

The Last Days Are Here!

Acts 2:1-47

The last days have arrived!" When we hear this, we immediately think it means history has drawn to a close. And we are partly right. But, according to the apostles of Jesus, the last days began with the ascension of Jesus to heaven and the outpouring of the Spirit on the church. And we have been in the last days ever since—almost two thousand years of last days! Indeed, the last days will continue until Christ comes again. It is hard to keep a balanced perspective on this. Like a small child on a long journey, the spirit of humankind keeps asking, "Are we almost there?" This study shows that in one sense we have "arrived," but in another sense we are still waiting. To keep the balance we must learn how to live "to the hilt" in these days of fulfillment while waiting hopefully for the last of the last days.

1. What do you think and how do you feel when someone says, "The end of the world is near"?
2. Read Acts 2:1-41. Jesus has been crucified and resurrected. He has also ascended into heaven out of sight (Acts 1:9). What happens to the waiting disciples to assure them that Jesus will continue to expand his worldwide mission?
3. The Feast of Pentecost (fifty days after the Passover) was one of the three great festivals of Israel. Why do you think Luke, the author, is careful to note the countries of origin represented by the visitors to Jerusalem for this great feast (Acts 2:9-11)?
4. With what arguments does Peter counter the charge that he and his friends were intoxicated (Acts 2:13)?
5. Peter explains the strange events of this feast day in terms of the Old Testament prophecy of Joel (Joel 2:28-31), a subject to which we will return in a later study. What evidence does Peter give that he is correct in claiming the "day of the Lord" (Acts 2:20, the last days) has arrived? (Note his quotations of Psalm 16:8-11 and Psalm 110:1, psalms generally regarded as pointing to God's final servant-savior, the Messiah.)

6. The "day of the LORD" (the last days) in Joel 2:1 is a day of both searing judgment on evildoers and gracious salvation and fulfillment for true servants of God (Joel 2:28-31). Interpreting this passage, Peter does not pronounce irrevocable doom on unbelievers and the executioners of Jesus, but rather stresses the grace of the day of the Lord. Why do you think he does this?

What hope does this bring for people today who are currently rejecting Jesus as their Lord and Savior?

7. What must people do to respond to the arrival of the last days (Acts 2:38)?

8. In very few places in the world today are people asking Christians, "What shall we do?" (Acts 2:37). Why do you think this is so?

9. What does living "in the last days" now mean to you?

10. Read Acts 2:42-47. What clues do we have in the passage to explain the growth of the church (Acts 2:47) then and today?

11. Community of language leads to community of property (Acts 2:42-47). Some dimensions of the community-life of the first Christians reflect the emergency situation of pilgrims stranded in Jerusalem after the feast or not wanting to go home and leave this new community. What, however, are the dimensions of living in the last days that can be applied to your own life in this present age?