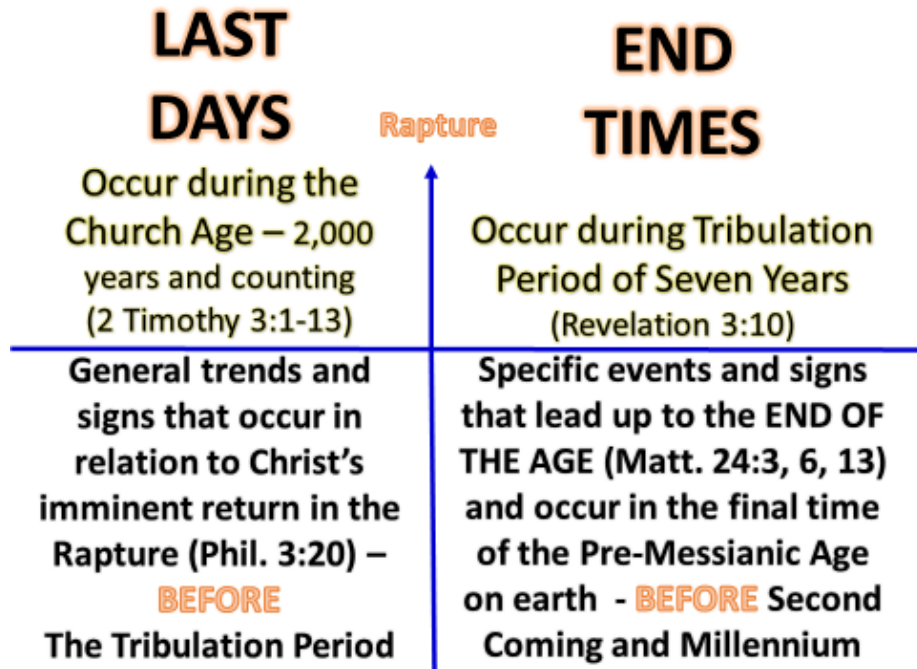


Last Days and End Times (Timing and Terminology)

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Paul viewed this prediction of the “last days” as something that was already occurring during his own day. Other apostles also made this prediction who would sometimes use other synonyms for the Last Days (1 Tim. 4:1; 1 John 2:18; 2 Pet. 3:3; Jude 17-18). When Paul said “This know also ... perilous times shall come” he was not making a prediction that they would occur thousands of years later, but that these troublesome times had already invaded the world scene during the early days of the Church and apostolic Christianity. Paul was CONFIRMING they had already come and this was something the people should know about.

Paul uses the future tense (“shall come”) because from the perspective of the past, they were now living in the predicted time of the Last Days, the time when “the perilous times shall come” upon world. He was not teaching that the Last Days would start up in the 1970’s or at some other particular time in the future when things really got bad. The Christians living in Paul’s day were to know about the “last days” prediction, that these days were already upon them, and the departures from wholesome doctrine and living is what the people were witnessing before their very eyes.

Think about this. Nobody could ever know when the “last days” would officially begin without the information that Paul and the apostles gave about the Last Days. The fact that the early church was already experiencing the signs related to the last days indicates they began when the church began (Pentecost). The world would not gradually morph into the “last days” but the “last days” were said to already be occurring during the days of apostolic Christianity. This means that the world entered the Last Days as a result of Christ’s ascension into Heaven and the birth of the Church (Acts 2). A new period of time began (the last days) before Christ would return in the Rapture.



In other words, with the formation of the Church on the Day of Pentecost, the “last days” clock began ticking and moving its hands forward with the possibility of Christ returning at any moment (“Even so come, Lord Jesus” - Rev. 22:20), which would end the period of time known as the “last days.” This period of time essentially occurs between Christ’s ascent into Heaven (Eph. 4:8) and His descent into the air to rapture His Church (“If I go ... I will come again” - John 14:1-3). The Last Days are related to the Church Age and have been in place for approximately 2,000 years.

Paul used the future tense in conjunction with the last days (“shall come” – 2 Tim. 3:1) to CONFIRM that the “last days” must happen according to God’s ordained purpose and to PROVE they were already living during these perilous times. From the perspective of the past they had already begun and the early church was already living in the period of time known as the Last Days. In other words, Paul said that they “shall come” in the sense that these days were upon them, they were already experiencing the effects of these days, and that the people should not be surprised with what was occurring in the church and society. What was predicted to happen was now coming to pass in his own day and these conditions would continue to exist throughout the future days of the Church Age.

When Paul said “in the latter times some shall depart from the faith” (1 Tim. 4:1), he was teaching that this departure from the faith was occurring right now, during his own time, and that it would be a condition that would continue to exist in the world. When Peter said, “that there shall come in the last days scoffers” he meant that what was predicted to happen was already in some measure occurring during his own time. Like Paul, he was CONFIRMING that these days had already come and

that the early Christians were already living during the period of time known as “the last days.” In 1 John 2:18, John taught “it is the last time” and “we know that it is the last time” which is a synonym or similar expression for the Last Days. John clearly taught that he was already living during the Last Days era of human history.

The apostles revealed to the early Christians that they were already living in the “last days” and “perilous times” and that these conditions would continue to exist throughout the Church Age up to the time of the Rapture. After the Church Age and “last days” would expire (“After this” - Acts 15:16), the End Times would commence with the seven-year Tribulation Period and specific events (End Time events) that would transpire in the world up to the end of the Tribulation Period (Matt. 24:3).

There was an added bonus to living in the Last Days. The apostolic predictions of the “last days” were not only given to first century Christians to confirm that they were already living during these troublesome times but that they could fully expect Jesus Christ to return during their lifetime (Phil. 3:20; 1 Cor. 16:22). The perilous times that were occurring during the days of the apostles and early New Testament Christianity (2 Tim. 3:1-13) would continue to exist on the world scene up to the coming of Christ. The event of the Rapture will end the Last Days for the Church but thrust planet earth into a specific period of time identified as “the hour of temptation” (a trial of adversity – Rev. 3:10), “the beginning of sorrows” (Matt. 24:8), “great tribulation” (Matt. 24:21) and “tribulation of those days” (Matt. 24:29). This is a future time of judgment that will occur over the earth.



Daniel's 70th Week Revelation

The time of judgment on earth (the Tribulation Period) will lead up to “the end of the age” (Matt. 13:39-40, 40; 24:3 - the pre-Messianic Age) and result in the establishment of the Messianic Age when Christ rules planet earth (Rev. 20:1-7). Daniel’s seventieth week (a final week of seven years – Dan.9:27) is a direct reference to the seven-year Tribulation Period and the

End Time events that transpire during this specific period of time on earth, just prior to “the end” (Matt. 24:3), the ending of the pre-Messianic Age (the time *before* Messiah rules), which will then usher in the Second Coming and the Messianic Age of the Millennium (the time *when* Christ rules).

The “last days” precede the “End Times” (the seven-year Tribulation Period). We are living in the Last Days but we are not living during the End Times, since this terminology relates to the future Tribulation Period, a specific time period that leads up to the end (the end of human history without God’s direct rule), which will be changed with the Second Coming of Christ and establishment of the earthly theocracy (Millennium). Jesus identified the events of the Tribulation Period as leading up to the end (Matt. 13:39-40 24:3; 24:14). This means that End Time events can only occur during this particular period of time which is ordained by God to take the earth to the end of age

In summary, we should not confuse the two phrases (Last Days and End Times) as many do today when studying Bible prophecy. The timing and terminology of these separate time periods is very important if one wants to have an accurate understanding of what is occurring in the world today and the future. End Time events which are specifically associated with the Tribulation Period and the impending end (end of the age) cannot happen today. They are predicted to occur in the future. Only

events of the Last Days can occur in the world today since these signs are related to the present Church Age and have already been occurring for almost 2,000 years.



**Occurring
TODAY in
the world**
(2 Timothy 3:1-13)

**Occur in
the FUTURE**
(Matthew 24)

