

The Last Days

Joel and many other OT prophets spoke of "*the last days*" and things that would happen in those days. Many erroneously take the phrase to refer to the last days before Jesus' second coming and the final end and judgment of the world.

But Joel and the prophets were speaking of the "Last Days" of the Mosaic dispensation, and the last days of the physical nation of Israel and Law of Moses as a covenant with God. The Law ended with the cross, and the rituals, the temple sacrifices, genealogical records, and the nations ended in AD 70.

The Last Days (plural)-- The Last Time, Last Days of Judaism

Acts 2:16,17 "But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my spirit..."

Heb 1:2 "God...Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son..."

1 John 2:18 "Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time."

1Peter 1:20 Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you

Acts 3:24 "Yea, and all the prophets...foretold of these days."

The End -- The End Times (End of the Nation of Israel)

Heb. 9:26 "...but now once in the end of the world (age) hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."

1 Cor 10:11 "...and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come."

1 Pet 4:7 "But the end of all things is at hand."

Matt 24:3 "...and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and the end of the world (age)."

Matt 24:6 "...Hear of wars and rumors...; but the end is not yet."
(Mark 13:7, Luke 21:9, "but the end is not immediately")

Matt 24:(13)

Matt 24:14 "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a testimony unto all the nations; and then shall the end come."
(see Col 1:6; 23)

Matt 24:33 "So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it (the end, v. 14) is near, even at the doors." (Rom 13:11)

The Last Day (singular) – Second Coming, Final Judgment of All

John 6:39, 40, 44, 54; John 11:24; John 12:48 (John 5:28-29) This is the Second Coming, the day of the Resurrection, and final judgment. See also

1 Thess 4:13-5:12; 1 Cor 15:23-24; John 14:3

Identification of Revelation Symbols

The **Dragon** - (ch 12:9) is the Devil; The **Beast** is Rome, and is identified by Daniel's prophecy in Daniel 7; The **Second Beast** (the False Prophet) is the religious elements supporting the persecution against God's people (Rev. 13); **Babylon** (the Harlot) is Jerusalem and the Jewish system (See Rev. 11:8); The **Woman on the Moon** (ch. 12) represents the righteous people on earth. (In the OT they are called "the remnant" in the NT it is the church.)

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REVELATION (Background Study)

Four Vital Things to Remember ***

1. It is a Revelation; v. 1

The Apocalypse (*apokalupsis*) "The Revelation" = "an uncovering, or unveiling." The word is used about a dozen times in the NT and related words about another 30 times.

- a. The Revelation is an *uncovering* or *unveiling* of impending events.
- b. The book, by the very definition of its title, is something that is being made known. Many people think the book cannot be understood, but if it is a *revelation*, that means it is something that is now being made known. The language is primarily drawn from the Old Testament.

2. It is a revelation to seven churches in Asia, v. 11, v. 4

John was to write what is revealed to these seven churches.
The book of Revelation is a book of warning.

- a. It warns five of the seven churches of Asia to *repent* or else.
- b. It warns those who had the mark of the beast, (14:9-11); and warns all the wicked of the earth (21:8).

3. A revelation in "signs."

Verse 1 "signified" thus these things are not "literal" but revealed in symbolic language. We should not expect the *devil* to look like a real dragon. Symbols stand for something, like a wedding ring stands for marriage. (Revelation symbols are political cartoons, like the donkey and elephant in our newspapers.)

- a. The language is unlike any other in the New Testament. The message was *signified* ("sign-i-fied") to John. Its use of signs or symbolic language is drawn from the Old Testament. One must study the OT prophets and their language is he is to understand the NT book of Revelation.
- b. "The book speaks not the language of Paul, but the Old Testament prophets Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel."
- c. "The Book of Revelation is the most thoroughly Jewish in its language and imagery of any New Testament book."
- d. Further identification with the OT is the fact that the book shows God's vengeance upon those who killed the prophets (16:6; 18:24; 19:10).

4. A revelation of things "which must shortly happen."

Rev. 1:1 "things which must *shortly* come to pass."
Rev. 1:3 "for the time is at hand."
Rev. 22:6 "the things which must shortly be done"
Rev. 22:10 "for the time is at hand."

The time element is emphasized at the beginning of the book, and lest the reader has forgotten during the course of the book, it is emphasized again at the end of the book, as well as several reminders along the way, i.e., 6:10 "a little season," or "a little while."

Any interpretation of Revelation that ignores these vital points is a wrong interpretation.

Unique Features of the Book

1. Four books about Christ; one about the spread of Christianity; twenty-one teach how to live, and one is prophecy of impending events.
2. The book reveals the *crowning* of those who *overcome*, and it is itself *the crown* of all revelation. An encouragement to those suffering persecution.
3. There are 404 verses in Revelation and 278 reference to O.T. passages.

What Revelation Is About:

Revelation is NOT about the "last days" before Christ's second coming, but about the "*last days*" of Judaism, and the fall of the nation and the destruction of their capital city Jerusalem, the temple, and the Jewish hierarchical system.

It is a parallel to the subject the Lord dealt with in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21. It concerns the vengeance and judgment of God upon the Jewish nation for their rejection of the Son of God and their persecution of Him and the church

Notice especially:

Matthew 23:34-36	Rev. 6:9-10; 16:6
Luke 21:20-22	Rev. 18:20-24
Luke 11:47-51	Rev. 16:6
Luke 18:7, Luke 13:33	Rev. 18:24; Rev. 17:6
Luke 13:33; Acts 7:51-52 ..	Rev. 11:8

Author: We understand the Apostle John to be the author of the last book in the New Testament (1:1, 4, 9; 21:2; 22:8). He is "*a brother, and a companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ*" (1:9).

Evidence from within the book indicate that it was written by the same author as that of the Gospel and Epistles which bear John's name. From the nature of the book no other John can measure up to what is demanded by the essence of the book.

Date: The book of Revelation is unique in that the date of its composition affects the interpretation placed upon its message. There are two general views, called "The Early Date" @. AD 64-68) and "The Late Date" @. AD 96).

Some think the book was written about AD 96 during the reign of Domitian (AD 81-96) and that he had banished John to Patmos. The tradition for this however is unreliable and there is no internal support. Those who take the Late Date hold to various views of its interpretation, generally the fall of Rome.

For those who understand the book is dealing with the destruction of the Temple, Jerusalem, and Judaism, a date before AD 70 is essential, and therefore a date from the time of about AD 65-68 seems valid.

Reasons for Holding to the Early Date:

1. The parallel between passages in the Gospel and in Revelation that deal with the destruction of Jerusalem would call for a date before the destruction of the city which occurred in AD 70.
2. Allusions to other apostles still alive besides John at the time of the writing. This would not be true if written about AD 96.
3. The state of Israel and the temple still existed at the time of the writing. These were destroyed in AD 70 and thus the necessity for a date prior to this event.
4. The use of Hebrew phrases and idioms that would be appropriate before the destruction of the nation, but came into disuse after AD 70.
5. The fact that a Jewish persecution of Christians in Asian cities existed at the

time of the writing give strong evidence that the Revelation was written before AD 70. There was no Jewish persecution of foreign Christians following the destruction of the national order and Jerusalem and the temple.

6. In the most ancient version or translation made of the Bible into another language (The Peshitta in the second century into Aramaic) the superinscription says the letter was written by the Apostle John during the reign of Nero.

7. John expected to leave Patmos (in ch. 1) and go and preach among the churches to whom he addressed this letter. That could be expected of a man who was 60 years old, but it could hardly be expected of a man who was 96 years old.

8. One of the problems that John faced as he wrote these letters to the seven churches of Asia were those Judiazers who were attempting to turn Christians back to the Temple worship at Jerusalem. That would not have been true after the destruction of the Temple which brought an end to institutional Judaism in AD 70.

9. The Temple of Herod was still standing, and John makes reference to the temple, when he writes this book, that would not have been true if this were written at a later date.

10. The twelve tribes still existed as the twelve tribes when John wrote this letter. That was not true after AD 70.

11. John says that the visions occurred in the reign of the sixth Roman Emperor. That within itself nails down the date without any doubt. Julius, Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, and Nero. Nero reigned from AD 54 to 68.

12. The code name in chapter 13, the mystical number of 666 is a clear reference to Nero, the then reigning ruler over the empire.

Jesus' Prophecy of the Destruction of the City and Nation

Why did Jesus prophesy so much about the destruction of the Jewish temple, city, and the nation? When this fulfillment came within their own generation (a 40 yr period) it would verify his identity.

Sign of Jesus in Heaven - Sign = "token, indication". (Vine)

The fulfillment of Matt. 24 was a "sign" to the Jews that Jesus, the true Messiah of God, had come into the world, and had been rejected, and was now in heaven, as the NT apostles and prophets taught. (Important see the KJV or ASV Matt. 24:30 which have the exact reading and word-order as in the Greek. The NIV and NASV give an interpretation (from the 3rd century) and completely miss the significance of this verse. This KEY verse informs us of the prophetic value of the Destruction of Jerusalem. It was a SIGN to the Jews who rejected Jesus that He is indeed the Messiah and was resurrected and has ascended to heaven as the apostles preached.)

This Generation -- Complete listing of New Testament usage:

Matt. 11:16, 12:41, 43, 45; 23:36;
Mark 8:12, 38; Luke 11:30, 32, 32, 50, 51, 17:25; Acts 2:40

Shortly ... (ἐν ταχεῖ) occurs 8 times: Luke 18:8; Acts 12:7; Acts 25:4; Acts 22:18; Rom 16:20; 1Tim. 3:14; Rev. 1:1; Rev. 22:16)

At Hand ... NT it occurs 21 times: Matt. 4:17; (see Mark 9:1) 2Tim 4:6, etc.

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