

Notes on THE DAY OF THE LORD

Many of the Old Testament prophets make reference to this momentous period of time. Some use the terms "the day" or "the great day" or "that day", but all by this expression strongly relate to **God's rule of the earth and therefore to His sovereign purpose for world history and specific events within that history.**

The Day of the Lord refers to God's special interventions into the course of world events to judge His enemies, accomplish His purpose for history, and thereby demonstrate that He is the sovereign God of the universe. Diligent perusal of the pages of the Promises of God reveal that references to the Day of the Lord occur seventy-five times in the Old Testament. This phrase became such an understandable subject of the Old Testament that by the time of Zechariah, one of the last of the prophets, he could use the term "in that day" and it was understood that he meant the Day of the Lord.

This phrase had definite connotations and was the great theme of the writings of the Old Testament prophets, who related it to the future kingdom promised in the Old Testament, and connected it with the coming of Christ as it relates to the setting up of this kingdom. The expression "the day of the Lord" clearly has an end-time (eschatological) meaning.

All honest Bible scholars who seek to become genuine students of prophecy must obtain a sound grasp of the concepts presented in the doctrine about the day of the Lord, as **this is fundamental to proper and right division of the scriptures which deal with the pertinent and practical promises of the end time.** We must "get

it out of the realm of the nebulous and tenuous, and avoid thinking of it as a vague theory and a spurious theology, as is done today even in many seminaries, for the subject of the Day of the Lord was, and still is a very important part of the program of God.

McDonald defines the day of the Lord as “any time when God judges men and their evil ways, and gets the victory and great glory to His name. In the future, it will be the time of great trouble after the rapture of the church, which will be followed by one thousand 1000 years when Christ will rule on earth”. (1) **“It is the day when the Lord will judge and interfere once more directly in the course of this world’s politics.”** (2)

"The day of the Lord" is a technical phrase that refers to a long period of time which begins when the day of Christ ends with the rapture of the church, incorporates the Great Tribulation, the judgment at the end of the tribulation, the thousand year reign of Christ, (see Acts 2:20; 2 Peter. 3:10; Revelation 6:17 and the final judgment— the Great White Throne Judgment, and ends with the creation of the new heavens and earth.

When Peter says in 2 Peter 3: 10 that "the day of the Lord will come like a thief" he is referring to the rapture of the church. Then with the next phrase he describes the destruction of the heavens and earth. Thus in one verse Peter talks about the beginning of the day of the Lord and its ending.

It is important for us to understand the sequence of events involved in the day of the Lord, so we will give this general summary. Jesus will first come at the rapture invisibly and unknown to men in general (the PAROUSIA), raise the righteous dead, and take them along with the saints who are yet alive from the earth for a 7-year period. During this time there will be great suffering called the "tribulation" for the wicked people who were left on earth. At the

end of these 7 years, the forces of evil will gather to fight against Jesus, who will visibly return (EPIPHANEIA) to defeat them at the battle of Armageddon. Jesus will then establish an earthly, civil kingdom over which He will reign as King from Jerusalem for 1000 years. At the end of 1000 years, the wicked dead will be raised, then all men will be judged and receive their eternal rewards.

The following are some important features about "the day of the Lord" that must be appreciated. These are that:

1. It includes a time of great judgment and wrath on all the nations and on Israel (Isaiah. 2:12-21; 13:9-16; 34:1-8; Joel. 1:15-2:11, 28-32; 3:9-12; Amos 5:18-20; Obadiah 15-17; Zephaniah. 1:7-18).

2. It is associated with the overthrow of God's enemies (Isaiah. 2:12).

3. It is God's instrument of wrath to purge out the rebels from Israel and results in Israel's return to the Lord (Ezekiel 20:33-39).

4. While it begins with judgment to defeat the enemies of God, it ushers in a time of great blessing called the millennium in which Christ will reign with the church, the body of Christ (Zephaniah 1:7-18; 3:14-17). "The significant truth revealed here is that the day of the Lord which first inflicts terrible judgments ends with an extended period of blessing on Israel, which will be fulfilled in the millennial kingdom. Based on Old Testament revelation, **the day of the Lord is a time of judgment, culminating in the second coming of Christ, and followed by a time of special divine blessing to be fulfilled in the millennial kingdom.**

5. The day of the Lord is also known by the terms “the time of Jacob’s distress” (Jeremiah 30:7) and “Daniel’s seventieth week” (Daniel. 9:24-29). Many other students of prophecy refer to this time as the Tribulation (see Matthew 24:9, 21, 29; Mark 13:19, 24; Revelation 7:14). The chief passage on the many characteristics and events of this time is Revelation 6-19.

What is clear, is that in the many passages that refer to the day of the Lord that they all agree that in the time when men are proclaiming peace, but preparing for war; in a time when they are holding to a form of godliness but denying the powers thereof; in a time when they are declaring that the problems of life are being solved, then when actually they are in greater danger than they have ever been before, then the day of the Lord will come.

There are people who wrongly associate the expression "the Lord’s day" with Sunday or even with the Sabbath. **Nowhere in the Bible is Sunday described as "the day of the Lord,"** but always as "the first day of the week." (cf. Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:2; Luke 24:1; John 20:1, 19; Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2). **“We must recognize there is a great deal of difference between the day of the Lord and the Lord's day. Sunday is the Lord's day, for it was the day when our Lord arose from the dead. But the day of the Lord is the day of the manifestation of God's hand directly in human affairs.** At the present hour even though God is working through the events of history bringing about overthrows, uprisings, and calamities as well as periods of prosperity and blessing, nevertheless His hand is hidden in the glove of history. But **all the writers of Scripture agree that a day is coming when God will intervene directly in the affairs of men again.”**

We must not confuse the day of the Lord with the phrase “the last days” either. The phrase “the last days” is used in the Scriptures to refer to the time of the Messiah. The New

Testament indicates that believers in Christ are living in the last days. For example we read in Hebrews 1:2, "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". Acts 2:17 states "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". Also in 2 Peter 3:3, the scripture teaches "First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires". **Whereas “the last days” began with the first coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and continue on to the present time, and ends at the second coming of the Lord, the day of the Lord begins at the rapture and continues into eternity.**

We know that we are correct in our view because of the current evidence which coincides with Paul's predictions in 2 Timothy 3:1-7 about the last days. The characteristics which Paul describes in this passage began to rear its ugly head in Paul's day and have continued to increase since then, such that evil is currently stronger and more accepted in every society universally, because of the moral collapse of mankind. Just as Paul promised we find that contemporary citizens are characterized as persons who love themselves, are boastful, proud, abusive, ungrateful, conceited, without self-control, and lovers of money. In regard to family they are disobedient to parents, without love, and unforgiving. With respect to their neighbors they are brutal, treacherous, rash, and they despise good. Concerning God they are ungrateful, unholy, love pleasure rather than God, and though having a form of godliness they deny His power.

Unfortunately, these characteristics are also being observed in the church, where there are men of immoral character and conduct. Though outwardly religious, they are selfish, and morally, religiously and intellectually perverse.

Let us here recall why there is a need for a future day of the Lord occur? After God created man, He gave him dominion over everything on the earth (Gen. 1:26,28; Psalm 8:3-9), intending that man should serve as his representative to administer God's rule over the earthly province of His universal domain. In other words, God designed the government of the earth to be a theocracy, a form of government in which God is the sovereign ruler of the earth, but His rule is administered through Adam, a human representative. However, **when God's enemy, Satan, convinced the first Adam to rebel against God and His rule, God's theocratic kingdom rule over the world system was lost (Genesis 3).** Through Adam's rebellion, Satan usurped the rule of the world system away from God (Luke. 4:5-6; John. 14:30; 1 John. 5:19). Since that time, Satan and rebellious man have been dominating the world system according to their own thoughts and ways (Isaiah. 55:7-9). In other words, Satan and man have been having their day in the world. During their day, they try to establish and assert their own sovereignty and deity.

But God's purpose for world history is to glorify Himself by demonstrating that He alone is the sovereign God. In order to accomplish this purpose, God has determined to have His day in the world in the end times of world history (Isaiah. 2:10-22). Several times in the past, God broke into the day of Satan and rebellious man with the interventions, or Days of the Lord, that were noted earlier. He did this for several reasons: to accomplish an immediate divine purpose (namely, the disruption, frustration, or destruction of some plan, purpose, or accomplishment of Satan and man), to graphically remind Satan and man that God is still the ultimate sovereign over the earth and universe, and to give Satan and man a foretaste or forewarning of the ultimate Day of the Lord that will come at the end of world history.

Proper perusal of the Scriptures indicate that there were several past Days of the Lord in which God exercised and demonstrated

His sovereign judgment on the nations. For example, He raised up Assyria to judge the northern kingdom of Israel during the 7th century B.C. (Amos 5:18,20), Babylon to judge the southern kingdom of Judah during the 6th and 5th century B.C. (Lamentations 1:12; 2:1,21-22; Ezekiel. 7:19; 13:5; Zechariah 1:7-13; 2:2-3), Babylon to judge Egypt and its allies during the 5th century B.C. (Jeremiah. 46:10; Ezekiel. 30:3), and Medo-Persia to judge Babylon during the 5th century B.C. (Isaiah. 13:6,9). It can thus be seen that in the past Days of the Lord, God used His direct, miraculous works as well as human instruments and human activity through war to execute His purpose against His enemies.

The Scriptures indicate that the concept of the Day of the Lord is also applicable to the future and that the future Day of the Lord will be far more significant than those of the past. God will in that time intervene to restore and exercise His theocratic kingdom rule over the world through the last Adam, Jesus Christ as taught in Zechariah. 14:1-9; 1Corinthians 15:45,47; Revelation 20:1-6. For example, Isaiah 2:10-22 describes a Day of the Lord that will involve the sixth seal which occurs during the future 70th week of Daniel 9, as described by the Apostle John in Revelation 6:12-17.

Both Isaiah 34:1-8 and Obadiah 15 describe a future Day of the Lord when God will judge all the nations, or Gentiles, of the world. Since none of the past Days of the Lord referred to earlier have so far involved divine judgment of all the nations, it is clear that Isaiah 34 and Obadiah refer to the future. Joel 3:1-16 and Zechariah 14:1-3, 12-15 also refer to a future Day of the Lord that will involve God's judgment of the armies of all the nations of the world, when those armies are gathered in Israel to wage war against that nation and the city of Jerusalem and when the Messiah will come to war against them. According to Revelation 16.12-16, those armies will gather when the sixth vial or bowl is poured out during the

70th week of Daniel 9. In addition, Revelation 19:11-21 teaches that at this time Christ will wage war against them when he comes from Heaven in His glorious Second Coming.

In I Thessalonians 5:2 the Apostle Paul taught that there would be in the future a Day of the Lord that bring sudden, inescapable destruction on the unsaved of the world. This has clearly not yet come to pass.

Just as in the days of the Lord that are past, God intervened into the course of world events to judge His enemies, accomplish His purpose for world history, and thereby demonstrate that He is - the sovereign God of the universe, in the future Day of the Lord, He will do the same- but with one exception. This will be the final day of the Lord.

In the present day, Satan and rebellious man exert a rule over the world system that is characterized by darkness only, (Ephesians. 6:12; Col. 1:13). **In the future Day of the Lord, God will establish control over His rule over the entire world system during the Millennium in visible form. He will thereby fully demonstrate who He is - the sovereign God of the universe (Exodus 15:11). It is noteworthy that the day of the Lord will have a period of darkness in which sin will be judged and a period of light only, in keeping with God's characteristic of light and in whom there is no darkness at all (1 John. 1:5).**

The day of the Lord is a day of salvation and judgment, or a day of salvation through judgment. It involves two distinct aspects: judgment followed by blessing. Zephaniah 3 **clearly records these two distinct aspects of this awesome day, by revealing that after Israel repents and returns to the Lord, they will be restored under the righteous rule of Messiah. It is imperative to understand this concept of the dual nature of the future Day of the Lord, for a perfect interpretation of the related Scriptures about this doctrine.

To illustrate, just as from the time of creation a day consisted of two phases - a time of darkness ("evening") followed by a time of light ("day," Gen. 1:4-5) - so the future Day of the Lord will consist of two phases - a period of darkness with judgment followed by a period of light with the ultimate fulfillment of God's promises of his sovereign rule and blessing.

The first phase will be a period of unprecedented, concentrated judgment involving the 70th week of Daniel 9 and the Second Coming of Christ. In this phase, God, who throughout most of history has permitted Satan and rebellious man to have their day, will suddenly intervene to destroy the rule of Satan and man over the world system, to evict them from the earth, and thereby to end their day in the world (Isaiah. 42:13-14; Rev. 6-19). This phase will be characterized by darkness and an intense outpouring of God's wrath.

The second phase will be a period of divine dominion over the world system. In this phase, God will intervene to restore and exercise His theocratic kingdom rule over the world through the last Adam, Jesus Christ (Zechariah 14:1-9; 1Corinthians 15:45,47; Revelation 20:1-6). This phase will be characterized by light and an outpouring of God's blessing.

The phase of judgment will be highlighted by darkness and a tremendous outpouring of divine wrath on the world during the 70th week of Daniel 9. (Joel 2:1-2; Amos 5:18-2a; Zechariah. 1:14-15; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11; **Rev 6-19**). Amos 5:18-20 emphasizes that this will be the total nature of the Day of the Lord for God's enemies. That day will bring no divine light or blessing to them.

In contrast, the phase of blessing will also be characterized by light, an outpouring of divine blessing, and the administration of God's rule. Joel, after talking about the darkening of the sun, moon,

and stars and God's future Day of the Lord judgment of the armies of the nations that have gathered in Israel (3:9-16), then foretold great divine blessing "in that day" (vv.17-21). Zechariah concurs by teaching that the future Day of the Lord would be one when all nations will wage war against Jerusalem and the Messiah will come to earth to fight against the nations (14:1-5). Zechariah also indicated that, although the earlier part of "that day" will be characterized by darkness, the latter part will be characterized by light (vv.6-7), great blessing (v.8), and God's rule over all the earth (v.9). This time of light, divine blessing, and God's rule will be the norm in the Day.

The several warnings about the judgments of the Lord on that day have been recorded so that people should not lightly brush them aside and disregard them. The global extent of the destruction and the reason for these judgments, namely, an excessively wicked generation of people like that in the days of Noah and Lot, is certainly repeated time and again for emphasis. A word to the wise is enough! Knowledge about God's end-time program, as well as the future expectation of the coming of the heavenly Bridegroom, is given as a strong incentive towards holy living and an unwavering commitment to Christ. Peter says: "Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God" (2 Pet. 3:11-12).