēs*, “bright, conspicuous”). This word indicates that the day of the Lord is awesome. The Hebrew equivalent of the Greek word of Joel 2 represents something to be feared or awe-inspiring or terrible. Even though the Greek carries the idea of something brilliant or notable, nevertheless, the idea of the Greek word *epiphanē* is ultimately the same—a dreadful day. The “last days” are equivalent to judgment of Judah in the Book of Revelation.

^g Or ‘week’

^h Or ‘week’

ⁱ Or *it*

^j Or *And one who causes desolation will come upon the pinnacle of the abominable temple, until the end that is decreed is poured out on the desolated city*

¹⁵“**In the last days**,” (ἐν ταῖς ἐσχάταις ἡμέραις, *en tais eschatais hēmerais*)

^a Joel 2:28-32

The events referred to by the author of the Book of Hebrews and the two Epistles of Peter are the fulfillment of the events foretold by Daniel (605 BC). Daniel discloses the remarks of an angel to him as well as the question of one angel to another angel concerning the time of the end. This encounter unfolds the partial mystery of the end of Judah:

“But you, Daniel, close up and seal the words of the scroll until the **time of the end**. Many will go here and there to increase knowledge.”⁵ Then I, Daniel, looked, and there before me stood two others, one on this bank of the river and one on the opposite bank.⁶ One of them said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, “**How long will it be before these astonishing things are fulfilled?**”⁷ The man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, lifted his right hand and his left hand toward heaven, and I heard him swear by him who lives forever, saying, “**It will be for a time, times and half a time.**^b **When the power of the holy people has been finally broken, all these things will be completed.**” (Daniel 12:4-7)

In this section, Daniel speaks of the “time of the end,” not the “end of time” (12:4). Daniel wanted to know “How long will it be before these astonishing things are fulfilled” (12:6)? Michael responds by saying, “It will be for a time, times and half a time.^b **When the power of the holy people has been finally broken**, all these things will be completed” (12:7). The power of the holy people was finally broken in AD 70. Malachi (433 BC), too, writes about the “last days” of Judah:

“**Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble, and that day that is coming will set them on fire,**” says the LORD Almighty. “Not a root or a branch will be left to them.”² But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings. And you will go out and leap like calves released from the stall.³ Then you will trample down the wicked; they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day when I do these things,” says the LORD Almighty.⁴ “Remember the law of my servant Moses, the decrees and laws I gave him at Horeb for all Israel.”⁵ See, **I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes.**⁶ He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse.” (Malachi 4:1-6)

The Elijah of Malachi’s prediction concerned the coming of John the Baptist. Jesus discussed this prophecy on two separate occasions in order to drive home the truth that John the Baptist was none other than the Elijah spoken of by Malachi. We need to listen to Jesus as He unfolds this truth:

Matthew 11:9-15

Matthew 17:9-13

Then what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet.¹⁰ This is the one about whom it is written: ‘I will send my

When the disciples heard this, they fell facedown to the ground, terrified.⁷ But Jesus came and touched them. “Get up,” he said. “Don’t be afraid.”

^b Or a year, two years and half a year

^b Or a year, two years and half a year

messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.”^c ¹¹ I tell you the truth: Among those born of women **there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist**; yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. ¹² From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it. ¹³ For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John. ¹⁴ And if you are willing to **accept it, he is the Elijah who was to come**. ¹⁵ He who has ears, let him hear.

⁸ When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus. ⁹ As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus instructed them, “Don’t tell anyone what you have seen, until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.” ¹⁰ The disciples asked him, “**Why then do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?**” ¹¹ Jesus replied, “To be sure, Elijah comes and will restore all things. ¹² But I tell you, **Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him**, but have done to him everything they wished. In the same way the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands.”

¹³ **Then the disciples understood that he was talking to them about John the Baptist.**

When John the Baptist arrived on the scene, we see him in the wilderness announcing the coming kingdom prophesied by the prophet Daniel (Daniel 2, 7, 9) and, at the same time, announcing that great and dreadful day of the Lord as prophesied by the prophet Malachi (Malachi 4:1-6). Matthew records the beginning of John the Baptist’s ministry with the announcement of the kingdom that Daniel had foretold:

In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea ² and saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.” ³ This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah: “A voice of one calling in the desert, ‘**Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.**’”^a (Matthew 3:1-3)

Following this announcement of God’s kingdom, John addresses the religious leaders about the coming wrath of God, which the prophets foretold:

But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: “You brood of vipers! **Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath?** ⁸ Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. ⁹ And do not think you can say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. ¹⁰ The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown

^c Mal. 3:1

^a Isaiah 40:3

into the fire. ¹¹I baptize you with^b water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. ¹²His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and **burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire.**” (Matthew 3:7-12)

Just a casual reading of Malachi 4 and Matthew 3 reveal parallels between the two accounts—“that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes” by Malachi is parallel to John’s “the coming wrath.” When the “coming wrath” begins, it will last for **forty-two months**, which is equivalent to **1,260 days**, which is equivalent to Daniel’s “**time, times and half a time**” (Daniel 12:7). The Book of Revelation sheds light on the words of Daniel. Just a cursory reading of Chapters 11 and 12 of John’s Revelation, and we are immediately informed that the “time, times and half a time” are equivalent to three and one-half years, which also corresponds to the forty-two months or 1,260 days (Revelation 11:1-3). According to John, during the final days of Judah, the church fled into the wilderness for the “time, times and half a time,” which is the same time frame that Daniel writes about (Daniel 12:7). John also calls attention to the 1,260 days in Revelation 12:6. The following charts set forth the parallels between Revelation and Daniel:

Revelation 11:1-3

I was given a reed like a measuring rod and was told, “Go and measure the temple of God and the altar, and count the worshipers there. ² But exclude the outer court; do not measure it, because it has been given to the Gentiles. They will **trample on the holy city for 42 months.** ³ And I will give power to my two witnesses, and **they will prophesy for 1,260 days,** clothed in sackcloth.”

Revelation 12:6

The woman fled into the desert to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for **1,260 days.**

Daniel 12:7

The man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, lifted his right hand and his left hand toward heaven, and I heard him swear by him who lives forever, saying, “**It will be for a time, times and half a time.**”^b When the power of the holy people has been finally broken, all these things will be completed.”

Revelation 12:13

The woman was given the two wings of a great eagle, so that she might fly to the place prepared for her in the desert, where she would be taken care of for a **time, times and half a time**, out of the serpent’s reach.

^b Or *in*

^b Or *a year, two years and half a year*

When would these forty-two months take place? John identifies the events as taking place when the holy city was overrun by the Gentiles (Rome). Observe, once more, John's remarks as he captures the great day of God's wrath upon Judah:

But exclude the outer court; do not measure it, because it **has been given to the Gentiles**. They will **trample on the holy city** for **42 months**.³ And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for **1,260 days**, clothed in sackcloth. (11:2-3)

This is the same event that Daniel writes about, as mentioned above, in the conclusion of his book. The events that John describes are associated with the events that Joel describes as the "last days." **Remember the words of John as he elaborates on these forty-two months as "a time, times and half a time":**

When the dragon saw that he had been hurled to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child.¹⁴ The woman was given the two wings of a great eagle, so that she might fly to the place prepared for her in the desert, where she would be taken care of for **a time, times and half a time**, out of the serpent's reach. (Revelation 12:13-14)

Jesus addresses this event in His signs of the end of the Jewish age:

When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near.²¹ Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those in the city get out, and let those in the country not enter the city.²² For this is the time of punishment in fulfillment of all that has been written.²³ How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! There will be great distress in the land and wrath against this people.²⁴ They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. **Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled**.²⁵ "There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea.²⁶ Men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken.²⁷ At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.²⁸ When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near." (Luke 21:20-28)

Eusebius (AD 260-340) bears testimony that the church in Jerusalem, before the war, by divine testimony, fled to the mountain country of Pella, which is exactly what Jesus foretold as recorded by Matthew. Eusebius reports:

The people of the church in Jerusalem were commanded by an oracle given by revelation before the war to those in the city who were worthy of it to depart and dwell in one of the cities of Perea which they called Pella. To it those who believed on Christ migrated from Jerusalem, that when holy men had altogether deserted the royal capital of the Jews and the whole land of Judaea, the judgment

of God might at last overtake them for all their crimes against the Christ and his Apostles, and all that generation of the wicked be utterly blotted out from among men.¹⁶

Remember, Joel, too, addresses this “great and terrible day of the Lord” (Joel 2:28-32). When will this event take place? As stated above, another piece of this puzzle is found in Malachi. Malachi (433 BC) associates this “great and dreadful day of the LORD” (Malachi 4:5) with the coming of Elijah.¹⁷ Malachi writes:

See, I will send you the prophet Elijah **before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes.**⁶ He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse. (4:5-6)

Again, “that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes” is the same as “time of the end” spoken of by Daniel (Daniel 12:4) and also by John the Baptist to the religious leaders with his penetrating words of rebuke: “Who warned you to **flee from the coming wrath**” (Matthew 3:7)? According to Malachi, Elijah would come before the power of the people would be finally broken. We should not forget that Jesus Himself cites the prophecy from Malachi about Elijah as having its fulfillment in the coming of John the Baptist (Matthew 11:10). Listen once more to Jesus as He unfolds the intent of the Holy Spirit with the following comments about the role and ministry of John the Baptist:

This is the one about whom it is written: ‘**I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.**’^c ¹¹ I tell you the truth: Among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than **John the Baptist**; yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. ¹² From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it. ¹³ For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John. ¹⁴ And if you are willing to accept it, **he is the Elijah who was to come.** ¹⁵ He who has ears, let him hear. (11:10-15)

LAST DAYS BY NEW TESTAMENT AND OLD TESTAMENT AUTHORS

Paul, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, in writing his First Epistle to Timothy, uses a different expression to describe the “last days” of the world of Judaism. About AD 64, he writes: “The Spirit clearly says that **in later times**¹⁸ some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons” (1 Timothy 4:1). In Paul’s final letter to Timothy, he writes: “But mark this: There will be terrible times in the **last days**” (2 Timothy

¹⁶Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, Books 1-5, III, v. 3-5 Loeb Classical Library, Vol., 153, edited by Jeffrey Henderson and with an English translation by Kirsopp Lake (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1926, 2001), 201.

¹⁷**Since this subject is misunderstood by so many sincere Christians, repetition is necessary in order to drive home the true meaning of the “last days.”**

^c Mal. 3:1

¹⁸ “in latter times” (ἐν ὑστέρῳ καιροῖς, en Justeros kairois)

3:1).¹⁹ Whether we say “in later times” or “in last days,” we are saying one and the same thing. James,²⁰ the Lord’s brother, also speaks of the “last days” as he issues his rebuke against those who have accumulated wealth without regard to the things of God:

Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days [ἐν ἐσχάταις ἡμέραις, *en eschatais hēmerais*]. (James 5:3)

The end of their age was just around the corner. Peter, too, addresses the “last days” in his First Epistle (AD 60s, before Nero’s death in AD 68).²¹ Peter speaks of those “kept by the power of God” in the “last time”: “Who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time”²² (1 Peter 1:5; see also Hebrews 9:28). Again, in 1:20, Peter writes: “He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times”²³ for your sake.” In his Second Epistle, he once more calls notification to the “last days” of Israel’s demise: “First of all, you must understand that in the last days²⁴ scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires” (2 Peter 3:3).

Jude, too, speaks of the “last days” of Israel with the following words: “They said to you, ‘In the last times’²⁵ there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires” (Jude 18). John also refers to “time of the end” of Judaism when he writes: “Dear children, this is the last hour;²⁶ and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour”²⁷ (1 John 2:18). Luke, like Matthew, records John the Immerser’s message about the coming wrath: “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath?” (Luke 3:7). Many of the disciples of Jesus recalled the words of John and Jesus concerning the “coming wrath” upon the holy city (Jerusalem) and left the city when they saw the armies of Rome approaching Jerusalem.

Book of Matthew

As examined above, I wish to summarize earlier statements by Jesus in order to bring clarity to this study of “last days.” Let us begin again with Matthew as he relates a conversation between Jesus and His disciples about the destruction of Jerusalem. Matthew recalls this interchange:

¹⁹ “in the last days” (ἐν ἐσχάταις ἡμέραις, *en eschatais hēmerais*)

²⁰ Some date the Book of James before AD 50, others after AD 60.

²¹ Nero committed suicide in AD 68 during the month of June.

²² “in the last time” [ἐν καιρῷ ἐσχάτῳ, *en kairō eschatō*]

²³ “in the last times” (ἐπ’ ἐσχάτου τῶν χρόνων, *ep’ eschatou tōn chronōn*, “in the last of the times”)

²⁴ “in the last days” (ἐπ’ ἐσχάτων τῶν ἡμερῶν, *ep’ eschatōn tōn hēmerōn*, “during the last of the days”)

²⁵ “in the last times” (ἐπ’ ἐσχάτου τοῦ χρόνου, *ep’ eschatou tou chronou*, “the last of the time”)

²⁶ “last hour” (ἐσχάτη ὥρα ἐστίν, *eschatē hōra estin*, “last hour it is”)

²⁷ “last hour” (ἐσχάτη ὥρα ἐστίν, *eschatē hōra estin*, “last hour it is”)

As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. ‘Tell us,’ they said, ‘when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?’ (Matthew 24:3)

To this question, Jesus cautioned: “Watch out that no one deceives you” (24:4). What would signal the final days of God’s wrath against the nation of Judah? Jesus called attention to the words of the prophet Daniel in order to indicate how to determine when the “time of the end” for the holy people would arrive. He cites the words of Daniel who had previously spoken of the “time of the end”:

So when you see standing in the holy place ‘the abomination that causes desolation,’^b spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let the reader understand—¹⁶then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. (24:15-16)²⁸

Luke gives additional comments by Jesus concerning the “last days” of Judah:

When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near. ²¹ Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those in the city get out, and let those in the country not enter the city. ²² For this is the time of punishment in fulfillment of all that has been written. (Luke 21:20-22)

Book of Genesis

As stated earlier, for many years, I read the phrase “last days” to depict the last days of the Messianic age, which “last days” have been going on now for about 2000 years. T.V. evangelists and radio preachers are constantly referring to the “**last days**” as applicable to the twenty-first century, not the first century. Yet, on closer scrutiny, we discover that both Old and New Testament writings employ this phrase to refer to the last days of the Old Covenant world of Judaism, not the Christian age. The “last days” of the world of Judaism with its Temple and its rituals came to an end in AD 70 with the destruction of Jerusalem. Jesus clearly states, in His day, “This is the time of punishment in fulfillment of all that has been written” (Luke 21:22).

Even though, I called attention to Genesis 49:10 in the beginning of this chapter, I did not examine this Scripture in detail. An understanding of this statement by Jacob is crucial to a proper understanding of the final overthrow of the house of Judah. Jacob predicted what would happen in the “last days” of the world of Judaism. The destruction of Jerusalem is the fulfillment of Genesis 49:1, 10. As recorded in Genesis 49, Jacob (2006-1886 BC)²⁹ called his

^b Daniel 9:27; 11:31; 12:11

²⁸For a detailed study of Matthew 24, see John L. Bray, *Matthew 24 Fulfilled* (Powder Springs, GA.: American Vision, 1996, 2008).

²⁹As we continue to move back in time, we can discover the date of Jacob’s birth. We are indebted to Moses for a statement concerning a conversation that Jacob had with Pharaoh:

children together to describe the end of Judaism. Moses (1526-1406 BC) records the following words of Jacob concerning the last days of Judaism: “Then Jacob called for his sons and said: ‘Gather around so I can tell you what will happen to you in days to come’” (Genesis 49:1). “In days to come” is translated in the KJV as “in the last days.” The Hebrew reading of this phrase is **בְּאַחֲרֵי הַיָּמִים** (*e' ă-h'ârîṭ' hăy-yā-mîm'*, “in the end of days”). The Septuagint (LXX) renders this phrase as **ἐπ' ἐσχάτων τῶν ἡμερῶν** (*ep eschatōn tōn hēmerōn*, “in the last days”). After Jacob informs each of his children, he then issues the final events that will take place in the “last days” concerning Judah. He says,

The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet,
until he comes to whom it belongs^c and the obedience of the nations is his. (49:10)³⁰

The KJV translates this verse (49:10): “The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet **until Shiloh come**; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.” Whether we translate the Hebrew as “until he comes to whom it belongs” or “until Shiloh come,” both phrases have reference to the coming of the Messiah, that is to say “the Christ.” Jacob is specific concerning the Messiah coming before the last days, or the final days, of the nation of Judah, which nation actually suffered utter destruction by the Romans in AD 70. Jacob says that the scepter (**שֵׁבֶט**, *šē-bēṭ*) would not depart from Judah nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet until “Shiloh” comes. Shiloh **שִׁלֹּחַ**, *šî-lō(h)*, seems to be a word meaning “He to whom it belongs,” and thus refers to the Messiah.³¹

The above analysis of Jacob's words is not out of harmony with other predictions, especially those Messianic promises issued to Abraham. For example, Jacob's grandfather, Abraham (2166-1991 BC),³² received a promise from God concerning the coming of the

And Jacob said to Pharaoh, ‘The days of the years of my pilgrimage are one hundred and thirty years; few and evil have been the days of the years of my life, and they have not attained to the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage.’ (Genesis 47:9)

The sojourn of Jacob began in Egypt (1876 BC) when he stood before Pharaoh, thus the information from Genesis 47:9 furnishes us with the additional knowledge to determine the date of Jacob’s birth. Since Jacob told Pharaoh that he was 130 years old, then if we add 130 years to the date that Jacob entered Egypt (1876 BC), one arrives at the date of 2006 B C as the date of Jacob’s birth.

^c Or *until Shiloh comes*; or *until he comes to whom tribute belongs*

³⁰See Dallas Burdette, “Are You the One Who Was to Come?” for a more detailed study of “until he comes to whom it belongs” [ONLINE]. Available from www.freedominchrist.net.

³¹For a detailed study on “Shiloh,” see David L. Cooper, *Messiah: His Nature and Person* (Los Angeles, California: Biblical Research Society, 1933), 46-54.

³²Still moving back, we learn from Genesis 21:5 that Abraham was born in 2166 BC. Moses writes: “Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.” Since Isaac was born in 2066 BC, then by adding 100 to Isaac’s birth, then we arrive at a date of 2166 BC for the birth of Abraham. Moses not only informs his readers about the birth of Abraham, but he also records the departure of Abraham from Haran to Canaan as occurring in the year 2091 BC: “So Abram left, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Haran” (Genesis 12:4). If we begin the patriarchal period with Abram (Abraham), then we are considering a time span from 2091 BC when he left Haran until the time when the children of Israel entered Egypt in 1876 BC. This calculation (2091 minus 1876) is a total of 215

Messiah. Moses records this promise in the Book of Genesis. Listen to Moses as he narrates this promise to Abraham:

The LORD had said to Abram, “Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you. ²I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. ³I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.” (Genesis 12:1-3)

This pledge is repeated again in Genesis 18:18:

Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him. Once more, God repeats this guarantee: “**through your offspring^b all nations on earth will be blessed**, because you have obeyed me.” (22:18)³³

Later, God confirmed the promise to Isaac:

I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and will give them all these lands, and through **your offspring^a all nations on earth** will be blessed, ⁵ because Abraham obeyed me and kept my requirements, my commands, my decrees and my laws. ⁶ So Isaac stayed in Gerar. (26:4-6)

This promise is reaffirmed to Jacob:

Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. **All peoples on earth** will be blessed through you and your offspring. (28:14)

Remember, toward the end of his earthly life, Jacob called his children together and issued the prophetic promise concerning the ultimate end of the kingdom of Judah. God made a promise, as stated above to Jacob's grandfather, Abraham, that in his grandfather's seed (עַרְבֵי, z#r^u) all nations would be blessed. Ultimately, the promise made to Satan (3:14-15) and to Abraham (12:3; 18:18; 22:17-18) would come through an individual (Jesus) who would bring this universal blessing, who is described as “her seed.” Moses reveals God’s conversation to Satan: “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between **your offspring and hers**” (3:15). The One who is here called the ‘seed of the woman’ is later called the ‘seed of Abraham.’ Paul, over two thousand years after Abraham, referred to God’s promise to Abraham this way:

years. Some see the patriarchal period as extending from the time Abram left Haran in 2091 BC down to the death of Joseph (1805 BC), which is recorded in Genesis 50:26. If we accept this latter span, then we would have a period of 286 years for the patriarchal period.

^b Or *seed*

³³For an excellent commentary on “The Seed of Abraham,” see David L. Cooper, *Messiah: His Nature and Person*, 37-41.

^a Or *seed*

The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say ‘**and to seeds,**’ meaning many people, but ‘**and to your seed,**’^a meaning one person, who is Christ. (Galatians 3:16)³⁴

Paul refers to a phrase in Genesis 3:15 in his Epistle to the Roman Christians (Romans 16:20) as having fulfillment in its totality in the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. Take note of Paul’s words as he recalls God’s conversation to Satan: “The God of peace will **soon crush Satan** under your feet” (16:20). The author of the Book of Hebrews also testifies to the finality of the crushing of Satan with the coming of Christ in judgment on apostate Jerusalem:

So Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and **he will appear a second time**, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him. (Hebrews 9:28)

This “coming” is the second coming. In the removal of apostate Jerusalem, God made way for the final defeat of Satan in His shaking of the old heavens and earth (the world of Judaism) and the creation of new heavens and a new earth (the body of Christ, or the church). Pay attention once more to the author of Hebrews as he writes:

But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly,²³ to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect,²⁴ to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.²⁵ See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, how much less will we, if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven?²⁶ At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, “**Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens.**”^c²⁷ The words “once more” indicate the removing of what can be shaken—that is, created things—so that what cannot be shaken may remain. (Hebrews 12:22-27)³⁵

When did God “shake not only the earth but also the heavens”? The Hebrew author identifies the above events as taking place “at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself” (9:26). “**The end (completion) of the ages**” is from the Greek **ἐπὶ συντελείᾳ τῶν αἰώνων** (*epi synteleia tōn aiōnōn*), which can also be translated as, “at the **completion** of the ages.” Jesus accomplished this feat during the final phase of the demise of the kingdom of Judah. In order to comprehend more fully this phrase “**last days**,” it would be helpful to look at a few more Old Testament prophecies as well as New Testament citations to grasp the significance of this phrase by the writers of both Testaments.

^a Gen. 12:7; 13:15; 24:7

³⁴ For a more detailed study of Galatians 3:16, see Dallas Burdette, “Overview of the Book of Galatians,” in Dallas Burdette, *From Legalism to Freedom: A Spiritual Narrative of Liberation* (Longwood, FL: Xulon Press, 2008), 299-343.

^c Haggai 2:6

³⁵“The church (**ἐκκλησία**) of the firstborn (**πρωτοτόκων**) is in the Greek text **ἐκκλησία πρωτοτόκων** (*ekklēsia prōtotokōn*, “a church of firstborn [ones]”).

Book of Isaiah

One of the first Scriptures that I learned as a boy preacher was Isaiah 2:1-4. Unfortunately, no one called attention to Chapters 3—4 in analyzing 2:2. The “last days,” in our interpretation, included the first century as well as the twentieth century (I started my preaching ministry in January 1951).³⁶ For many believers, today, the “last days” also include the twenty-first century. In my early training, we divided the time periods into three periods—Patriarchal, Mosaic, and Christian. We assumed that the phrase “last days” applied to the Christian age and continues to the supposed “end of time,” which we called the end of this world. Many Christians in this same fellowship as well as many other fellowships still maintain that Christians are, at the present time, still living in the “last days.”

A close scrutiny of Isaiah reveals that he is writing about the final days of Israel’s demise. Isaiah writes about the events that would occur during the final days of Israel prestige, or power, which power Daniel spoke of as coming to an end (Daniel 12:7). One of the ways that God’s people know that the kingdom came into existence in the first century is that the kingdom would be established during the “last days,” or the final days of Israel’s power. Don Preston, author and minister, correctly states: “The *last days* would already be in existence when the kingdom would be established.”³⁷ Isaiah foretold the coming of the Messiah and the establishment of His messianic kingdom during the final days of the kingdom of Judah. Listen to him as he pens his futuristic words:

In the last days the mountain of the LORD’s temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. ³ Many peoples will come and say, “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths.” The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. ⁴He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore. (Isaiah 2:2-4)

“In the last days” (בְּאַחֲרֵי הַיָּמִים, *bē’ā-h’ā-rîṭ’ hāy-yā-mîm*) **is not a prediction of the “last days” of the church, but rather, it refers to the last days of Israel’s existence.** The Septuagint (LXX) translates the Hebrew text as ταῖς ἐσχάταις ἡμέραις (*tais eschatais hēmerais*, the last days), which the KJV translates as **“the last days.”** In Chapter 2, Isaiah speaks of God judging Israel, which judgment ultimately took place in AD 70. In order for us to observe the impact of 2:2-4, we should look at Isaiah’s statements in 2:9-11 and 2:19-21. It is significant that Jesus alludes to and cites both of these Scriptures as having reference to Jerusalem in His day (see Luke 21:24; 23:28-31). Pay attention to Isaiah as he describes the reaction of men and women who face persecution from the Romans in the first century, which army God employed to wreak havoc upon a nation that rejected His Messiah:

³⁶See Dallas Burdette, “Dallas Burdette’s Pilgrimage of Faith,” in Dallas Burdette, *From Legalism to Freedom: A Spiritual Narrative of Liberation* (Longwood, FL: Xulon Press, 2008), 1-26.

³⁷Don Preston, *The Last Days Identified* (Ardmore, OK: JaDon Productions, 2004), 25.

So man will be brought low and mankind humbled—do not forgive them.^{a10}Go into the rocks, hide in the ground from dread of the LORD and the splendor of his majesty!¹¹The eyes of the arrogant man will be humbled and the pride of men brought low; the LORD alone will be exalted in that day. (Isaiah 2:9-11)

Men will flee to caves in the rocks and to holes in the ground from dread of the LORD and the splendor of his majesty, when he rises **to shake the earth.**²⁰In that day men will throw away to the rodents and bats their idols of silver and idols of gold, which they made to worship. They will flee to caverns in the rocks and to the overhanging crags from dread of the LORD and the splendor of his majesty, when he rises **to shake the earth.** (2:19-21)³⁸

Jesus, as stated above, cites Isaiah 2:19 as having fulfillment in the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. Following Luke's report of Jesus' reference to the end of Judaism in Luke 21, he again refers to comments by Jesus concerning Israel's rejection of Him as their Messiah (Luke 23:28-30). Jesus alludes to Isaiah 2:19 on His way to crucifixion. Luke reports his comments and Jesus' words:

As they led him away, they seized Simon from Cyrene, who was on his way in from the country, and put the cross on him and made him carry it behind Jesus.²⁷ A large number of people followed him, including women who mourned and wailed for him.²⁸ Jesus turned and said to them, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children.²⁹ For the time will come when you will say, 'Blessed are the barren women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!'³⁰ Then they will say to the mountains, 'Fall on us!' and to the hills, 'Cover us!'^a
³¹ For if men do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?" (Luke 23:26-31)

This statement in Luke 23:30 is also a reflection from Isaiah 2:19-21. Even in Isaiah 2:9-11, which words relate to Israel's final days that are commonly referred to as "the last days." We observe that Jesus alludes to Isaiah 2:9-11, 19-21 in Luke 23:28-30. Also, John captures the words of Isaiah (2:19-21) in the sixth seal in the Book of Revelation (Revelation 6:12-17), which also depicts the overthrow of apostate Jerusalem. Listen to John as he pens the following description of the events transpiring during the final days of Israel's political power:

I watched as he opened the sixth seal. There was a great earthquake. The sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair, the whole moon turned blood red,¹³ and the stars in the sky fell to earth, as late figs drop from a fig tree when shaken by a strong wind.¹⁴ The sky receded like a scroll, rolling up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place.¹⁵ Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains.¹⁶ They called to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!"¹⁷ For **the great day of their wrath has come**, and who can stand?" (Revelation 6:12-17)

^a Or *not raise them up*

³⁸See also Hebrews 12:22-27.

^aHosea 10:8; Isaiah 2:19; Revelation 6:16.

From Isaiah 2:2-4, we know that the Messianic kingdom would come into existence during the final days of Judah's power. Not only is Isaiah 2:2 dealing with the final days, but 2:9-11 and 2:19-21 also describe the final days that Jesus speaks about as recorded in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21. Chapters 2—4 of Isaiah are simply reiterations of God's promise in Deuteronomy 32 concerning punishment for disobedience, which chapter is commonly known as the Song of Moses that is descriptive of Israel's final downfall in AD 70. John, too, in his Book of Revelation, speaks of the seven last plagues, which, when finished, represented the final overthrow of Judaism. What John writes about is parallel to Daniel 12. John portrays the event of Judah's downfall this way:

I saw in heaven another great and marvelous sign: seven angels with the seven last plagues³⁹—last, because with them God's wrath is completed.² And I saw what looked like a sea of glass mixed with fire and, standing beside the sea, those who had been victorious over the beast and his image and over the number of his name. They held harps given them by God³ and sang the song of Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb: “Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the ages.⁴ Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.” (Revelation 15:1-4)

CONCLUSION

This study has sought to examine the Scriptures concerning the “last days” objectively. Any examination of Scripture must endeavor to be true to the context, not tradition. The “**last days**” had to do with the destruction of apostate Judah in AD 70, not the end of time. The “**last days**” is appropriately called “the time of the end” by Daniel (Daniel 12:4). Just a cursory reading of the prophecies in the Old Testament writings reveal the shaking of the old heavens and earth (Judaism) and the coming of the new heavens and a new earth (the church). The views set forth in this chapter as well as the three precious chapters dealing with the Book of Revelation go against the traditional views advocated by many Christians. As we seek to unravel the true meaning of the expression “last days,” we should remember the words of Luke in the Book of Acts:

Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true. (Acts 17:11)

³⁹The “**seven last plagues**” are reminiscent of God's punishment against the children of Jacob, which Moses sets forth in the Book of Leviticus (Chapter 26), which is equivalent to Deuteronomy 32. Moses speaks of punishing the nation for disobedience this way: “I will punish you for your sins seven times over” (Leviticus 26:18, 21, 24, 25, 27-39). “**Seven plagues**” are equivalent to “**seven times over**.”