

A. An Introductory Note in Definition

The term "last days" "latter days", etc. are used to indicate times following the present unto the consummation of the age. It is hard to realize it but the "last days" begin tomorrow and, in historical perspective, began for others a long time ago. The term is therefore a relative term until things are over or until one can look back a sufficient period of time to determine trends in history. It is true that we are living in the "last times" and that has been true ever since the words were used by the apostles.

Now it becomes obvious that these "last times" are more "last times" than those of sixty years ago...and much more than those of a thousand years ago. I might note that if this has not confused you it speaks very well of your ability to remain unconfused. But without regard to relative states of confusion, it is still true...we are living in the last times and will continue to live in them until the Lord brings the age to a close.

The ideas of the last times are used to challenge, reassure and encourage believers to faithfulness...both in the Bible and in the ministry of the church. We are never told to be fatalistic about them but to view the opportunities of service and worship as being great in the expectation of the Lord's completing the age. We are never told to date them but we are told to walk with intelligence and energy in the face of what God will do.

In our study at Cedar Crest we are simply seeing a bit of what is prophesied in this area. It is not a full-blown course in eschatology (the study of end times and final things). Rather we are having something of a survey treatment in order to orient ourselves to the knowledge of God's work in a way that will motivate us to "occupy till I come." (Luke 19:13, in context)

Our definition, incidentally, in the first paragraph is supported by the biblical use of the term and a good illustration may be had in Genesis 49:1.

B. Old Testament Aspects of the End Times

The Old Testament Scriptures that say something about this are many. In our treatment we will deal with two classes of Scripture references:

1. Passage highlighting a future time of great blessing on the earth:

--Isaiah 2, 11, 65:17...These Isaian passages stress a remarkable situation on earth in which the truth of God is known everywhere, external fear and rebellion are removed, and peace with God and man is the rule, not the exception. I understand how the passages are interpreted by some but for me it is not possible to see them in any way that does not have a literal base for its beginning.

--Micah 4:1-5...Sounds like Isaiah! but shows how 'much this theme plays a part in the Old Testament.

--Zechariah 8:1-8