

DOCTRINE OF THE DAY OF THE LORD

- I. Preliminary considerations.
- A. The first issue that must be addressed is the manner in which the authors of the various books of the Bible used the term “day”.
 - B. It is clear that both the Hebrew OT and the Greek NT used the word in the literal sense of a 24-hour period of time.
 - 1. This is clearly observed in the six days of restoration, which are defined by the non-metaphorical terms *evening and morning* to denote a single solar day. Gen.1:5,8,13
 - 2. The NT writers also clearly used this term to refer to the same portion of time. Joh.1:29,35,39,43
 - C. However, unlike the terms *morning and evening*, which are always used literally, the term *day* can be used in a non-literal sense to refer to an extended period of time that is not limited to 24 hours.
 - 1. The phrase *as it is this day* may readily be understood to refer to circumstances that are not limited to one literal day, and could be translated, *as has been/as is the case*. Eze.9:7,15
 - 2. The phrase *in the days of* is used to denote the span of time that a person has lived, or the length of time they have reigned. Gen.26:1; Est.1:1
 - 3. It is used of an indefinite period as seen in the following phrases.
 - a. Day of trouble. Psa.20:1
 - b. Day of war and battle. Job 38:23
 - c. Day of salvation. 2Cor.6:2
 - D. It is used in a figurative sense to denote a general time of opportunity, which is not to be limited to a particular day. Joh.9:4
 - E. Therefore, there is sufficient biblical evidence to indicate that the term *day* is used regularly throughout the Bible to refer to a length of time that is more than 24 hours.
 - F. Most conservative commentators have long recognized that the phrase “the Day of the Lord” is not referring to one literal day in human history.
 - G. In fact, many define the Day of the Lord as “*a special phrase in the Bible used to refer to an extended period of history when God directly intervenes in human affairs---in judgment and in blessing.*”
 - H. While there are differences of opinion with respect to when this Day of the Lord begins and when it ends, this definition is certainly accurate.
 - I. This is further confirmed by the Hebrew term **יָמַי** (eth—time), which is a word that refers to time in the sense of an opportunity or season, a period of time. Eze.30:3
 - 1. This word is used of regular events such as the rainy season (Eze.10:13), the period of the harvest (Jer.50:16), and the time of migration (Jer.8:7).
 - 2. It is linked with the phrase *in those days* to denote the extended time of Israel’s restoration and prosperity under Messiah. Jer.33:15; 50:4,20; Joe.3:1

II. Vocabulary terms.

A. Hebrew terms.

1. The phrase יום יהוה (yom YHWH) is found 15x in the OT and is the most common designation for the Day of the Lord.
2. This phrase is often qualified by other descriptive terms or phrases to denote various aspects of the Day of the Lord.
 - a. *Cruel, with fury and burning anger.* Isa.13:9
 - b. *Great.* Zep.1:14
 - c. *Great and very awesome.* Joe.2:11,31
 - d. *Great and terrible.* Mal.4:5
3. Because the Jews were so familiar with this concept, it is often referred to in general terms as well.
 - a. *The day.* Mal.4:1
 - b. *That day.* Isa.10:20; 11:10
 - c. *In those days.* Joe.3:1
 - d. *At that time.* Zep.3:20

B. Greek terms.

1. Like the Hebrew counterpart, the phrase ἡμε,ρα κυρι,ου (hemera kuriou), with or without the definite article, is translated as The Day of the Lord some seven times in the NT. Act.2:20; 1Cor.1:8; 5:5; 2Cor.1:14; 1The.5:2; 2The.2:2; 2Pet.3:10
 - a. In a few verses it is made more specific by the addition of the name *Jesus* or the term *Christ*. 1Cor.1:8; 5:5; 2Cor.1:14
 - b. Three times in the book of Philippians it is called *the day of Christ/Christ Jesus*, emphasizing the rapture as a prelude to the Day of the Lord. Phi.1:6,10; 2:16
2. It is called the *Day of Judgment* since it is characterized by fire, destruction, and the various judgments that Christ will render. Mat.10:15; 2Pet.2:9; 3:7
3. Again, similar to Hebrew usage, it is called the *great day* in three verses, all of which emphasize God's judgment. Jud.6; Rev.6:17; 16:14
4. It is called the *great day of their wrath*. Rev.6:17
5. It is simply referred to as *the day* on other occasions. 1The.5:4 (context there indicates that it is the Day of the Lord in view); Heb.10:25

III. Definition and description.

- A. While there are those that suggest that the Day of the Lord was fulfilled in various OT judgments (such as the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC), the promises of universal peace and prosperity clearly have not come to pass.
- B. At present, God is acting with maximum patience toward mankind as He did in the days of Noah, desiring that all come to believe in Christ and gain maximum doctrine. 1Tim.2:4; 1Pet.3:20; 2Pet.3:15

- C. However, as we have pointed out in the introduction, the Day of the Lord is the period of human history when God openly intervenes in the affairs of mankind, both for blessing and for judgment.
- D. There is a real dichotomy that is obvious when one examines the verses that deal with the Day of the Lord, some emphasizing horrible destruction and some emphasizing tremendous blessing.
 - 1. Mankind has sinned greatly against the Lord and the result will be devastation and calamity for the human race. Isa.13:6,9; Eze.30:3; Joe.1:15; Zep.1:14-18
 - 2. On the other hand, that day is spoken of in glowing terms of tremendous blessing, the likes of which the world has never seen. Isa.4:2; 11:10; Hos.2:18,21; Joe.3:18
- E. Therefore, there are clearly two distinct aspects of this extended period that begins with a massive slaughter, continues with an extended period of millennial blessing, and concludes with the final judgment.
- F. As we will detail, the Day of the Lord has an inauguration point effectively executed at the middle of Daniel's 70th week, and continues through the Great White Throne judgment.

IV. The timing and length of the Day of the Lord.

- A. Events that precede the Day of the Lord.
 - 1. The Word of God is quite clear that certain events happen before one can expect the Day of the Lord to commence.
 - 2. The phenomena that was foretold in Joe.2:31, which is also the subject of the sixth seal in Revelation, must occur before the Day of the Lord. Rev.6:12
 - a. The Word of God is clear that the destruction of political Babylon takes place just before the beginning of the Day of the Lord proper. Isa.13:6
 - b. The destruction of prophetic Edom (also code for the U.S. in certain passages) is identically scheduled as the Day of the Lord draws near. Oba.15
 - 3. Elijah must reappear in human history before the Day of the Lord begins, which appearance is detailed in the book of Revelation. Mal.4:5; Rev.11:3ff
 - 4. Antichrist must be resuscitated and brought back onto the stage of human history before the Day of the Lord can begin. 2The.2:1-3
 - 5. In that context, the Holy Spirit must cease to restrain the mystery of lawlessness, the church must be removed, and we must resume the final seven years of the Age of Israel. 2The.2:7-8
 - 6. There must be a massive peace movement, symbolized by the white horse of Rev.6:2, that deceives the world's populace. 1The.5:2-3
 - 7. Therefore, until one can identify all the above as having taken place, the Day of the Lord technically is not effective (causative of +J and Blessing).

8. However, there are verses in the N.T. that insinuate that the rapture is also associated with the Day of the Lord. 1Cor.1:8; 5:5; 2Cor.1:14
9. The Rapture occurs *co terminus* with the beginning of Daniel's 70th week.
- B. The *terminus a quo and terminus ad quem* for the Day of the Lord.
 1. Most interpreters through the centuries have held to one of two positions with respect to when the Day of the Lord actually begins.
 2. The first position holds that the Day of the Lord begins with the rapture of the Church since it is a period of intense judgment and destruction.
 3. This, coupled with Jesus' usage of the term *great tribulation*, has contributed to the widespread but erroneous use of the term *tribulation* to describe the events of Daniel's 70th week.
 4. The second position holds that the Day of the Lord begins with the Second Advent, and views the Millennium as the promised period of unprecedented blessing.
 5. However, both views have their problems.
 - a. The first view does not take into account the facts that Elijah and the Antichrist must be present on planet earth prior to the beginning of the Day of the Lord. Mal.4:5; 2The.2:2-3
 - b. Further, the Day of the Lord cannot begin at the rapture, since the United States is also destroyed prior to the Day of the Lord, which is described as being *near* but not present. Isa.13:6
 - c. The second view that the Day of the Lord commences at the Second Advent does not take into account the many passages that indicate that the Day of the Lord is a period that is characterized by great judgment on the nations. Eze.30:3; Joe.2:1; Zep.1:14-18
 6. So how are we to remedy the fact that the Day of the Lord is also insinuated in Paul's writings as including the Rapture?
 7. The solution is that there is an inaugural perception of this era and a technical manifestation or execution.
 8. Its inauguration is the Rapture that ushers in Christ's official execution of office beginning the period of judgment and blessing that has as its beginning the midpoint of Daniel's 70th week.
 9. This solution satisfies those things that must precede and Paul's references in apparent contradiction.
 10. The Rapture heralds the imminent reign of Christ beginning the official Day of the Lord mid-point Daniel's 70th week.
 11. 2Pet.3:10 gives permission to assume the Rapture instrumental to initiating the day and extending it to the dissolution of the universe.
 12. The *terminus ad quem* for the Day of the Lord is an undefined point that follows the end of the one thousand-year reign of Christ on planet earth.
 - a. At the end of the thousand years, Satan is released for a short but unspecified length of time. Rev.20:3,7
 - 1) John uses the phrase *mikro, n cro, non* (mikron chronon—a short time) a total of four times in his writings. Joh.7:33; 12:35; Rev.6:11; 20:3

- 2) Joh.7:33 refers to the time between September, 32 AD and the crucifixion in April, 33 AD, while John 12:35 refers to a period of less than a week. Joh.12:1
 - 3) The longest span in view is Rev.6:11 that refers to the final 3½ years of Daniel's 70th week.
 - 4) Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that this time is probably to be measured at most a few years.
- b. This will result in the Gog/Magog rebellion that will be summarily defeated by a firestorm that comes directly from heaven. Rev.20:9
 - c. Following the final imprisonment of Satan in the lake of fire, the original heavens and earth will be destroyed by unprecedented heat.
 - d. This event is specifically declared to come during the Day of the Lord. 2Pet.3:10; Rev.20:11
 - e. There is some question about whether or not the Great White Throne judgment is part of the Day of the Lord.
 - 1) Jesus Christ declared that He was the final judge of humanity as per the Father's decision. Joh.5:22,27
 - 2) Since the Son discharges this final judgment, it makes some sense to understand this as the event that actually closes the Day of the Lord.
 - 3) Further, the new creation is brought into existence at this time and the Day of God begins. 2Pet.3:12; Rev.21:3-4
13. Therefore, the Day of the Lord actually concludes with the Great White Throne judgment though we do not know the length of time that transpires between the end of the millennial reign of Christ and this event.
- C. The length of the Day of the Lord.
1. As we have demonstrated, the term *day* is used for an extended period of time that is more than a solar day in various places in the Bible.
 2. While the day of the Lord begins with a period of massive destruction, the Millennial passages in the OT envision an extended period of blessing for the earth. Hos.2:16-23; Isa.65:20-25; Zep.3:14-20
 3. The critical passage for determining the length of the Day of the Lord is found in 2Pet.3:8, which is found in the context of refuting the false scientific theory of uniformitarianism.
 - a. This passage explains the reality that the plan of God is not to be viewed in terms of the endless ages required by uniformitarian evolution; it is to be viewed in terms of one day equaling approximately one thousand years.
 - b. This allows for one Divine week, approximately seven thousand years in duration, in which the issues raised by the angelic conflict will be resolved.
 - c. The 7th day of the Divine week, the Day of the Lord, is characterized as a period of rest. Isa.14:3,7; Jer.50:34
 - d. This also explains certain enigmatic passages that envision a lengthy period of time but are referred to as *days*. Hos.6:1-2

4. Therefore, the Day of the Lord “proper” is actually 1003½ years long, with an unspecified period of time following.

V. Concluding observations.

- A. As with every significant prophetic event in history, God has revealed the specifics of this momentous period of time in His Word. Amos 3:7
- B. However, those that are negative will not understand what is coming upon the planet, but those few with doctrine will be oriented. Daniel 12:10
- C. This explains the *thief in the night* metaphor that is applied to the Day of the Lord. 1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Peter 3:10
- D. This is to be distinguished from the coming of Christ at the rapture, which also employs the thief metaphor, to remove the Church from the planet before *the hour of testing*. Revelation 3:3; 16:15
- E. All the OT promises to Israel will be fulfilled at that time as the new covenant goes into effect. Jeremiah 31:27-34; Joel 3:1
- F. However, the maladjusted Jews were chided by the prophets for their unrealistic expectations that the Day of the Lord would benefit them in spite of their evil. Amos 5:18-23
- G. The negative Jews will suffer the same treatment that the negative Gentiles receive from the hand of the Lord. Zephaniah 1:2-13
- H. The phrase “the Day of the Lord” is differentiated from the phrase “the Day of God” that looks to the new heavens and earth in its eternal state. 2 Peter 3:12