
PAROUSIA FULFILLED – LAST DAYS OF WHAT?

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INTRODUCTION:

The New Testament contains several references to "last days", "last times" or "last hour", and many people mistakenly believe that it is foretelling the literal, physical destruction of planet Earth and the universe of stars and planets. An earlier article, entitled: "No End of the World" ³, refutes these doomsday scenarios and shows that the Bible is actually referring to the last days or end of a certain period in history... an "age" or "eon".

In order to truly understand this topic of "last days", we need to examine what the scriptures actually say, paying particular attention to the historical context and audience relevance.

JOEL'S PROPHECY OF THE LAST DAYS

Writing some 800 years or more before the birth of Christ, the prophet Joel called upon Judah (ie: the Southern Kingdom, including Jerusalem) to cease their sin and disobedience of God's laws. Speaking through Joel, the Lord God said:

*"And it shall come to pass afterward,
that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh;
your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
your old men shall dream dreams,
and your young men shall see visions.
Even on the male and female servants
in those days I will pour out my Spirit."
(Joel 2:28-32)*

Some 800 years later the things prophesied by Joel were manifested and there was a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus' disciples on the Day of Pentecost. Apostle Peter explained to the assembled crowds in Jerusalem that this was in fulfillment of Joel's prophecy:

*"But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel:
'And in **THE LAST DAYS** it shall be, God declares,
that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh,
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
and your young men shall see visions,
and your old men shall dream dreams;
even on my male servants and female servants
in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy."
(Acts 2:16-18)*

Therefore, under the inspiration of God's Holy Spirit, Peter declares TO THAT FIRST CENTURY CROWD that THEY are living in the "**LAST DAYS**", when Joel's prophecy was being fulfilled.

James Stuart Russellⁱ observed:

"... It is impossible not to recognise the correspondence between the phenomena preceding the day of the Lord as foretold by Joel, and the phenomena described by our Lord as preceding His coming, and the judgment of Israel (Matt. xxiv. 29). The words of Joel can refer only to the last days of the Jewish age or aeon, the sunteleia tou aionos..." (The Parousia¹, p148)

EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

The writer of Hebrews (Paul) also indicated that the **"LAST DAYS"** had come upon that same first century generation:

*"but **IN THESE LAST DAYS** he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world." (Heb 1:2)*

*"...But as it is, he has appeared once for all **AT THE END OF THE AGES** to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." (Heb 9:26b)*

Thus, Paul is telling Jewish Christians in the first century Church that THEY are living in the **"LAST DAYS"** when God spoke to man through his Son, Jesus Christ, and that Jesus came to put away sin by the his sacrificial death on Calvary's cross, in those **last days**, ie: the **"END OF THE AGES"**.

Russell notes:

"An old era, call it Mosaic, Judaic, or Old Testament, was now running out; many things that had seemed immovable and eternal were about to vanish away; and 'the end of the age,' or 'the last times,' had arrived." (The Parousia¹, p264)

Dr John Brown of Edinburgh said:

"The period of the close of the one dispensation and the commencement of the other is spoken of as "the last days," and "the end of the world," and is described as such a shaking of the earth and heavens as should lead to the removal of the things which were shaken. (Hagg. ii. 6; Heb. xiv. 26, 27.)' ("Discourses and Sayings of our Lord", vol i pp199-200, quoted by Russell in The Parousia¹, p353)

PETER'S EPISTLE

In his first general epistle to the first century Christian Church, Peter confirms the view that he and his contemporaries are living in the **"LAST DAYS"**:

*"He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the **LAST TIMES** for the sake of YOU" (1 Peter 1:20)*

JAMES' EPISTLE

Apostle James warned the unbelieving Jews in Jerusalem, his contemporaries, to repent, saying:

*"Your gold and silver have corroded, and their corrosion will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure **IN THE LAST DAYS**." (James 5:3)*

Thus, he agrees with Peter and Paul that he and his contemporaries were living in the **"LAST DAYS"**, and he encourages his flock of first century Christians to be patient:

*"Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains. You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for **THE COMING OF THE LORD IS AT HAND**. Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, **THE JUDGE IS STANDING AT THE DOOR**." (James 5:7-9)*

Thus, in the same chapter of his epistle, James connects the "**LAST DAYS**" with the coming of the Lord (the parousia of Christ), which is "at hand"... "the judge is standing at the door".

Russell relates James warning to the earlier pronouncements of Malachi (the last Old Testament prophet):

"This bold denunciation of the powerful oppressors and robbers of the poor in the last days of the Jewish State recalls to our minds the warnings of the prophet Malachi... That judgment was now drawing nigh, and 'the judge was at the door.'" (The Parousia¹, p292)

MALACHI'S WARNING

"Then I will draw near to you for judgment. I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, against the adulterers, against those who swear falsely, against those who oppress the hired worker in his wages, the widow and the fatherless, against those who thrust aside the sojourner, and do not fear me, says the Lord of hosts." (Mal 3:5)

"For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble. The day that is coming shall set them ablaze, says the Lord of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch." (Mal 4:1)

THE LAST HOUR

Apostle John also confirms that they are in the "LAST DAYS", and even goes so far as to call time... saying "it is **THE LAST HOUR**":

*"Children, it is **THE LAST HOUR**, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is **THE LAST HOUR**." (1 John 2:18)*

THE END OF THE AGES HAS COME

Paul wrote to the Christians in Corinth and again confirmed that they were living in the "**END OF THE AGES**":

*"Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the **END OF THE AGES** has come." (1 Cor 10:11)*

JESUS WEPT OVER JERUSALEM

When Jesus entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, he wept over them because of their spiritual ignorance and unbelief:

'And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, "Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side and tear you down to the ground, you and

your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation." (Luke 19:41-44)

Jesus was prophesying that the last days had come upon Jerusalem, when their enemies would soon surround them and destroy them (which finally happened in AD 70).

PARABLE OF THE WICKED TENANTS

That soon coming judgement upon Jerusalem and national Israel was also the theme of Jesus' parable about the wicked tenants (the vinedressers):

*'And he began to tell the people this parable: "A man planted a vineyard and let it out to tenants and went into another country for a long while. When the time came, he sent a servant to the tenants, so that they would give him some of the fruit of the vineyard. But the tenants beat him and sent him away empty-handed. And he sent another servant. But they also beat and treated him shamefully, and sent him away empty-handed. And he sent yet a third. This one also they wounded and cast out. Then the owner of the vineyard said, "What shall I do? I will send **my beloved son**; perhaps they will respect him." But when the tenants saw him, they said to themselves, "This is the heir. Let us kill him, so that the inheritance may be ours." And they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them? He will come and destroy those tenants and give the vineyard to others.'" When they heard this, they said, "Surely not!" But he looked directly at them and said, "What then is this that is written:*

*"The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone?"*

Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him." ' (Luke 20:9-18)

This parable plainly declares that by crucifying Jesus, national Israel had finally abrogated and extinguished FOREVER their rights to the kingdom of God (ie: the vineyard). Because the wicked tenants killed the "beloved son", *"the owner of the vineyard (God) will come and destroy those tenants and give the vineyard to others"* (v16).

Note that this parable refers to Jesus' PHYSICAL DEATH and SHEDDING OF PHYSICAL BLOOD on the cross of Calvary.

Jesus declared that ALL the blood of the prophets shed by national Israel, throughout their history, would be charged against that last days evil and adulterous generation (his contemporaries):

"so that the blood of all the prophets, shed from the foundation of the world, may be charged against this generation, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who perished between the altar and the sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, it will be required of this generation. " (Luke 11:50-51 also Matt 23:35)

CONCLUSION

The New Testament scriptures, in several places, confirm that first century Christians and their contemporaries were living in the "LAST DAYS", the "END OF THE AGES". Apostle Peter cited Joel's prophecy about the many signs and wonders and outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of

Pentecost, as proof that they were in the "LAST DAYS". Many other New Testament passages also talk about the "LAST DAYS".

Martin captures the epitome of those last days, saying:

*"... the last generations of national Israel stood at the threshold of entering the Promised Land, via a new covenant mediated by their Messiah, but failed to do so as a result of their unbelief. God pronounced judgement upon **that** generation and **that** generation perished in AD 70... The first-century Christians were given the kingdom of God... they accepted what the Jews, as a nation, had rejected." (Behind the Veil of Moses², p318-319)*

Throughout the history of national Israel, God viewed Israel's unbelief and worship of other gods as adultery and fornication. In New Testament days, they continued to commit 'adultery' and 'fornication' when they rejected and crucified their Messiah, and said to the Roman governor: *"We have no king but Caesar!"* (John 19:15)

The New Testament "LAST DAYS" were the final days of the Old Covenant age of Judaism, the Mosaic Law, temple sacrifices and earthly priests... which were but pale shadows of the true perfect sacrifice: Jesus Christ: the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. All praise and honour and glory and power to him!

REFERENCES

Unless otherwise stated, all Bible verses in this study are from the English Standard Version Bible, Bible Gateway – ESV Bible, viewed online July 2019 at: <https://www.biblegateway.com>

1. ***"The Parousia: The New Testament Doctrine of Christ's Second Coming"*** by Russell, James Stuart. International Preterist Association, Bradford PA 2003. (Originally published as *"The Parousia: The New Testament Doctrine of Our Lord's Second Coming"* by T. Fisher Unwin, London, 1887)
2. ***"Behind the Veil of Moses: Piecing Together the Mystery of the Second Coming"*** by Martin, Brian L., Xulon Press 2009.
3. ***"Parousia Fulfilled – No End of World"*** by Higgs, Kenneth N., 2019

[MORE INFORMATION AND FEEDBACK: please email Ken Higgs => info@parousiafulfilled.com]

ENDNOTES

ⁱ **James Stuart Russell** (1816-1895) was a minister in the Congregational Church at Great Yarmouth, Tottenham, Edmonton, and Bayswater. He held to a past fulfillment of the Second Advent and in 1878 he published a book on this subject, originally entitled *"The Parousia: The New Testament Doctrine of Our Lord's Second Coming"*.