

November 2016

Frank W. Nelte

THIS IS NOT YET "THE TIME OF THE END"

In Old Testament prophecies we find different expressions that refer to the future. The three main expressions, as used in the KJV, are "**the latter days**" and "**the last days**" and "**the time of the end**". And it is easy for people to assume that all three of these expressions refer to the same general time frame.

But that is not the case!

The expressions "the latter days" and "the last days" are identical in the Hebrew text. It makes no difference whether we translate that particular Hebrew text as "the latter days" or as "the last days". So when I from now on refer to "the last days", my references automatically also apply to the expression "the latter days". Those two expressions are one and the same.

But the expression "the time of the end" is a translation of a completely different Hebrew expression. And this expression is not a synonym for the expression "the last days". Rather, it has a very specific application.

THE LAST DAYS

The expression "in the last days" has a fairly broad range of applications, ranging from the time when God's spirit was first given to people in Acts chapter 2 (see Acts 2:17) all the way to the time after Jesus Christ's second coming (see Isaiah 2:2 and Ezekiel 38:16, etc.). So the expression "in the last days" (or "in the latter days") can apply to certain specific times during a period of more than 2000 years. This expression which is found mostly in the Old Testament is also used in the New Testament in Acts 2:17, 2 Timothy 3:1, Hebrews 1:2, James 5:3 and in 2 Peter 3:3.

So we today are certainly living "in the last days"!

We are living in the last days because **the last days started around the time of Acts chapter 2**. Think of it as this expression's application starting soon after the start of the second half of the total time of 7100+ years that God has made available for the plan of salvation for mankind. The expression "in the latter days" (or "in the last days") can in very general terms apply to the last approximately 3000 years of that plan. It is past the halfway mark, and way, way past the point of no return. This is "the down-hill end part" of the whole race, to use an analogy. That makes it "the last days", in contrast to "the former days".

But that is not to say that we are therefore also living "at the time of the end". The expression "at the time of the end" has a completely different application to the expression "in the last days". And **we today are certainly not yet living "at the time of the end"!**

To fully understand the things I will now explain, you need to be familiar with the information I present in my earlier article entitled "**The Second Coming Of Jesus Christ**". Specifically, God's plan of 7100+ years for leading human beings to salvation shows **a pattern** for how God approaches every one of four major events in that plan of salvation: up to the flood, up to the start of Christ's ministry, up to Christ's second coming, and up to the completion of the plan.

One aspect of that pattern is that God has committed Himself to a very specific count-down period leading up to each of these four events. The count-down to the flood was 120 years (Genesis 6:3). The count-down to Christ's ministry was 483 years, the first "69 weeks" of the 70-weeks prophecy (Daniel 9:25). The count-down to Christ's second coming is 3½ years (Daniel 12:7) or 42 months or 1260 days (Revelation 11:2-3). The count-down to the completion of the plan of salvation is 100 years, the time allotted to people in the second resurrection (Isaiah 65:20).

The second aspect of the pattern God established involves an unspecified period of time **before** each of these four count-down periods, to which count-down periods God has committed Himself in advance. I have referred to those four unspecified periods of time as "God's discretionary periods of time". With those four periods of time God is not in any way restricted by prophetic or symbolic requirements. There is nothing that could prevent God from making those four periods as long or as short as God wants to make them.

So "the pattern" I am referring to is this: God's whole plan for mankind can be broken down into a fourfold repetition of in each case having a discretionary period of unspecified length, which is followed by a very clearly defined count-down period to each of four key events in the overall plan God has implemented. In addition to this repeating pattern, God has also inserted the millennium into the middle of this plan (i.e. middle in general terms, without implying the mathematical middle).

Now it is these four "discretionary periods" that allow God to retain full control over the whole process, by never starting a predicted count-down period before God knows for certain that His goals will indeed be achieved. The length of these "discretionary periods" is not addressed in any prophecies. Not even the angels know in advance how long those "discretionary periods" will be. And understanding symbolism and the significance of the annual feasts and Holy Days likewise does not provide any hints for how long those discretionary periods will be. They are truly "discretionary" in length.

After the events have taken place, then the length of these discretionary periods can be determined, sometimes accurately and at other times only approximately. Thus, the discretionary period before the 120-year count-down to the flood was 1536 years, a figure we arrive at from the records of the lives of people from Adam to Noah. Of interest might be that this figure of 1536 years is equal to: $1\frac{1}{2} \times 2^{10}$.

The length of the discretionary period before the 483-year count-down to the start of Christ's ministry is less certain. While it seems fairly certain that the decree which starts the 483 years was made in 458 B.C., leading to the start of Christ's ministry in 26 A.D., the actual year in which the flood started in B.C. terms is not nearly as clear. And it is in fact inconsequential!

It really makes no difference whether the flood started in 2369 B.C. or ten years earlier or ten years later or in any other year. It makes no difference, because the discretionary period leading up to the start of the count-down to Christ's ministry allowed God to make that period of time preceding the 483 years however long God wanted to make it or needed to make it, without being restricted by some or other prophecy or symbolism.

The length of the discretionary period before the 3½-year count-down to Christ's second coming **has thus far not yet been decided**. That is why it is "discretionary". This is explained in the article about Christ's second coming.

Briefly, God the Father will not allow that 3½-year count-down to Christ's second coming to start until it has been established with 100% certainty that there will indeed be 144000 individuals ready for the first resurrection. So God the Father reserves to Himself the right to decide when that count-down is to start. And once the specific requirement has been met, then there is no prophecy and no symbolism and no nothing that could in any way pressure God the Father's decision regarding which day or month or year

God the Father will select to start that 3½-year count-down. (That specific requirement is explained in the article about Christ's second coming.)

So much for all our prophecy charts for predicting Christ's second coming!

The length of the discretionary period before the 100-year count-down to the lake of fire and the completion of the plan of salvation has also not yet been decided by God the Father. After the 1000 years of Jesus Christ's rule have been completed, Satan is "loosed out of his prison" (Revelation 20:7). He will be loosed for "a little season" (Revelation 20:3). **That "little season" is God's discretionary period of time.** How long will it be? Nobody knows, because God the Father has not yet decided how long it will be.

It is not a matter of God the Father already knowing exactly how long that period will be, and simply saying to us: I know how long it will be, but I am not going to tell you. I'll just give you a hint by saying that it will be "a little season". That's not the way God works.

Satan is loosed to get a very specific job done, and God will give Satan **however much time it will take**, within reason obviously, for Satan to do that job. Satan's job after Jesus Christ has ruled for 1000 years is to round up every single unconverted individual anywhere on Earth at that time, and to stir them up to fight against Jesus Christ and to surround "the camp of the saints" (see Revelation 20:9). Not a single unconverted individual alive anywhere on Earth at that time is to be left out of that group. That is Satan's job for that "little season".

That rebellious group will consist of hundreds of millions, if not even a billion or two, of unrepentant people at the end of the millennium, who will then openly display their hatred for God. Their number is "as the sand of the sea" (Revelation 20:8).

That staggering multitude is gathered together "to battle" (verse 8 again). But at the end of the 1000-year rule of Jesus Christ there will be no weapons available anywhere on Earth. So how long will it take to make some kinds of weapons for five hundred million people or more? How long will it take to organize the transport to the area of Jerusalem for such a multitude, what with no cars or airplanes or trains available? How much food will such a multitude need to carry with them, considering most of us like to eat two or three times a day?

How long would it take us today to gather from scratch an army of a mere one million soldiers, and to transport them from America to the Middle East? It is not something we would accomplish in a mere two or three weeks, is it? For example, in 2015 over two million Muslims made the annual pilgrimage, the Hajj, to Mecca. That is the largest gathering in the world every year, and it involves an enormous amount of planning ahead of time. Getting those two million people to Mecca is a staggering undertaking. Now multiply that Hajj number by 200 or by 500 or by even more. That is the size of the army that Satan will round up after the 1000 years.

My point is this: I have no idea how long it will take Satan to gather anywhere from five hundred million to perhaps two thousand million people, and to bring them into the Middle East to fight against Jesus Christ. Many of us just gloss over the effort required to bring that many well-armed people from all around the world to Jerusalem.

But it must surely, at a rock-bottom minimum, take well over a couple of months to get such a vast number of people to Jerusalem. Personally, I wouldn't be surprised if Satan needs a year or two or even three to get this job done, which from God's perspective would still only be "a little season". But I don't know how long it will take Satan to get the job done. But one thing is certain: this is not going to be a mere 5-day or 6-day gig for Satan. And it is not necessarily meant to be "a little season" from our

impatient human perspective.

There is a reason why God has not specified how long that "little season" will be. It is because God will make available however much time will be needed to get the job done that God wants Satan to do. The job is of the utmost importance, and how long it will take is only of secondary importance.

And that is the final discretionary period in God's plan of salvation for mankind. Now let's look at the expression "the time of the end".

THE TIME OF THE END

This expression is used exactly five times in the whole Bible, and all five places are in the Book of Daniel. Parts of the book of Daniel are written in Aramaic, and parts are written in Hebrew. These five references are all in the section that was written in the Hebrew language. This expression "the time of the end" is never used outside of the Book of Daniel.

Now the prophecies in the Book of Daniel have one specific purpose: to lead us to the second coming of Jesus Christ and the establishment of the Kingdom of God over this whole Earth. That is always the focus in the Book of Daniel.

Let me give you the answer up front, and then we can examine the details. Are you ready?

The expression "**the time of the end**" is used to refer to **the 3½-year count-down to Jesus Christ's second coming!**

The start of that 3½-year count-down is announced with the start of the ministry of the two witnesses. It therefore follows that until the two witnesses start their ministry of 42 months in length we have not yet come to "the time of the end".

This expression "the time of the end" has no other application anywhere in the Bible. That (the last 3½ years) is what it refers to, and that is all it refers to!

So you today are indeed living "in the last days". But you are right now also assuredly **not yet** living "at the time of the end". While to us in English these two expressions sound almost synonymous, that is assuredly not what God intended when God inspired His messengers to tell Daniel about "the time of the end".

The time of the end will only start when the 3½-year count-down to Christ's second coming starts. **Not a day before!**

Now let's look at the places where this statement is made.

So he came near where I stood: and when he came, I was afraid, and fell upon my face: but he said unto me, Understand, O son of man: for **at the time of the end shall be** the vision. (Daniel 8:17)

This statement is a reference to the "2300 evenings and mornings" prophecy, mistranslated as "2300 days" in Daniel 8:14. I am planning to write in the near future a separate article on that prophecy.

The point the angel Gabriel was making to Daniel in verse 17 is that the 1150 days prophecy (1150 morning sacrifices and 1150 evening sacrifices) applies to things **within that period of 3½ years** that is

identified as "the time of the end". Gabriel concluded his message to Daniel by saying "shut you up the vision for it shall be for many days" (Daniel 8:26). With this statement Gabriel was saying that nobody will fully understand this vision until the time of the end has started, i.e. it will not be fully understood more than 3½ years before Christ's second coming. That's what "shut up the vision" in this specific context means.

The remaining four occurrences of "the time of the end" are all in the context of chapters 11-12 of Daniel.

And *some* of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make *them* white, **even to the time of the end**: because *it is* yet for a time appointed. (Daniel 11:35)

Here again the expression "the time of the end" refers to the 3½-year period leading up to Christ's return. This verse tells us that in the time leading up to the start of the ministry of the two witnesses even some of those leaders amongst God's people who are looked up to as "men of understanding" shall stumble and fall. That will be for the explicit purpose of testing those of God's people who rely on the teachings of these "men of understanding". It will result in "a purging" of the people attending God's Church. God wants to know if we follow the truth unconditionally, or if we follow our leaders **even when those leaders fall** in ways that will become obvious to us. These leaders "fall" when **they reject certain truths** that have been brought to their attention. Leaders who "fall" end up misleading God's people; that should be obvious.

And **at the time of the end** shall the king of the south push at him: and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over. (Daniel 11:40)

This warfare in verse 40 will take place no earlier than 3½ years before Christ's return. That means that this warfare ties in with the wars that apply to some of the seven trumpets of Revelation chapter 9. This is not the place where I want to get involved with the last three woes of Revelation. But the point is that this reference here to "the time of the end" is also a reference to that final 3½-year period before Christ returns.

But you, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, **even to the time of the end**: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased. (Daniel 12:4)

This is a straight-forward instruction to Daniel that the meaning of this particular prophecy would not be fully revealed until 3½ years before the return of Jesus Christ, i.e. it would not be fully understood until the two witnesses start their ministry. In other words, God gave the prophecy in such a way that **nobody will understand all aspects of this prophecy until the two witnesses will start their ministry**. So until then there will always be some aspects of this prophecy that we will not understand correctly. That is God's doing, not revealing the full meaning until God wants this prophecy to be explained correctly.

And he said, Go your way, Daniel: for the words *are* closed up and sealed **till the time of the end**. (Daniel 12:9)

This is a repetition of the statement in verse 4. It should be clear that nobody will ever understand all aspects of this prophecy correctly until "the time of the end" has started, until the two witnesses have started their ministry.

And that covers all five of the occurrences of the expression "the time of the end". All of them refer to things that apply to the 3½-year count-down period to Christ's second coming. None of those five places apply to anything that deals with things four or five or six or more years before the second coming.

Now let's consider this expression "the time of the end" more closely.

WHY DOES GOD CALL IT "THE TIME OF THE END"?

It is easy for us to just view this expression from our point of view. But the obvious question should be: **end of what?**

God clearly has in mind that something is going to end. What is that?

The expression "the latter days" (or "the last days") is a clear contrast to "the former days" (or "the first days"). The terms "latter" and "former", and also the terms "last" and "first", pivot around the point we might call "the center", or "the midpoint". Latter is just as far after the midpoint as former is before the midpoint. And last is just as far after the midpoint as first is before that midpoint.

This explains why the term "in the latter days" can broadly speaking apply to various times in the chronological second half of God's plan.

Coming to "the time of the end":

The two Hebrew words translated as "the time of the end" are "eth" (or "eyth") and "qets" or ("qeyts"). (The prefixes for "at" and "to" and "until" which are attached to "eth" (or "eyth") in these five verses need not concern us.) The word "eyth" means "time".

The word "qeyts" is translated as "the end". According to the Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, "qeyts" is derived from the root word "qasas" (also transliterated as "qatsats"), which means "to cut off" or "to sever". God used the word "qeyts" in Genesis 6:13 to say that "the end (qeyts) of all flesh is come" because the flood would result in "a cutting off" of all of humanity except for eight people.

So when God uses the expression "**the time of the cutting off**" (i.e. "the time of the end") in the Book of Daniel, what is it that is going to be "cut off" at the end of those 3½ years?

What is going to be cut off at Christ's second coming is **man's rule on Earth!** From then onwards mortal man will never again rule over any part of this planet. Never again will mortal man decide what is right and what is wrong. The period of mankind "doing its own thing", which period started with Adam and Eve eating the forbidden fruit, will be permanently terminated or cut off.

In the time leading up to the flood God said in Genesis 6:3, "My spirit shall not always strive (or judge or contend) with man". At that time God still hoped that man's hatred and hostility towards God could somehow be minimized after the flood. But that's not how we human beings turned out to be after the flood. We once again disappointed God.

The result is that even today, in the year 2016 A.D., God is still involved in "striving with man", simply because man is still free to organize human society in ways that oppose God's intentions. That will stop at the conclusion of the 3½-year "time of the end".

Thereafter, during the millennium and at the end of the millennium, human beings will still be able to sin and to give vent to their hatred for God's way of life; but human beings will not control human societies, and humans will have no say in what laws will be enforced from Christ's second coming onwards. And during the millennium Jesus Christ will assuredly not be "striving" with human beings.

The end refers to the end of a very specific period of time, a termination that God is eagerly looking forward to. So the time of the end is the 3½-year period before Christ's second coming, which time period will conclude when mortal man's rule on Earth is permanently cut off. Man's rule will have come to an end. That is what this expression "time of the end" refers to.

So in conclusion:

The expression "**the time of the end**" has only one application. It is always used to refer to the 3½-year count-down period that precedes the second coming of Christ. It never refers to any point in time outside of that 3½-year period. It is a very specific term, designating the time when mortal man's rule on Earth will permanently end. And it is only used in the Book of Daniel.

By contrast, the expressions "**in the last days**" and "**in the latter days**" can apply to a range of situations, starting with the giving of God's holy spirit in Acts chapter 2, and going all the way to events that occur after Jesus Christ's return. This is a general term, applied to a range of different situations that occur at vastly different times.

So don't confuse these two expressions because they are not synonymous.

For those of you who have read most of my past articles I might mention that the confusion in most people's minds over these two expressions "the time of the end" and "the last days" is very much along the same lines as the confusion that exists for most people regarding the Hebrew words "**chag**" (a feast) and "**mow'ed**" (a Holy Day); and also the confusion regarding the Greek words "**metanoeo**" (to repent by changing the way our minds naturally think and reason) and "**metamelomai**" (to be sorry without requiring any real changes in the way our minds work); and the confusion over the Greek words for "morning star" ("**proinos aster**" and also "**orthrinos aster**") and the Greek word which is mistranslated as "day star" ("**phosphoros**").

In each case these pairs of words or expressions are treated as if they were synonymous, which they most assuredly are not. The expressions "in the last days" and "the time of the end" are just one more example of this practice of wrongly equating two different expressions as being synonymous.

Frank W Nelte