

## Prophetic Last Days

April 14, 2022

### The Last Days

What are the prophetic *last days*? When did they start and when will they end?

- In my early years I was taught that *the last days* of Scripture would cover a seven-year period, usually referred to as the tribulation (from Matthew 24:21-22), and that they would start after the rapture. However, I was also taught that *the signs of the times* (i.e., fulfillment of prophetic Scripture associated with the tribulation) would be apparent before the rapture, and that we should be on the lookout for *the beast* of the book of Revelation and his number 666 (Revelation 13:1-18). The nationhood of Israel in 1948 was considered to be a sign of the times (Christians have considered many events over the last two millennia as being signs of the times). I believe this teaching is incorrect.
- Later, I was taught that the last days started at Pentecost (Acts 2:14-21) and that they were interrupted by the revelation of the mystery. I believe this is partly true.
- So, I looked up *last days*, *latter days*, *last day*, *last hour*, *the day of the Lord*, and related terms in my concordances. I found that the prophetic *last days* refer to the promised kingdom that Israel is waiting for, the events leading up to its establishment, and the final judgments.
  - The last prophecies about Israel's promised kingdom and its coming Messiah were about 400 years before the birth of Jesus (according to generally accepted date estimates by Bishop Ussher).
  - The prophetic last days actually started with the birth of Jesus, who will be the King of the Jews (Hebrews 1:1-3; Isaiah 7:14; Micah 5:2). Also, John the Baptist (referred to as Elijah in prophecy) was prophesied to prepare the way for the Messiah before the great and terrible (dreadful) *day of the Lord* (Malachi 3:1; 4:4-6; Matthew 11:7-14; 17:9-13; Mark 1:2-4).
  - The prophetic last days will end with the great white throne judgment at the end of Christ's millennial reign (John 5:28-29; 12:48; Revelation 20:11-15). All of the enemies of God and His Son, including sin and death, will be destroyed.
  - Therefore, the seven-year period is only one small part of the last days.

The prophetic last days have been fulfilled through the resurrection of Christ, the initial pouring out of the Holy Spirit in power (Acts 2:1-18), and the continued rejection by His people (culminating in the stoning of Stephen—Acts 7:51-60). They were interrupted by the revelation of the mystery by Christ through the Apostle Paul. They will resume after the rapture of the members of the body of Christ.

### Israel's Nationhood

Many Christian theologians, pastors, teachers, and writers point to the re-establishment of the nation of Israel in 1948 as fulfillment of prophecy. I don't believe this is the case for the following reasons (and more, based on the distinctions between prophecy and the mystery):

- The current nation of Israel occupies only a portion of its historical promised land that God gave to the people of Israel after Moses took them out of Egypt (Ezekiel 37:24-25).
- God has not gathered His people to the land of Israel as prophesied, for there are millions of Jews living in nations other than Israel (Ezekiel 36:24).

- Israel is a political nation and, as such, is no different than any other nation today. It does not consider itself to be God’s chosen nation and it does not worship God in any manner that resembles its historical establishment by God in the Old Testament nor as prophesied for the future (Ezekiel 36:25-27).
- The current nation does not and cannot define itself according to twelve tribes, which will be the case when God restores Israel (Ezekiel 37:21-23; Matthew 19:27-28; Revelation 7:4-8; 14:1-3). The people as a whole consider themselves to be Israelis with no direct connection to the Israelites of the Bible.<sup>1</sup>
- Israel has not known peace as described in Scripture, as it has experienced conflicts throughout its history and has depended on a strong military instead of the power of God for its national security (Isaiah 26:12; Jeremiah 33:6-7; Ezekiel 37:26).

It has been more than 70 years since Israel was established as a sovereign nation—through their own political and military revolution (instead of by the miraculous hand of God)—and yet nothing has changed. A lot should have happened by now if that event was in fulfillment of prophecy.

### **A Word of Caution About Studying Prophecy**

An incredible amount of material has been written about the events, kingdoms, and principal characters of *the last days*. So, not only is a great deal of time devoted to researching them, but much time is spent by believers reading and studying the material, listening to sermons, and attending prophecy conferences about them. I spent much time in the past on this subject and have been doing so again in the last couple of years (primarily to understand and teach the differences between prophecy and the mystery). I am convinced, however, that there are better ways to spend our time.<sup>2</sup> Such studies include a great deal of conjecture or speculation, and so much of it devolves into opinion. Furthermore, it takes time away from studying and learning about what we need to know about what God Has done for us and is doing for us through Christ, and how we ought to live each day in our service to God and our Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>3</sup> If our focus is on the future, we will lose sight of today and our usefulness to God will be diminished.

With that said, I have felt the need to provide some basic information that has helped me, and I hope will help others, compare what is being taught today in our Christian churches with what Scripture actually says. It is quite apparent to me that most theologians, Bible scholars, pastors, teachers, and writers do not understand the difference between prophecy, or that which has been spoken *since* the world began, and the mystery, or that which was kept hidden (secret) in God *since before* the world began until revealed to us by Christ through the Apostle Paul.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I learned this from the son of former Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin with whom I attended graduate school in Colorado in the late 1970s.

<sup>2</sup> Paul devoted only parts of two letters to discussions on the prophetic last days, and that was to point out false teaching and to reassure the Thessalonian brethren that they were not destined to endure those times (I Thessalonians 5:1-11; II Thessalonians 2:1-15).

<sup>3</sup> See my studies **Walk Worthy, Fruit of the Spirit, Let Us Be Humble, Prayer, Christian Suffering, Our Way or God’s Way**, and others that address our daily walk.

<sup>4</sup> See my studies **The Mystery (God’s Secret Plan), The Two Messages of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and Our Lord Jesus Christ** that include discussions on the mystery and how it differs from prophecy.

An understanding of this critical difference enables us to realize that we are living during the dispensation of the grace of God (Ephesians 3:1-12) and that no events of the prophetic last days are occurring today—*not one*. It will show that there, indeed, will be an event often referred to as *the rapture* and that it will occur *before* the prophetic last days resume. Yes, *before they resume*, because they were interrupted by God, according to His eternal plan, sometime after the stoning of Stephen (perhaps with the salvation of Saul—later known as the Apostle Paul—on the road to Damascus) and will not resume until after the rapture.

Brethren, I am convinced that we, as members of the body of Christ, will not live through *any* of the unfulfilled events of the prophetic last days (I Thessalonians 5:1-11). Nor do I believe that we will see the foundation set before the rapture for the events that will occur after the rapture. For example, I don't think that the current sovereign nation of Israel has anything to do with what God will work out through Israel after the rapture because nothing happening in Israel today is in fulfillment of prophecy. Furthermore, I am convinced that we will not see the appearance of the beast or his kingdom before the rapture. Of course, I could be wrong for I readily admit that I don't understand all of these things, but so far not one of *the last day* prophecies have actually been fulfilled (since the ones fulfilled prior to Paul's salvation) despite Christian teaching that is prevalent today.