

THE DAY OF THE LORD

When Christ Takes the World Back From Satan and Evil Men

Lesson # 6

The Day of the Lord is a fascinating and yet complex subject. While it is fairly easy to interpret individual texts that describe the Day of the Lord, it is very difficult to try and synthesize all of the texts into a comprehensive statement or definition of the day of the Lord. Part of this is due to the variety of texts, their contexts, and the fact that there have been more than one “Days of the Lord.” In this lesson we will seek to search the Scriptures in order to understand the character and timing of the ultimate day when the Lord Jesus Christ takes the world back from Satan and evil men in order to establish His kingdom.

I. DEFINITION OF THE DAY OF THE LORD

- A. A biblical phrase prevalent among OT prophets who pointed to a future event or era (not necessarily a single twenty-four-hour day) during which God would visit judgment on Israel or the world. The NT authors interpreted the phrase in a futuristic sense but saw in Jesus Christ the beginning of the fulfillment of the Day of the Lord. For believers in Christ the Day of the Lord is an anticipation of hope; for unbelievers it holds only judgment leading to damnation.¹

- B. [Day of the Lord is] a special day at the end of time when God’s will and purpose for mankind and His world will be fulfilled. Many Bible students believe the Day of the Lord will be a long period of time rather than a single day—period when Christ will reign throughout the world before He cleanses heaven and earth in preparation for the eternal state of all mankind. But others believe the Day of the Lord will be an instantaneous event when Christ will return to earth to claim His faithful believers while consigning unbelievers to eternal damnation.²

- C. The phrase “Day of the Lord” and its derivatives describe a day or time when the Lord acts in judgment and wrath against the wicked. Certain texts employ the phrase to describe near and far future judgments where the Lord breaks forth upon the wicked with fury and anger. In the past God has done this by using other nations. He used Babylon to judge Egypt (Jer. 46:1-10; Ezek. 30:1-19). He used the Medes to judge Babylon (Isa. 13). But the Scriptures speak of an ultimate day or days when the Lord himself will break forth upon the wicked men of earth and will personally destroy the wicked in order to establish righteousness and blessing on the earth.

¹*Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms.*

²*Nelson’s New Illustrated Bible Dictionary.*

II. KEY SCRIPTURES ON THE DAY OF THE LORD, GOD AND CHRIST

A. Scriptures on the Day of the Lord

1. Isa. 2:12 For **the Lord of hosts will have a day** of reckoning Against everyone who is proud and lofty And against everyone who is lifted up, That he may be abased. 13 And it will be against all the cedars of Lebanon that are lofty and lifted up, Against all the oaks of Bashan, 14 Against all the lofty mountains, Against all the hills that are lifted up, 15 Against every high tower, Against every fortified wall, 16 Against all the ships of Tarshish And against all the beautiful craft. 17 The pride of man will be humbled And the loftiness of men will be abased; And the Lord alone will be exalted in that day, 18 But the idols will completely vanish. 19 Men will go into caves of the rocks And into holes of the ground Before the terror of the Lord And the splendor of His majesty, When He arises to make the earth tremble.
 - a. Isaiah chapter 2 speaks of God reigning on earth and displaying his majesty. Blessings are promised to the faithful in vss. 2-5 and they are called to humility in vss. 6-9 because of the Lord's judgment which He will bring upon the earth in vss. 10-22 "in that day." It is interesting to note that Isaiah's description here is very similar to what is described in the early part of the tribulation by John in Rev. 6:15-17 which says, *15 Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; 16 and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; 17 for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"*
2. Isa. 13:6-16 Wail, for **the day of the Lord** is near! It will come as destruction from the Almighty. 7 Therefore all hands will fall limp, And every man's heart will melt. 8 They will be terrified, Pains and anguish will take hold of them; They will writhe like a woman in labor, They will look at one another in astonishment, Their faces aflame. 9 Behold, **the day of the Lord** is coming, Cruel, with fury and burning anger, To make the land a desolation; And He will exterminate its sinners from it. 10 For the stars of heaven and their constellations Will not flash forth their light; The sun will be dark when it rises And the moon will not shed its light. 11 Thus I will punish the world for its evil And the wicked for their iniquity; I will also put an end to the arrogance of the proud And abase the haughtiness of the ruthless. 12 I will make mortal man scarcer than pure gold And mankind than the gold of Ophir. 13 Therefore I will make the heavens tremble, And the earth will be shaken from its place At the fury of the Lord of hosts In the day of His burning anger. 14 And it will be that like a hunted gazelle, Or like sheep with none to gather them, They will each turn to his own people, And each one flee to his own land. 15 Anyone who is found will be thrust through, And anyone who is captured will fall by the sword. 16 Their little ones also will be dashed to pieces Before their eyes; Their houses will be plundered And their wives ravished.
 - a. In this chapter Isaiah prophesies judgment on Babylon by the Medes. In the midst of this prophecy Isaiah discusses the Day of the Lord. It could be that Isaiah is saying that the Lord's judgment of Babylon is "the day of the Lord." Yet the description of the day of the Lord seems to describe the ultimate and final day of the Lord which was pictured in part by the nearer destruction of Babylon.

3. Joel 1:15 Alas for the day! For **the day of the Lord** is near, And it will come as destruction from the Almighty.
 - a. In chapter 1 Joel predicts judgment on Judah. A literal locust plague will leave the land stripped bare. Thus Joel is looking back to what has already happened in Judah. Then in chs. 2-3 Joel looks forward to what will happen in the future as God will send an army like locusts to judge Judah.

4. Joel 2:1, 11, 31 Blow a trumpet in Zion, And sound an alarm on My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, For **the day of the Lord** is coming; Surely it is near, . . . 11 The Lord utters His voice before His army; Surely His camp is very great, For strong is he who carries out His word. **The day of the Lord** is indeed great and very awesome, And who can endure it? . . . 31 “The sun will be turned into darkness And the moon into blood Before **the great and awesome day of the Lord** comes.
 - a. The entire chapter describes the judgment of the Day of the Lord. It continues on into ch. 3 where it is obvious that the ultimate Day of the Lord is in view.

5. Joel 3:14-17 Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For **the day of the Lord** is near in the valley of decision. 15 The sun and moon grow dark And the stars lose their brightness. 16 The Lord roars from Zion And utters His voice from Jerusalem, And the heavens and the earth tremble. But the Lord is a refuge for His people And a stronghold to the sons of Israel. 17 Then you will know that I am the Lord your God, Dwelling in Zion, My holy mountain. So Jerusalem will be holy, And strangers will pass through it no more.
 - a. It is clear from this text and the following verses that the Day of the Lord is a time where God’s wrath is poured out on the wicked but that it is also a time of rescue and blessing for the righteous who are delivered from their wicked oppressors and enjoy the establishment of Christ’s kingdom on earth.

6. Amos 5:18-20 Alas, you who are longing for **the day of the Lord**, For what purpose will **the day of the Lord** be to you? It will be darkness and not light; 19 As when a man flees from a lion And a bear meets him, Or goes home, leans his hand against the wall And a snake bites him. 20 Will not the day of the Lord be darkness instead of light, Even gloom with no brightness in it?
 - a. This text speaks of those in Israel who, for selfish reasons, desire the Lord to judge Israel. They long for the Day of the Lord, but do not realize that it will mean doom for them as well for they are blind to their sin and rebellion.

7. Zeph. 1:7, 14-16 Be silent before the Lord God! For **the day of the Lord** is near, For the Lord has prepared a sacrifice, He has consecrated His guests. . . 14 Near is **the great day of the Lord**, Near and coming very quickly; Listen, **the day of the Lord!** In it the warrior cries out bitterly. 15 A day of wrath is that day, A day of trouble and distress, A day of destruction and desolation, A day of darkness and gloom, A day of clouds and thick darkness, 16 A day of trumpet and battle cry Against the fortified cities And the high corner towers.
- a. The entire book of Zephaniah is about the Day of the Lord. He also refers to the Day of the Lord as “the day of God’s wrath” (1:18), “the day of the Lord’s anger” (2:2), and “the day when I rise up to prey” (3:8). Peter seems to borrow heavily from Zephaniah when he speaks of the Day of the Lord. Positively, Zephaniah explains how the Day of the Lord will bring peace and blessing to the righteous remnant of Israel.
8. Zech 14:1-5 Behold, **a day is coming for the Lord** when the spoil taken from you will be divided among you. 2 For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city will be captured, the houses plundered, the women ravished and half of the city exiled, but the rest of the people will not be cut off from the city. 3 Then the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fights on a day of battle. 4 In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south. 5 You will flee by the valley of My mountains, for the valley of the mountains will reach to Azel; yes, you will flee just as you fled before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the Lord, my God, will come, and all the holy ones with Him!
- a. Zechariah devotes a lot of material to what he refers to as “in that day” but it isn’t until Zech. 14:1 that the phrase “a day is coming for the Lord” is used. Hence it is difficult to be certain which of the many other references to “in that day” refer to the Day of the Lord (9:16; 12:3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 11; 13:1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 13, 20, 21). What is clear is that the Day of the Lord is clearly related to the second coming of Christ to earth to establish His kingdom.
9. Mal. 4:5 “Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible **day of the Lord**.”
- a. It is clear from the gospels (Mt. 11:7-15; 17:9-13) that John the Baptist was Elijah and also that there would be another Elijah to come. John came at Jesus’ first coming but the future Elijah will come before Jesus second coming and the great and terrible day of the Lord. It is very probable that one of the two witnesses of Rev. 11:3-6 is the promised future Elijah for he has the same ministry and performs the same miracles as Elijah did in the Old Testament.

10. Acts 2:20 'The sun will be turned into darkness And the moon into blood, Before the great and glorious **day of the Lord** shall come.
- a. Peter quotes Joel's prophecy of the Day of the Lord in this portion of Acts during the birth of the church at Pentecost. It is a difficult text to interpret. Peter says in vs. 16 "*this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel.*" He doesn't use the more common phrase "this is to fulfill." So interpreters have wondered why Peter quoted Joel. Here are some suggestions: 1) Peter quoted Joel because he thought the prophecy was going to be fulfilled completely but was wrong, 2) Peter quoted Joel not because he thought the prophecy was being fulfilled but because what was happening at Pentecost (speaking in tongues and the Holy Spirit being poured out) was the same kind of thing that Joel predicted, 3) Peter quoted Joel to emphasize the last statement in the portion of Joel he quoted "*and it shall be that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.*" 4) Peter was teaching that some portions of Joel were being fulfilled. He quoted the entire section because there were parts being fulfilled e.g., pouring out of the Holy Spirit and many being saved were spread out in the prophecy, but he knew that the ultimate fulfilment would be future. It is clear that some of Joel's prophecy quoted by Peter was not fulfilled at Pentecost.
11. I Thess. 5:1-6 Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. 2 For you yourselves know full well that **the day of the Lord** will come just like a thief in the night. 3 While they are saying, "Peace and safety!" then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape. 4 But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief; 5 for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness; so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober.
- a. In this text Paul is trying to clear up some confusion the Thessalonians had about the Day of the Lord. Apparently some false teachers were teaching that it had already come and gone. Paul indicates that it will come like a thief for those who do not know Christ bringing destruction upon them. Believers, however, will be expecting this day as it will mean salvation for them. This argues strongly that the Day of the Lord is or commences at the second coming of Christ.
12. II Thess. 2:1-4 Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, 2 that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that **the day of the Lord** has come. 3 Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, 4 who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.

- a. Apparently the false teachers were still teaching that the Day of the Lord had already taken place. Paul then gives more specifics about the Day of the Lord so that they can be assured it has not taken place. Paul gives us these clues, 1) Day of the Lord is the same as or includes the second coming, 2) when it happens we will already be gathered together to Christ (raptured), 3) it can't happen until the apostasy happens first (during tribulation), and 4) it can't happen until the antichrist is revealed and commits the abomination of desolation. This text seems to argue that the Day of the Lord follows after the tribulation events described and that it either includes the last half of the tribulation or does not include the tribulation but starts or is synonymous with the second coming.
13. II Pet. 3:10 But **the day of the Lord** will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.
- a. Here again, the Day of the Lord is described as coming like a thief, specifically upon false teachers, and the entire heavens and earth being burnt up. We know this doesn't happen until the end of the millennial reign of Christ. So Peter must either be saying that the second coming and the millennium culminated in the destruction of heaven and earth, or that the destruction of heaven and earth is a separate Day of the Lord. The following context also reveals that the Day of the Lord is synonymous with the day of God (see below).

B. Scriptures on the Day of God

1. II Pet. 3:10-13 But **the day of the Lord** will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. 11 Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, 12 looking for and hastening the coming of **the day of God**, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! 13 But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.
- a. Here Paul starts off by speaking of the Day of the Lord and then he refers to the Day of the Lord as "*the day of God.*" The end result of the Day of the Lord is that the heavens and earth are first destroyed with fire and then recreated. This, as mentioned above, does not happen until after the millennium.

2. Rev. 16:13-16 And I saw coming out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs; 14 for they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them together for the war of **the great day of God, the Almighty**. 15 (“Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his clothes, so that he will not walk about naked and men will not see his shame.”) 16 And they gathered them together to the place which in Hebrew is called Har-Magedon.
 - a. We have already learned from II Pet. 3:10-13 that the Day of the Lord and the Day of God are one and the same. Here we learn that the Day of God happens at the time of or begins with the events which occur at the end of the tribulation in between the sixth and seventh bowls of wrath poured out on the earth. The nations are gathered together for war in the Valley of Megiddo to fight against Israel immediately preceding the second coming.

C. **Scriptures on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ**

1. I Cor. 1:7-8 so that you are not lacking in any gift, awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, 8 who will also confirm you to the end, blameless in **the day of our Lord Jesus Christ**.
 - a. Paul opens his letter encouraging the Corinthians to persevere until the second coming so that they will be blameless in *“the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.”* Paul seems to indicate that the second coming ushers in the Day of our Lord Jesus Christ or is one and the same with it.
2. II Cor. 1:14 just as you also partially did understand us, that we are your reason to be proud as you also are ours, in **the day of our Lord Jesus**.
 - a. In this text, like I Cor. 1:7-8, Paul is encouraging the Corinthians in the opening of his letter. His hope is that the Corinthians will have understanding of the truth Paul is trying to communicate to them until the end. The reason Paul gives is so that he will have reason to be proud at their steadfastness *“in the day of our Lord Jesus.”* Again, as in I Cor. 1:7-8 above, Paul seems to be referring to the time of the second coming or the millennium following it.

D. **Scriptures on the day of the Lord Jesus**

1. I Cor. 5:5 I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in **the day of the Lord Jesus**.
 - a. In this text Paul discusses a case of church discipline and his plan of action is to remove the unrepentant man from the church, give the man over to his sin and Satan, so that when he dies his spirit will be saved in *“the day of the Lord Jesus.”* Since the resurrection

of believers doesn't happen until the second coming, this seems to indicate that "*the day of the Lord Jesus*" is one and the same with the millennial reign of Christ.

E. **Scriptures on the Day of Christ Jesus**

1. Phil. 1:6 For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until **the day of Christ Jesus**.
 - a. As at the beginning of I & II Corinthians Paul gives encouragement to the Philippians that God will continue to work in them until "*the day of Christ Jesus*." Believers continue to grow in maturity until they die or until Jesus Christ returns. Hence the second coming seems to be indicated by the phrase "*day of Christ Jesus*."

F. **Scriptures on the Day of Christ**

1. Phil. 1:10 so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until **the day of Christ**;
 - a. Though Paul leaves off the name "Jesus", it is clear from the flow of the context and since "*the day of Christ Jesus*" is in such near proximity to the "*day of Christ*" that one and the same day is being spoken of which would be the second coming of Christ.
2. Phil. 2:16 holding fast the word of life, so that in **the day of Christ** I will have reason to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain.
 - a. See note from Phil. 1:10 above.

G. **Summary observations about the Day of the Lord**

1. Day of the Lord won't come until after the forerunner Elijah which is most likely a reference to one of the two witnesses in Rev. 11.
2. Day of the Lord won't come until after the Holy Spirit is poured out and visions and dreams are given to common people.
3. Day of the Lord will begin or happen after the rapture of the saints.
4. Day of the Lord will not be over or begin until a great apostasy occurs.
5. It will not be over until the Antichrist is revealed and commits the abomination of desolation (3 ½ years into the tribulation).

6. Day of the Lord will not be over until God's wrath is poured out on the wicked.
7. Day of the Lord will not be over until the 1000 year reign of Christ is concluded.
8. Day of the Lord will not be over until the present heaven and earth are burnt up and replaced by the new heaven and earth.

H. **Key questions**

1. **Is the Day of the Lord synonymous with Day of Christ, Day of Christ Jesus, Day of our Lord Jesus Christ, Day of the Lord Jesus, Day of God, and Day of God the Almighty?**
2. **When does the Day of the Lord begin?**
3. **Are there more than one future day/s of the Lord to be fulfilled or is there just one?**

III. **APPLICATION**

- A. Don't get discouraged about the world we live in and its wickedness. Jesus Christ is coming again to make things right.
- B. Knowing the fear of the Lord and the judgment to come upon unbelievers, be diligent to share the gospel with the lost.
- C. Be faithfully doing the Lord's will now and anticipate that at any moment you could be raptured and be with the Lord. As a believer you should not allow yourself to be taken off guard by His coming but continually live in anticipation of the church's gathering together to be with the Lord.
- D. In our world there are many who cry "peace, peace" when there is no peace. The world wants to have peace and wickedness together but the Bible says "there is no peace for the wicked" (Isa. 48:22; 57:21).