

**TRUTH and ERROR in the BOOK OF ACTS:
JOEL'S ARMY and the TABERNACLE OF DAVID**
(Two Serious False Teachings from Acts 2 and Acts 15)

Acts 2:14-21 “**14** Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. **15** These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! **16** No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

17" 'In the last days, God says,

I will pour out my Spirit on all people.

Your sons and daughters will prophesy,

your young men will see visions,

your old men will dream dreams.

18 Even on my servants, both men and women,

I will pour out my Spirit in those days,

and they will prophesy.

“19 I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. **20** The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. **21** And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

In learning more about Christ's Ascension and the subsequent Pentecostal outpouring, we re-learned several truths ...

- Christ's Ascension / exaltation / enthronement in his glorified body was a necessary prerequisite for the later outpouring of the Spirit.
- Since his enthronement, Christ been reigning as Son of David and Son of God, fulfilling God's promise to David that his throne would endure forever.
- The Spirit in his fullness would continue to be available to the Church until the Day of the Lord.
- The last days began in Jesus' ministry, were fully in effect by the Day of Pentecost, and continue in an undifferentiated manner until Christ's Second Coming.
- The entire period of the New Covenant is the "last days."
- There is no indication in scripture that there will be an increase in the intensity of the Spirit's outpouring at the "end" of the age, just before Christ's return.

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There will be periods of great kingdom advance ...

- years of great harvests and missionary church planting;
- years of reformation and purifying in the Church;
- years of outpourings of the Holy Spirit;
- years of social justice (ending slavery, oppression, poverty, wars, ...);

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AND, ...

There will be periods of tribulation ...

- persecution, oppression, martyrdom;

- famine, poverty, disease, lack;
- wars, lawlessness, violence;
- loss of Christian influence, territory, lives;
- affluence, ease, lukewarmness, or coldness;
- false doctrines / heresies growing in the Church;
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Sometimes, the Church in one part of the world will experience blessing while elsewhere it experiences great tribulation.

Sometimes, either tribulation or blessing may predominate everywhere.

We CANNOT say for sure in what kind of period Christ's return will occur.

Even evangelical and Pentecostal scholars have mixed opinions on this.

WE CANNOT POINT TO ANY SCRIPTURE THAT CLEARLY, EXPLICITLY, UNAMBIGUOUSLY GIVES ONE PARTICULAR SIGN THAT DEFINITELY SIGNALS THE IMMIDENT RETURN OF CHRIST.

This means that Christians must always be ready to meet God without warning.

I. WHAT THE BIBLE MEANS BY "LAST DAYS" (or End-times, Last Hour, etc.)

The "former times" refers to the time before Christ's First Coming and putting the New Covenant in effect.

Most of the time it refers to the Old Covenant or Old Testament.

The "end times" or "last days" refers to the period of time beginning with Christ's First Advent to fulfill OT promises and prophecies, putting into effect the New Covenant.

THROUGHOUT the NEW TESTAMENT, Christ and the Apostles explicitly taught this, and the Church always believed this. The following scriptures are just two of the many we looked at ...

Hebrews 1:1-2 "1 In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe."

"In the past" was the OT, the Old Covenant, the former times.

The writer says Jesus' first coming inaugurated "these last days."

James 5:3 "3 Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days."

James, the half-brother or stepbrother of Jesus Christ, warns wealthy Christians of his time that they are hoarding wealth "in the last days."

The fact that the last days / last times began with Christ's First Coming and Holy Spirit's outpouring, and continue until Christ's Second Coming, is taught everywhere in the NT: Acts 2, 1 Tim 4, 2 Tim 3, Hebrews 1, 9:26, James 5:3, 1 Peter 1:19f, 2 Peter 3, 1 John 2, Jude 1:17, etc. All of these references to the last days refer to NT days!

WE MUST GRASP THIS BIBLE TRUTH: THE LAST DAYS ARE AN UNDIFFERENTIATED PERIOD OF TIME FROM CHRIST'S FIRST COMING UNTIL HIS SECOND COMING.

THE SCRIPTURES TEACH the following things will be happening **simultaneously** throughout the “church age” or the time between Christ’s First and Second Advents:

- the preaching of the gospel, with the church generally advancing into new places and people groups, and generally growing;
- the constant presence of heresies new and old, false supernatural phenomenon, and “Christians” falling into apostasy;
- the persecution of the church in various places in varying degrees;
- increasing wickedness among unbelievers;

There will be seasons of blessing, seasons of tribulations, in greater and lesser degrees, sometimes mixed, sometimes happening at the same time but in different parts of the world, until the end of the Age.

Christ warned us that there would be no sign to indicate that his immediate appearing was at hand. (Acts 2:14-41, 1 Tim 4:1, 2 Tim 3:1, Heb 1:2, 1 Pet 1:20, 1 Jn 2:18, etc.) He warned us not to become embroiled in speculation and prediction. His coming for us will be sudden and unexpected, with no time to prepare, avoid, or flee.

II. End-time Error # 1 – Joel’s Army

One of the erroneous teachings about the “last days” that brings a lot of confusion is called “Joel’s Army.”

LOOK AT JOEL 2:

- a locust plague is devouring Judah’s land;
- Joel equates this with an “army” sent as judgment from God;
- He calls on Judah to repent;

Joel 2:1-11 “**1** Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound the alarm on my holy hill. Let all who live in the land tremble, for the day of the LORD is coming. It is close at hand-

2 a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness. Like dawn spreading across the mountains a large and mighty army comes, such as never was of old nor ever will be in ages to come.

3 Before them fire devours, behind them a flame blazes. Before them the land is like the garden of Eden, behind them, a desert waste—nothing escapes them.

4 They have the appearance of horses; they gallop along like cavalry. **5** With a noise like that of chariots they leap over the mountaintops, like a crackling fire consuming stubble, like a mighty army drawn up for battle. **6** At the sight of them, nations are in anguish; every face turns pale.

7 They charge like warriors; they scale walls like soldiers. They all march in line, not

swerving from their course. **8** They do not jostle each other; each marches straight ahead. They plunge through defenses without breaking ranks. **9** They rush upon the city; they run along the wall. They climb into the houses; like thieves they enter through the windows. **10** Before them the earth shakes, the sky trembles, the sun and moon are darkened, and the stars no longer shine. **11** The LORD thunders at the head of his army; his forces are beyond number, and mighty are those who obey his command. The day of the LORD is great; it is dreadful. Who can endure it?"

Biblically, "Joel's Army" is an army of locusts, a part of God's judgment, foretelling the Babylonian armies that are about to come.

There is NO biblical basis for the teaching that God will "raise up" a special "Joshua and Caleb" generation, a "Joel's Army" of young people to do mighty exploits just before Christ's return, ushering in his coming.

It is often taught that this spiritually elite "anointed generation" will do even greater miracles than Christ's original 12 Apostles, winning nations for Christ! Unbelievable!

This teaching is found nowhere in Scripture, was never taught in the ancient church, and was not a part of the original Pentecostal movement.

This teaching originated in the Latter Rain movement in the late 1940's, and has periodically resurfaced, most recently in the Apostles-and-Prophets (or Prophetic or New Apostolic Reformation) movement. *The Assemblies of God officially condemned that movement in 1949.*

It is sometimes called by various names (Manifest Sons of God, Elijah Generation, Davidic Generation, Joel's Army, etc.), but is the same old heresy.

THE PROBLEMS:

1. It is unscriptural – there is no support for this teaching anywhere in the Bible.
2. It is anti-scriptural – it teaches something opposite to what the Bible really teaches.
3. God has promised to pour out his Spirit on ALL people. This means that all ages, social ranks, genders, and races are equally eligible to become children of God and temples of the Spirit.
4. The false teaching creates an "elitist" mentality, putting a select few up on pedestals and the rest on a lower level.
5. It holds out a "works" or "spiritual phenomenon" mentality as a sign that you are part of the elite.
6. It puts people down, discouraging them regarding their walk with God.
7. It creates a "sign" of Christ's imminent coming, and a CONDITION for that coming, which does NOT exist in Scripture.
8. There are NO Bible scholars anywhere in the Christian Church in any place, time, or denomination who have ever believed or taught such a doctrine, including the Assemblies of God.

Whenever you hear someone preaching or teaching that God is raising up a “special” generation or group of people to do special exploits, whether they call it Joel’s Army, the Elijah Generation, the David Generation, or whatever, you need to REJECT that teaching, and mark the teacher as SUSPECT IN HIS or HER ABILITY or perhaps even their ORTHODOXY.

AND, you need to continue to do what God has commanded all of Jesus’ disciples to do: be faithful in prayer, study, church attendance, discipleship, and whatever kind of ministry in your local church that God has given you.

Don’t be anxious, don’t be filled with pride, don’t be discouraged.

III. End-time Error # 2 – the Tabernacle of David

A related heresy is the false teaching called the “Tabernacle of David.”

Based on a false interpretation of Acts 15:15-18 (which quotes Amos 9:11-12 and alludes to Isaiah 45:21), this false teaching claims that near Christ’s Second Coming, God will restore a special kind of anointed praise and prayer similar to the supposedly unique style and spirit of David’s, and that this will be especially precious to God, will have great power in spiritual warfare, and will be practiced by truly spiritual people, God’s elite.
No Bible scholar of any kind has ever believed this.

Acts 15:12-18 “**12** The whole assembly became silent as they listened to Barnabas and Paul telling about the miraculous signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles through them. **13** When they finished, James spoke up: "Brothers, listen to me. **14** Simon has described to us how God at first showed his concern by taking from the Gentiles a people for himself. **15** The words of the prophets are in agreement with this, as it is written: **16** " 'After this I will return and **rebuild David's fallen tent.** Its ruins I will rebuild, and I will restore it, **17** that the remnant of men may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who bear my name, says the Lord, who does these things' **18** that have been known for ages.”

Amos 9:11-12 Israel’s Restoration

11 "In that day I will restore David's fallen tent.

I will repair its broken places, restore its ruins,
and build it as it used to be,

12 so that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations that bear my name, " declares the LORD, who will do these things.

In context, James is declaring, and Luke records, that the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the inclusion of gentiles in God’s People with Jews by grace through faith is the manner in which God HAS already restored David’s fallen tent.

This is how God HAS renewed and restored Israel: by sending Messiah, by raising him from the dead, by his ascension, by the Spirit’s outpouring, and by combining Jews and gentiles into One People of God.

THIS WAS WHAT THE JERUSALEM COUNCIL IN ACTS 15 WAS ALL ABOUT!

Amos had prophesied the restoration of David's monarchy and its political rule over Edom and other nations. The original context implies nothing other than a historical-literal fulfillment.

HOWEVER, in the Jerusalem Council, James declares that the ultimate real fulfillment of Amos 9 is the inclusion of the gentiles in God's people through faith in Jesus Christ. James declares that the rule and reign predicted by Amos has been fulfilled by Christ's spiritual rule over gentile Christians in the church.

James, the Apostles, and the entire Jerusalem Council - made up almost exclusively of Jewish Christians - declared Amos' prophecy to be fully fulfilled in a historical-spiritual way, through Christ's reign as David's Son over the gentiles who were now God's people, the Church.

Jesus, the Apostles, and the ancient Church saw this as happening in a continuous, undifferentiated manner throughout the "last days," from the Day of Pentecost until the Day of the Lord.

The "Joel's Army" and "Tabernacle of David" false teachings have been claiming **for 60 years** that God was raising up some kind of super-spiritual elite to fight the devil and get the church good enough for Jesus to return.

This is just the opposite of what Scripture teaches about God's People and the "last days."

There **was no** special kind of tabernacle built by David on Mt Zion where unique, Spirit-directed praise was practiced that was different from the Tabernacle and Temple ritual. **There is no evidence of it whatsoever, not in any writings of any kind, not in any archaeological evidence of any kind.**

Yahweh tolerated no kind of rival shrines or worship sites.

Everything revolved around the Tabernacle, and then the Temple.

And, it is CERTAIN that James' words in Acts 15 CANNOT refer to such a place.

THE PROBLEMS:

1. The false Tabernacle of David teaching is unscriptural – this doctrine is taught NOWHERE in Scripture.
2. This teaching is anti-Scriptural – it teaches things directly opposed to what God says in his Word.
3. ALL of God's true people are a royal priesthood, and it is IN CHRIST, and NOT in a particular kind of worship, that we have access to the Father.
4. This teaching creates a special spiritual "elite" among God's people who must do the truly powerful worship that gets God's attention, drives back the enemy, and opens the heavens.
5. This kind of pride and elitism is taught nowhere in Scripture.

6. Worship forms, practices, songs, etc., change over time and over cultures. While some are BETTER and MORE BIBLICAL than others, no particular form or style has been endorsed in Scripture.
7. This teaching claims that only those initiated into this super-spiritual kind of warfare worship can truly worship God to his complete satisfaction, and truly break the powers of darkness.
8. This teaching claims that this “restoration of the Tabernacle of David” is both a sign that Christ’s coming is imminent and is a key to purifying the church to make her WORTHY of Christ’s return.
9. The kind of worship advocated by this teaching addicts people to high-energy, highly emotionally charged worship, making them to believe they have not “worshipped” unless they have this very emotional “experience.”

There is NO biblical scholar – Pentecostal, Baptist, Presbyterian, Catholic, Lutheran, Nazarene, Methodist, etc., etc. – who teaches this false doctrine.

God gives us no specific sign that will tell us Christ’s coming is at the door.

SO, when you hear someone teaching this kind of thing, you should REJECT that teaching as false, and mark that teacher as highly SUSPECT, a poorly trained and on this doctrine a deceived person.

CONCLUSION

One of the problems with both of these errors is the damage they do to believers.

Some are made to feel super-spiritual, elite, proud, God’s special agents.

Others are made to feel they are second-class or are missing what “God is doing in the earth.”

AND, part of the problem is the wide-spread misunderstanding among Pentecostals-charismatics of what the Bible means when it says, “last days.”

SO, people are made to FEAR all the time:

- fear they are missing God’s outpouring;
- fear they are missing out on being one of God’s green berets;
- fear they are missing true worship if they don’t have a powerful emotional experience;
- fear they are not working or praying or giving frantically enough because it is the “last hour.”

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FRIENDS, DO NOT BE AFRAID, and DO NOT BE DISCOURAGED!

The “last days” started with Jesus and will continue until Jesus returns.

We have no idea when Jesus will return, so we must be ready at all times.

ALL of God’s People are eligible to be filled with his Spirit and be part of his ONE great People (i.e., there is NO Davidic / Joel / Elijah generation).

ALL of God’s People may worship him acceptably in spirit and in truth, because we are ALL a part of God’s True People in Christ, David’s restored tent.

PRAY, STUDY GOD'S WORD, BE FAITHFUL IN CHURCH, SHARE CHRIST WITH OTHERS, JUST KEEP GROWING IN GOD'S LIFE AND BLESSING, and LEAVE THE TIMING OF CHRIST'S COMING IN GOD THE FATHER'S HANDS!

(**NOTE:** The study and conclusions presented here are not a matter of "opinion" or simply one person's "interpretation." This paper presents the consensus perspective of all genuine biblical scholars. *It is simply not possible that the two heretical teachings confronted here are true.* It is certain that the perspectives on Acts 2 and Acts 15 presented in this paper as correct perspectives are indeed correct.)