



Are These the Last Days?

If I've been asked once, I've been asked a dozen times during this past month: Are we in the last days? Is this pandemic a sign? What's God saying to us?

Many believers when they think of the "last days" have a very narrow idea in mind, inspired by a scary book or movie. But to grasp "the end times" requires that we have a sense of God's plan for all of time. And when you start to see that history is "his story", then the future won't seem so scary any more.

Icebreaker: Back in the 80s, the End Times were all the rage. One popular book was “88 Reasons Why Jesus Is Coming Back In 1988”, followed in short order by its sequel, “89 Reasons Why...”. What else comes to mind when you think of the 1980s.

1. For the next few weeks, we’re going to offer a crash course in *eschatology*, which means the “study of

_____.”

2. Rather than proving how weird Christians are, eschatology flows out of how Christianity views time and history.

What are the three great worldview clashing for our souls today? And how do each of these view the flowing of time and the meaning of history?

Eastern Philosophy/Religion *Naturalism/Darwinism* *Judeo-Christian Teaching*

3. When most Christians think of the “last days”, what are they thinking about?

4. When – biblically speaking – do/did the last days begin?

“This is what was said through the prophet Joel, ‘And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh.’” (Acts 2:16-17)

5. Let's begin...at the beginning. Why did God create us in the first place?

"So God created humans in his own image. And God blessed them. And God said, 'Be fruitful, and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it.'" (Genesis 1:27-28)

Be fruitful...

To understand what this means, we need to understand what it means to be created *"in the image of God"*. It means we will share with God a...

- _____ Resemblance.
We were created to reflect in our lives God's beauty, goodness, love, and truth.
- _____ Resemblance
We were created with the capacity to reason in some fashion like God does.
- _____ Resemblance
We were created with the ability to seek, know and relate to God.

So let's put all these ideas together.

To live a fruitful life is to use this moral heart of mine, and this thinking brain of mine and this relational spirit of mine to grow God's love, goodness, beauty and truth upon the earth.

Multiply...

What does this mean?

Fill the earth...

God meant this in two ways. What are they?

God's original dream was to "fill the earth with his glory". Has God given up on this dream?

"Truly, as I live...all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord." (Numbers 14:21)

*"For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea."
(Isaiah 11:9)*

"For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." (Habakkuk 2:14)

"Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth. (Matthew 5:5)

Subdue it..

The Hebrew word for this means *“to tread down, to make a path, to press, squeeze, knead, to bring into bondage, to tame what is wild”*

From the clues given in Genesis 2 – 4, what does this word likely mean?

6. This was God’s plan, and we can see that in some fashion, all these thousands of years later, this is precisely what the human race has done. How so?

7. But something’s wrong! What happened to God’s original plan? What happened in Genesis 3?

8. Because of this, what’s the huge problem now? (And we see it in Genesis 4 when what happens?)

9. As evil spreads, what happens next?

“When man began to multiply on the face of the land...The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” (Genesis 6:1,5)

What did God do, which could be described as a *severe mercy*?

10. What do we see happening in Genesis 10 and 11?

11. Why did God divide humanity up into different nations at the Tower of Babel?

12. The Tower of Babel gives us the first bit of Good News in the entire account. It is here that God sets in motion at last his plan to rescue humanity from its evil.

His plan would have several stages to it. We might call them the 'First Days', the 'Middle Days', and the 'Last Days'.

What happened in the "First Days"?

What does God say to Abraham when he first calls him? Why is it significant?

*"I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. **In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.**" (Genesis 12:3)*

What happened in the "Middle Days"?

What did God give to the world through Israel?

- God gave to the world through Israel his _____, through which he taught the world its need of being rescued from its evil.
- Through Israel God gave the world his _____, through which he taught the world how to prepare for its rescue, how to seek him, know him, please him, and worship him.
- Through Israel, God gave to the world his _____ and _____, which paint a picture for the world of how its rescue from evil will be achieved.
- Through Israel gave to the world his _____ who prepared Israel and the nations for the coming of the one who would accomplish this great rescue.
- And then at last, the middle days come to fulfillment when God gave to the world through Israel _____, the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

And from then on we have been in...drum roll...*the last days.*

"Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets. But in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things."
(Hebrews 1:1-2)

And now one thing remains:

“And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world and then the end will come.” (Matthew 24:14)

Three Ways (At Least) That Knowing This Material Helps Us

1. It reminds me that God is _____ he has marked out since the beginning of time.

“I know that you can do all things,
and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.”
(Job 42:2)

2. It reminds me of how all of this ends: the earth will be filled with the _____.

“For behold darkness shall cover the earth and thick darkness the peoples;
but the Lord will arise upon you and his glory will be seen upon you.” (Isaiah 60:2)

3. It reminds me that God has a great _____ for me to do: he calls me to use my gifts, passions and talents to fill this earth with his beauty, goodness, love and truth.

“For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” (Ephesians 2:10)