

ESCHATOLOGY: DOCTRINE OF LAST THINGS

PART 61

THE DAY OF THE LORD

Our study of the Day of the Lord concerns the end of history, but in the Old Testament it could, at times, refer to something, while future, that could be either near term or long term in nature. Context decides that issue. That needs to be kept in mind because these two different times can be right next to each other in any particular Scripture which may be confusing. The key to observing this situation usually involves the things that did not happen in the near term; therefore, they have to be something that will happen in the future.

There seems to be some differences between the Day of the Lord, the Day of Jacob's Trouble, the Tribulation, and the Day of Christ that need to be explored as well.

“God's servants the prophets spoke of the day of the Lord as both near historical and far eschatological events. Many passages contain a movement from the near to the far event. The prominent theme of every 'day of the Lord' prophecy is God's judgment of sin. The blessings of God's reign are subsequent to and a result of the day of the Lord, but they are not a part of it.... 'The Day of the Lord' is a biblical phrase used by God's prophets to describe either the immediate future or the ultimate eschatological consummation. They used it to describe several events. Readers must interpret the appearance of it in its context to determine whether the prophet expected the immediate historical act of God or Yahweh's ultimate eschatological vision.” [Richard L. Mayhue, “Day of the Lord” in *The Popular Encyclopedia of Bible Prophecy*, p. 76].

For example, the book of Obadiah reveals God's judgment on Edom for their treatment of Israel, but in the second half of the book, the end times is clearly the subject. “Edom illustrates God's judgment to come on all nations who rebel in arrogance against God. The day of the Lord may refer to any time God judges by entering into world affairs. Most frequently, though, it refers to (a) God's judgments in the Great Tribulation and at the return of Jesus Christ in glory, and/or (b) God's establishing of the Millennium. In other words, the Lord's 'day' is when He will bring all things under His rule. Edom's humiliation foreshadows what the Lord will do to all nations who similarly mistreat Israel. Besides her past humiliation, Edom will be repopulated in the future and with other nations will again come under God's wrath in the forthcoming day of the Lord when Christ returns to establish His reign.” [Walter L. Baker, “Obadiah” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, p. 1457]. Context needs to be seriously considered when determining whether or not the day of the Lord refers to the end times or to some activity or period of time before that.

Obadiah 15–17 ¹⁵“For the day of the LORD draws near on all the nations. As you have done, it will be done to you. Your dealings will return on your own head. ¹⁶“Because just as you drank on My holy mountain, All the nations will drink continually. They will drink and swallow And become as if they had never existed. ¹⁷“But on Mount Zion there will be those who escape [the Remnant], And it will be holy. And the house of Jacob will possess their possessions.

“The Day of the Lord” is only in the New Testament four times, but the book of Revelation reveals a powerful description of the end times events we variously call The Day of the Lord without actually using the term or the term Tribulation. The words “that day” are used more frequently in the New Testament and they seem to refer to the beginning of the Lord’s reign over the Messianic Kingdom and to the Judgment Seat of Christ. For example, during the last Passover, the Lord said He would not drink wine again until “that day” when He drinks it with His disciples in the Kingdom, presumably at the Wedding Supper of the Lamb.

Matthew 26:29 ²⁹“But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom.”

Paul used “that day” to refer to the Judgment Seat of Christ.

2 Timothy 1:16–18 ¹⁶The Lord grant mercy to the house of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains; ¹⁷but when he was in Rome, he eagerly searched for me and found me— ¹⁸the Lord grant to him to find mercy from the Lord on that day—and you know very well what services he rendered at Ephesus.

2 Timothy 4:8 ⁸in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.

The “Day of the Lord” in the New Testament does refer to the end times and it affirms the dispensational understanding of the term.

Acts 2:20 ²⁰THE SUN WILL BE TURNED INTO DARKNESS AND THE MOON INTO BLOOD, BEFORE THE GREAT AND GLORIOUS DAY OF THE LORD SHALL COME.

1 Thessalonians 5:2 ²For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night.

2 Thessalonians 2:2 ²that 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.

2 Peter 3:10 ¹⁰But 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.

Jeremiah 30 provides an excellent description of the judgment of Israel, the judgment of the nations' who persecute her, and of her restoration. Jeremiah called this a time of Jacob's distress as translated in the NASB and it is translated as the time of Jacob's trouble in other translations (KJV, NKJV, ASV, HCSB, NET Bible). The Hebrew word is צָרָה meaning trouble, distress, or calamity and all are good translations of the word, but "trouble" just seems to me to be the most natural way to think of it.

Jeremiah 30:1–7 ¹The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, ²"Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Write all the words which I have spoken to you in a book. ³'For behold, days are coming,' declares the LORD, 'when I will restore the fortunes of My people Israel and Judah.' The LORD says, 'I will also bring them back to the land that I gave to their forefathers and they shall possess it.'" ⁴Now these are the words which the LORD spoke concerning Israel and concerning Judah: ⁵"For thus says the LORD, 'I have heard a sound of terror, Of dread, and there is no peace. ⁶'Ask now, and see If a male can give birth. Why do I see every man With his hands on his loins, as a woman in childbirth? And why have all faces turned pale? ⁷'Alas! for that day is great, There is none like it; And it is the time of Jacob's distress, But he will be saved from it.

The near-term aspect of this prophecy is the impending judgment of Judah by God's agent of judgment, Babylon, but this prophecy also has long term aspects. There will be a day, still in the future, when both Israel and Judah will be passed under the rod of God's judgment and after that the Remnant restored into the land. This cannot be referring to the restoration following the Babylonian captivity because Israel, the Northern Kingdom, was not judged, their judgment had already happened at the hands of Assyria, and not restored at the time when Judah returned to the land from Babylon. This must be referring to a different, future time. Both kingdoms will be restored together at the end of the time of Jacob's Trouble. This restoration into the land of Israel is the fulfillment of the Land Covenant in Deuteronomy 30:1-10. The description of the time of Jacob's Trouble indicates it will be a terrifying time for the Jewish people. Actually, it will be a terrible time for all people living on the earth at the time, but Israel and Judah are the subjects of this prophecy. Through Jeremiah, God's promise is that Israel will, at the end of the time he called Jacob's Trouble, be saved from out of this terrible time.

Those who deny dispensational distinctions must restrict this prophecy to the return of Judah to Babylon.

"The historical setting in which Jeremiah predicted Israel's salvation from 'a time of trouble' is clearly stated as the promised deliverance from the Babylonian captivity. Chapters 30 and 31 of Jeremiah contain an anthology of God's restoration promises, written shortly after Nebuchadnezzar had deported the king of Judah, along with ten

thousand Jews, to exile in 597 B.C. These restoration promises inspired the exiled Jews with new hope for the end of the predicted seventy years of captivity. Through Jeremiah the Lord promised a new exodus from Babylon for a repentant, godly Israel." [Hans K. LaRondelle, *The Israel of God in Prophecy: Principles of Prophetic Interpretation*, p. 119]. One problem with this thinking is that only a small part of the Jews went back to Israel from Babylon. All Israel will be saved and restored at the end of Jacob's Trouble.

Jeremiah 30:8–11 ⁸'It shall come about on that day,' declares the LORD of hosts, 'that I will break his yoke from off their neck and will tear off their bonds; and strangers will no longer make them their slaves. ⁹'But they shall serve the LORD their God and David their king, whom I will raise up for them. ¹⁰'Fear not, O Jacob My servant,' declares the LORD, 'And do not be dismayed, O Israel; For behold, I will save you from afar And your offspring from the land of their captivity. And Jacob will return and will be quiet and at ease, And no one will make him afraid. ¹¹'For I am with you,' declares the LORD, 'to save you; For I will destroy completely all the nations where I have scattered you, Only I will not destroy you completely. But I will chasten [יָצַר] you justly And will by no means leave you unpunished.'

In verse 8, the Day of the Lord is referred to as "that day." The Lord is going to judge those who have subjugated and persecuted Israel. This almost certainly refers to the entire Gentile world because at the end, the whole world will have turned against Israel and will be trying to destroy her. Revelation 19:19 says the "kings of the earth and their armies" will be arrayed against Israel. David, their king, will be raised and assume His position as King. Without going into detail, I will say theologians have different opinions concerning the identity of David. Some believe he is the resurrected David who will be the prince of Israel during the Millennium (Ezek. 34:23-24, 37:24-25) and others believe He will be the resurrected Messiah, the son of David. Through Jeremiah, the Lord offers comfort to the Jewish people because He is going to save them in the end. At that time, they will be at peace and no longer threatened by other people and nations where He scattered them during the Diaspora. The nations of the world are going to be completely destroyed and their governments will be replaced by the one theocratic government headquartered in Israel and ruled by the Messianic King Jesus. God also tells them they will be disciplined but not to the point of complete destruction. The purpose of God for the Day of the Lord is to discipline Israel and through this disciplinary process to identify the Remnant who will enter the land to populate Israel in the Kingdom. Chasten, יָצַר, means to correct, discipline, or punish in order to improve behavior implying the training of a person. As a father disciplines his children in order to change their behavior, so the Heavenly Father will discipline Israel in order to bring them to faith.

Jeremiah 30:12–17 ¹²"For thus says the LORD, 'Your wound is incurable And your injury is serious. ¹³'There is no one to plead your cause; No healing for your sore, No recovery for you. ¹⁴'All your lovers have forgotten you, They do not seek you; For I have wounded you with the wound of an enemy, With the punishment of a cruel one, Because your iniquity is great And your sins are numerous. ¹⁵'Why do you cry out over your injury? Your

pain is incurable. Because your iniquity is great And your sins are numerous, I have done these things to you. ¹⁶Therefore all who devour you will be devoured; And all your adversaries, every one of them, will go into captivity; And those who plunder you will be for plunder, And all who prey upon you I will give for prey. ¹⁷For I will restore you to health And I will heal you of your wounds,' declares the LORD, 'Because they have called you an outcast, saying: "It is Zion; no one cares for her."'

The Day of the Lord will become necessary because of Israel's sin. Her sin was the rejection of her King and His Kingdom when He appeared among them and offered them their Kingdom. As a result, their nation was destroyed and scattered around the world where they have been scorned, persecuted, and killed on a consistent, constant basis since 70 A.D. However, God promises to reverse this situation. He will turn the Gentiles nation's sins against Israel back on their own heads and He will heal and restore Israel. This involves both physical and spiritual healing. There seems to be a warning here for Israel against relying on alliances with other nations to help them. Their help will only ultimately and finally come from the Lord; all others—including the USA—will not only abandon them but totally turn on them in the end. We see this even today. No United States administration has been totally supportive of Israel; all have supported some things and done some other things that are harmful to Israel's sovereignty, peace, and safety. Some of them have been more supportive than others; obviously, the Obama administration was overtly hostile to Israel. Even President Trump has backed off his promise to move the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem because he thinks he can pull off a peace deal and moving the embassy would harm the chances of doing that. Many nations in the world want Israel destroyed and the Jews killed right now. They are surrounded by nations who want nothing but their destruction. God will protect Israel now, discipline the nation in His way and in His timing in the near future, and restore them in the Kingdom at the end of it all.

Jeremiah 30:18–24 ¹⁸“Thus says the LORD, ‘Behold, I will restore the fortunes of the tents of Jacob And have compassion on his dwelling places; And the city will be rebuilt on its ruin, And the palace will stand on its rightful place. ¹⁹From them will proceed thanksgiving And the voice of those who celebrate; And I will multiply them and they will not be diminished; I will also honor them and they will not be insignificant. ²⁰Their children also will be as formerly, And their congregation shall be established before Me; And I will punish all their oppressors. ²¹Their leader shall be one of them, And their ruler shall come forth from their midst; And I will bring him near and he shall approach Me; For who would dare to risk his life to approach Me?’ declares the LORD. ²²You shall be My people, And I will be your God.’” ²³Behold, the tempest of the LORD! Wrath has gone forth, A sweeping tempest; It will burst on the head of the wicked. ²⁴The fierce anger of the LORD will not turn back Until He has performed and until He has accomplished The intent of His heart; In the latter days you will understand this.

It is interesting to note the last clause of verse 23: “in the latter days you will understand this.” This book was written over 2,500 years ago but understanding will not come to the

Jewish people until the Day of the Lord serves to bring them back to the God who created them to be His people in the first place. Once again, God promised to restore Israel. They will be His people not only in theory but in practice. Their enemies will be judged and they will become the people God originally created them to be. God promised to physically restore Israel.

The prophet Joel is a good example of near term prophecies morphing into prophecies of the Day of the Lord and the restoration of the Remnant. The locust plague is a type of the Day of the Lord. Beginning in Joel 2:18, deliverance and restoration become the theme. Some theologians restrict the meaning to restoration after the locust plague, but there are some parts of the prophecy that point to the distant future. Beginning with this verse, Busenitz believes the prophet turned to the future and predicted Israel's material restoration, spiritual restoration, and national restoration." [Irvin A. Busenitz, *Joel & Obadiah*, p. 161].

Further, some of the things written have never characterized Israel up to this point in history. In Joel 2:19, the prophet revealed that God promised "I will never again make you a reproach among the nations." Israel is still a reproach among the nations; that situation has never been rectified. "[T]he never again finality of 2:19 suggests that the time period in view encompasses the era of millennial prosperity, blessing, and security. Any fulfillment prior to that time would reduce the impact of those words." [Irvin A. Busenitz, *Joel & Obadiah*, p. 167]. In verses 26 and 27, God said, "My people will never be put to shame" which also has never characterized the nation.

There is no doubt beginning in Joel 2:28, the subject turns to the Day of the Lord.

Joel 2:28–32 ²⁸"It will come about after this That I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; And your sons and daughters will prophesy, Your old men will dream dreams, Your young men will see visions. ²⁹"Even on the male and female servants I will pour out My Spirit in those days. ³⁰"I will display wonders in the sky and on the earth, Blood, fire and columns of smoke. ³¹"The sun will be turned into darkness And the moon into blood Before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. ³²"And it will come about that whoever calls on the name of the LORD Will be delivered; For on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem There will be those who escape, As the LORD has said, Even among the survivors whom the LORD calls.

A Remnant of Israel will be saved and all Gentiles who believe in the Messiah will also be saved during this time. From this time into the Millennium, the Spirit's ministry will be more visible and active than ever before. David Levy put it this way: "The Holy Spirit will be manifested in all His fullness during the Millennial Kingdom, much greater than during any period in history. It will be the Spirit's ministry to restrain *sin*. There will be no spiritual conflict since demonic activity is nonexistent, for Satan is bound in the bottomless pit, and Christ is suppressing evil by ruling with a rod of iron.... It will be the Spirit's ministry to convict people of their need for *salvation*. though freed from the oppressive domina-

tion of Satanic power, men will still need to receive Christ. Those born during the Kingdom Age will be led to Christ by the Holy Spirit like their parents before them." [David M. Levy, *Joel: Th Day of the Lord*, p. 54]. Whether he is completely accurate here or not, it will be a time of considerable Holy Spirit activity.

Joel 3:1-17 refers to God's judgment on the nations for the way they have mistreated His people over the centuries. "The struggles and sufferings of Israel are well documented from Egyptian slavery to the Roman destruction of Jerusalem. Like an echo, the Diaspora Jew would face nineteen more centuries of anguish as the shadow of persecution dogged their every footstep throughout the world. They would experience the fire of the Spanish Inquisition, the stench of Vienna's ghetto, the poverty of Poland's peasantry, the sword of Russian pogroms and the horrible heel of Nazi annihilation. Arising from the ashes of despair comes the cry, *Where was God in defense of His people?* He was there, not taken by surprise at the cruelty perpetrated against His chosen, but silently waiting for the fulfillment of His Word predicted centuries earlier, for Moses had predicted in the Law that Israel's disobedience would produce God's discipline. Sad to say, the discipline is not finished. Israel is yet to face her greatest holocaust known as 'Jacob's trouble', a time of unprecedented persecution when, once again, the nations of the world will converge upon Israel." [David M. Levy, *Joel: Th Day of the Lord*, p. 58].

Joel 3:1-2 ¹"For behold, in those days and at that time, When I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, ²I will gather all the nations And bring them down to the valley of Jehoshaphat. Then I will enter into judgment with them there On behalf of My people and My inheritance, Israel, Whom they have scattered among the nations; And they have divided up My land.

Finally, Joel addresses the truth of Israel's restoration during the Messianic Kingdom.

Joel 3:18-21 ¹⁸And in that day The mountains will drip with sweet wine, And the hills will flow with milk, And all the brooks of Judah will flow with water; And a spring will go out from the house of the LORD To water the valley of Shittim. ¹⁹Egypt will become a waste, And Edom will become a desolate wilderness, Because of the violence done to the sons of Judah, In whose land they have shed innocent blood. ²⁰But Judah will be inhabited forever And Jerusalem for all generations. ²¹And I will avenge their blood which I have not avenged, For the LORD dwells in Zion.

Amos described the Day of the Lord for the Israelites of the Northern Kingdom who thought the Day of the Lord would be a day of blessing in spite of their rebellion. This description of that Day as a day of judgment and horror is a type of the Tribulation when the entire nation and its people will be subjected to the disciplinary hand of God's wrath.

Amos 5:18-20 ¹⁸Alas, 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; ¹⁹As 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. ²⁰Will not the day of the LORD be darkness instead of light, Even gloom with no brightness in it?

Isaiah revealed a prophecy of “the last days” that predicted the worldwide influence the mountain of the Lord will have on the people of the Messianic Kingdom. This will be the result of and follow the Tribulation judgments that purify the world and identify the Remnant.

Isaiah 2:2–4 ²Now it will come about that In the last days The mountain of the house of the LORD Will be established as the chief of the mountains, And will be raised above the hills; And all the nations will stream to it. ³And many peoples will come and say, “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, To the house of the God of Jacob; That He may teach us concerning His ways And that we may walk in His paths.” For the law will go forth from Zion And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. ⁴And He will judge between the nations, And will render decisions for many peoples; And they will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, And never again will they learn war.

Then Isaiah tells them since they have the Law and the mountain of the Lord, they should already be living in light of it, but they are not. Then he describes their behavior that is going to result in the Day of the Lord culminating with the exaltation of God. Paganism is the ultimate act of rebellion against God. To this day, most Jews are atheistic and do not participate in any religious activities with the exception of superficial participation in some of the feasts which they consider to be more in the nature of cultural activities and Jewish identity rather than acts of obedience and worship. Affluence is another problem. The Jewish people have been blessed by God to be economically prosperous no matter where they are and many of them have made the acquisition of wealth an idol. At any rate, their rebellion is going to culminate in the Day of the Lord. “Wealth has induced a false sense of security and boosted their national pride.” [Victor Buksbazen, *The Prophet Isaiah: A Commentary*, p. 118]. Isaiah was describing the state of the nation in his time, but it is still, at its core, the same. These things need to be purged and the nation needs to be purified and that will happen in that day.

Isaiah 2:5–11 ⁵Come, house of Jacob, and let us walk in the light of the LORD. ⁶For You have abandoned Your people, the house of Jacob, Because they are filled with influences from the east, And they are soothsayers like the Philistines, And they strike bargains with the children of foreigners. ⁷Their land has also been filled with silver and gold And there is no end to their treasures; Their land has also been filled with horses And there is no end to their chariots. ⁸Their land has also been filled with idols; They worship the work of their hands, That which their fingers have made. ⁹So the common man has been humbled And the man of importance has been abased, But do not forgive them. ¹⁰Enter the rock and hide in the dust From the terror of the LORD and from the splendor

of His majesty. ¹¹The proud look of man will be abased And the loftiness of man will be humbled, And the LORD alone will be exalted in that day.

Isaiah then reveals a day that will come during which not only the Jewish people but the people of the world will be judged. He described the horrors of that day.

Isaiah 2:12–22 ¹²For 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. ¹³And it will be against all the cedars of Lebanon that are lofty and lifted up, Against all the oaks of Bashan, ¹⁴Against all the lofty mountains, Against all the hills that are lifted up, ¹⁵Against every high tower, Against every fortified wall, ¹⁶Against all the ships of Tarshish And against all the beautiful craft. ¹⁷The pride of man will be humbled And the loftiness of men will be abased; And the LORD alone will be exalted in that day, ¹⁸But the idols will completely vanish. ¹⁹Men 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. ²⁰In that day men will cast away to the moles and the bats Their idols of silver and their idols of gold, Which they made for themselves to worship, ²¹In order to go into the caverns of the rocks and the clefts of the cliffs Before the terror of the LORD and the splendor of His majesty, When He arises to make the earth tremble. ²²Stop regarding man, whose breath of life is in his nostrils; For why should he be esteemed?

In chapter 3, Isaiah returns to dealing with Israel's sin and rebellion. God is going to remove the leaders of the nation, He is going to judge them and the people, and He denounces the women of Judah. But at the end of it all, the Kingdom will be established.

Isaiah 4:2–6 ²In that day the Branch of the LORD will be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth will be the pride and the adornment of the survivors of Israel. ³It will come about that he who is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy—everyone who is recorded for life in Jerusalem. ⁴When the Lord has washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion and purged the bloodshed of Jerusalem from her midst, by the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning, ⁵then the LORD will create over the whole area of Mount Zion and over her assemblies a cloud by day, even smoke, and the brightness of a flaming fire by night; for over all the glory will be a canopy. ⁶There will be a shelter to give shade from the heat by day, and refuge and protection from the storm and the rain.

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