THE FUTURE FORETOLD

Study Companion

ARE WE LIVING IN THE LAST DAYS?

Primary Scriptures: Hebrews 1:1–2; Acts 2:14–21; Matthew 24:1–14, 36–46; 2 Peter 3:8–9

THIS WEEK'S QUESTION

Are we living in the last days?

Wars. Disease. Earthquakes. Conflict. Political instability. New technology.

It's easy to look at what's happening around us and wonder whether today's headlines prove we're living in the last days.

But before we look at the headlines, we need to ask a more important question:

How does the Bible itself use the phrase “last days”?

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS

Yes. We are living in the last days.

But biblically, the last days didn't begin with today's wars, modern technology, a pandemic, or any other recent event.

The New Testament describes the last days as already underway in the time of the first Christians. They began with the coming of Jesus and continue as we await His return.

That means we can confidently say **we are living in the last days** without claiming that today's headlines prove we are the final generation or that Jesus must return within a particular period of time.

KEY TAKEAWAY

> **Readiness isn't knowing when Jesus is coming. Readiness is being found faithful whenever He does.**

Biblical prophecy isn't intended merely to satisfy our curiosity about the future.

Knowing that we live in the last days should change the way we live **today**.

START WITH THE TEXT

Before working through the questions, read:

Hebrews 1:1–2
Acts 2:14–21
Matthew 24:1–14
Matthew 24:36–46
2 Peter 3:8–9

As you read, don't begin by asking:

“Does this sound like something happening in the news?”

Begin with:

What does the text actually say?

Who was speaking or writing?

Who was the original audience?

What were they being told to believe or do?

Text first. Theory second.

LOOK CLOSER

1. When Did the “Last Days” Begin?

Read **Hebrews 1:1–2** again.

Pay particular attention to this phrase:

> “but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son”

The writer doesn't say that the last days will begin sometime in the distant future.

He says:

“in these last days.”

Look at the contrast in these verses.

How did God speak “in the past”?

How has God spoken “in these last days”?

What event or person appears to mark the change?

Something to Notice

Hebrews doesn't identify the beginning of the last days by pointing to a war, natural disaster, political development, or technological advancement.

The focus is **Jesus**.

God's Son has come.

Something new has begun.

PUT THE PIECES TOGETHER

2. Peter Says They Were Already Happening

Now read **Acts 2:14–21**.

Something extraordinary has just happened at Pentecost. The Holy Spirit has been poured out, and the crowd is trying to understand what they're witnessing.

Peter responds by quoting the prophet Joel.

Acts 2:17 begins:

> "In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people."

But don't stop at the quotation.

Look at **Acts 2:16**.

Peter introduces Joel's prophecy by saying:

> "This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel."

Think about that statement.

Was Peter presenting the "last days" only as a distant future event?

What did Peter believe his audience was witnessing?

Now put **Hebrews 1:1–2** and **Acts 2:16–17** together.

What do these passages suggest about when the New Testament writers believed the last days had begun?

The Bigger Picture

This helps us make an important distinction:

"Are we living in the last days?"

and

"Are we the final generation before Jesus returns?"

are **not the same question**.

Scripture gives us strong grounds for answering the first.

It does not give us permission to determine the second simply from today's headlines.

WHAT ABOUT THE SIGNS?

3. Wars, Famines and Earthquakes

Read **Matthew 24:4–8** slowly.

Jesus mentions:

- wars and rumors of wars
- nation rising against nation
- kingdom rising against kingdom
- famines
- earthquakes

Those certainly sound dramatic.

But now pay attention to what Jesus says **around** those descriptions.

In Matthew 24:6 He says:

> “See to it that you are not alarmed.”

Then He says:

> “Such things must happen, but the end is still to come.”

What instructions does Jesus give His followers?

Does Jesus say that the existence of wars or earthquakes proves the end has arrived?

What does He actually say?

Something to Notice

It's easy to focus on the **events Jesus describes** and overlook the **instructions Jesus gives**.

Jesus doesn't simply tell His followers what may happen.

He tells them how to respond.

Don't be deceived.

Don't be alarmed.

Remain faithful.

That's very different from living in constant fear of the next headline.

DIG A LITTLE DEEPER

4. If These Are the Last Days, Why Has It Taken So Long?

The first Christians expected Jesus to return.

Nearly two thousand years later, we're still waiting.

So has God's plan been delayed?

Read **2 Peter 3:8–9**.

Peter writes:

> “The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness.”

According to verse 9, what does Peter say explains God's apparent delay?

What does God desire?

Now consider what that means.

If another day represents another opportunity for someone to repent, reconcile, believe, forgive, or respond to God, how might that change the way you think about God's timing?

PAUSE & REFLECT

Prophecy can easily become something we **watch** rather than something that changes us.

Another video.

Another prediction.

Another headline.

Another theory.

But knowing more about prophecy doesn't automatically mean we're becoming more faithful to Jesus.

Pastor Ruth shared a simple confession in this week's message:

“I'm really good at saying, ‘I'll get to that.’”

Maybe you've found yourself doing something similar.

Take a moment to consider:

Is there something in your life that keeps getting pushed to “someday”?

Maybe it's a conversation, forgiveness, an apology, time with God, serving, reaching out to someone, or something else you've been meaning to do.

What tends to keep pushing it further down the road?

What might change if you stopped thinking of it as “someday” and considered what you could do today?

YOUR PIVOT POINT

WHAT HAVE I BEEN PUTTING OFF THAT I ALREADY KNOW I SHOULD DO?

Read **Matthew 24:45–46**.

Jesus describes a faithful servant whose master returns and finds him doing what he was supposed to be doing.

Biblical readiness isn't passive.

It's **faithfulness today**.

Don't make a list of twenty things.

Choose **one**.

The thing I've been calling “someday”:

The next step I know I should take:

When I will do it:

Then take that step.

> **Readiness isn't knowing when Jesus is coming. Readiness is being found faithful whenever He does.**

BEFORE YOU CLOSE YOUR BIBLE

Take one final look at what you've studied.

What does Scripture clearly tell you about the “last days”?

What does Scripture NOT allow you to conclude simply from today's headlines?

What did you notice in these passages that you hadn't noticed before?

What is one truth from this study you want to carry into the coming week?

You don't have to know where we are on a prophetic timeline to faithfully follow Jesus today.

Text first. Theory second.

NEXT QUESTION

We've established something important:

Yes, we're living in the last days.

But if the last days have already lasted nearly two thousand years, that raises another question:

WHAT HAS TO HAPPEN BEFORE JESUS RETURNS?

Does the gospel have to reach every nation?

Does the Antichrist have to appear?

Does the temple have to be rebuilt?

Does something still have to happen with Israel?

And does the Bible actually give us a checklist that tells us when Jesus can return?

That's where we're going next in **The Future Foretold**.