

Chapter 7 The Day of the Lord

If we are supposed to work toward the goal of seeing the Kingdom of God come on earth, then we should develop a mental picture or vision of what the accomplished goal will look like. Without a vision it is difficult to remain focused, we are easily distracted and we are likely to wander aimlessly. [1] As already pointed out, the Kingdom of God is political, a form of government that will bring order to the planet. The better we understand it, the more zeal and discipline we are likely to have in our pursuit of that day.

What is the Day of the Lord?

There are many references in scripture to the Day of the Lord. This term is generally understood to be connected to the return of Christ or the end of the age. One such reference is found in Second Peter.

2 Peter 3:10 (KJV)

10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

Besides the things in the verse above, other things commonly associated with this day or the end of the age include: the return of Christ, mortals becoming immortal, the reward of the righteous, the judgment of the wicked, and so on. [2] These are all true, but some imagine these things to happen simultaneously as if they will happen all on one day. Though this day may *come* suddenly, we should not assume it will be over quickly or last only 24 hours. If we only read 2 Peter 3:10 (the passage quoted above), it is easy to view this event as a supernatural act of God that takes place almost instantaneously. Yet, just prior to this picture of the day of judgment, Peter gave us an interpretive clue to understanding it.

2 Peter 3:8 (KJV)

8 But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

One day with the Lord is as a thousand years. [3] This is an important key to understanding the Day of the Lord, (implying God's day, a day of judgment) is actually a long period of time—one thousand years.

The Order of End Events

The Apostle Paul spoke of these end events being drawn out over a period of time and also spoke of their order.

1 Corinthians 15:20-26 (KJV)

20 But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.

21 For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.

22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

23 But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.

24 Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father;

when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.

25 For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.

26 The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.

In verse 22 he makes a general statement and lumps everyone together speaking of all being “made alive” or resurrected. Then, in verse 23, he clarifies the general statement saying that there is an order, some will be made alive before others. First is Christ. This may also include those who were raised from the dead and walked in the streets of Jerusalem at Christ’s resurrection, Christ being the first of the firstfruits (see Matt 27:52-53). Then there is a resurrection of those that belong to Christ at His coming.

In verse 24, Paul again makes a general statement about the end. It is interesting that Paul, in verse 24, seems to view the end as after Christ’s coming. He then clarifies the statement about the end by explaining that, before Jesus presents the Kingdom to the Father, He must reign until all rule and authority is subdued and the last enemy, death, is defeated.

Defeating death is likely a reference to humans living longer than 1000 years. Since sin entered the human race, no human has ever lived past the 1000 year barrier. Methuselah was the oldest, living 969 years (Gen 5:27). God told Adam and Eve regarding the forbidden fruit, “...in the day you eat of it, you shall surely die” (Gen 2:17). Remember, with the Lord, a thousand years is as one day, therefore, for a human to live past the 1000 year mark would represent victory over death and complete redemption from the curse of sin. Then, having established the Kingdom on earth, having put down all authority, and having defeated death, Jesus will present the Kingdom to the Father. This explains why the millennium, the Day of the Lord, must be a literal 1000 year period.

If Paul were speaking from an outline it might look something like this:

I. Resurrection

A. Christ the firstfruits

B. Those who belong to Christ at His coming

II. The End (the millennium)

A. Reign (establish the kingdom)

B. Put down all rule and authority

C. Destroy death

D. Present the kingdom to the Father

[4]

The millennium period is also explained in Revelation, Chapter 20. It describes the resurrection of the just, who will rule and reign with Christ in His Kingdom for a thousand years. This resurrection is called the first resurrection:

Revelation 20:4-6 (KJV)

4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

5 But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.

6 Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

[5]

At or near the end of this thousand-year period Satan will be released from his prison to deceive the nations. Many inhabitants of the earth will participate in a rebellion against the Kingdom of God. This rebellion will be dealt with quickly; they will be consumed by fire from heaven. After this firestorm, the wicked will be raised to receive eternal judgment (see Rev 20:7-14). [6]

So, we see that this thousand-year period will begin at the first resurrection, and the appearing of Jesus Christ as King of Kings. [7] Though the resurrection of the just and the change to immortality will happen in a moment of time (see 1 Cor 15:51,53), the day of judgment will not be brief in its duration. This day of judgment will be a time when Jesus will literally and bodily sit as King of the earth with the Church ruling with Him.

Jesus Explains Preparing for the Kingdom

As they came to understand that Jesus was the promised Messiah, His disciples thought He would soon set up His Kingdom and rule the earth. In Luke Chapter 19, we read that Jesus was approaching Jerusalem and the disciples thought He was going there to establish His throne in Israel—not to be crucified! [8] Therefore, Jesus told them a parable. Why? Because they thought the Kingdom of God would appear immediately (see Luke 19:11-27). [9]

In this parable Jesus gave them an overview of events from His ascension to the time of His second coming. He compared Himself to a nobleman of a certain country leaving on a long journey to receive a kingdom and return. This parable provides the framework from which we build our understanding of the second coming and our responsibility to prepare for it. [10]

Luke 19:11-27 (NKJV)

11 Now as they heard these things, He spoke another parable, because He was near Jerusalem and because they thought the kingdom of God would appear immediately.

12 Therefore He said: "A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return.

13 So he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas, and said to them, 'Do business till I come.'

14 But his citizens hated him, and sent a delegation after him, saying, 'We will not have this man to reign over us.'

15 And so it was that when he returned, having received the kingdom, he then commanded these servants, to whom he had given the money, to be called to him, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. 16 Then came the first, saying, 'Master, your mina has earned ten minas.'

17 And he said to him, 'Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities.'

18 And the second came, saying, 'Master, your mina has earned five minas.'

19 Likewise he said to him, 'You also be over five cities.'

20 Then another came, saying, 'Master, here is your mina, which I have kept put away in a handkerchief.

21 For I feared you, because you are an austere man. You collect what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow.'

22 And he said to him, 'Out of your own mouth I will judge you, you wicked servant. You knew

that I was an austere man, collecting what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow.

23 Why then did you not put my money in the bank, that at my coming I might have collected it with interest?"

24 And he said to those who stood by, "Take the mina from him, and give it to him who has ten minas."

25 (But they said to him, "Master, he has ten minas.")

26 For I say to you, that to everyone who has will be given; and from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.

27 But bring here those enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, and slay them before me.' "

There are several important aspects of this parable that relate to our work of preparation but when Jesus returns, we who serve Him will give an account of our stewardship during His absence. Each of us will be rewarded according to our faithfulness and many will be given positions of authority. [11] Some will even rule cities in His kingdom government.

At this time, there will be severe judgment upon two types of people. First are those who are like the wicked lazy servant who did not understand that the nobleman was a good man with a good plan. As a result he didn't seek to increase his portion nor did he even seek help in increasing it. Therefore, what he had was taken away and given to one who had been more faithful. According to Matthew's account of this same parable, this servant was cast into outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth (see Matt 25:30).

The second type to be judged at this time are those referred to in this parable as the citizens who hated Him and did not want Him to reign over them. I believe this speaks of those who militantly oppose Christ and the Kingdom and refuse to repent. The faithful servants were then commanded to bring them before the King and they were judged in His presence. This parallels what we read in Psalm 149 where the saints are given the honor of executing judgment: "...To execute upon them the judgment written: this honor have all his saints." (see Psalm 149:7-9). [12]

This is a very sobering picture of the Lord's return and the establishment of His Kingdom! Many have a picture of the Kingdom of God that is far less harsh. However, Scripture describes Christ coming as a king judging and making war (see Rev 19:11). Jude also presents us with a picture of the return of Christ at the resurrection of the just, when thousands of saints who have died will be raised up and participate in judgement.

Jude 1: 14-15 (KJV)

14 And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints,

15 To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.

These returning saints will be joined by those living saints who will be changed and put on immortality (see 1 Cor 15:52-53). This will be a time of war when we will have the honor of being part of an unstoppable army, an army of immortal saints subduing and judging the world with Christ! [13] This may sound extraordinary to those who have not looked at the Kingdom of God from a political perspective. But consider the following passages:

1 Corinthians 6:2 (KJV)

Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?

Revelation 2:26-27 (KJV)

26 And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:

27 And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father.

Psalms 149:6-9 (NKJV)

6 Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, And a two-edged sword in their hand,
7 To execute vengeance on the nations, And punishments on the peoples;
8 To bind their kings with chains, And their nobles with fetters of iron;
9 To execute on them the written judgment; This honor have all His saints. Praise the LORD.

We see that this will be a day of judgment, judgment that will subdue the nations and result in peace on earth. This should give us a serious degree of motivation to be faithful stewards who overcome the world in this age and qualify to be part of this army. [14]

The Period of Restoration

On the day of Pentecost, Peter referred to a time period during which all things would be restored.

Acts 3:19-21 (NASB)

19 Repent therefore and return, that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord;
20 and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you,
21 whom heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time.

From verse 21 above, we can conclude the period of restoration starts with the return of Jesus and is precipitated by a time of repentance and returning to the Lord, which contextually, is probably a reference to Israel returning to the Lord. The Greek word used for refreshing (anapsuxis) means a recovery of breath, implying a time of rest. This describes what the Day of the Lord will be, a time of rest and peace. This period of restoration, which follows the Lord's return, is therefore the Day of the Lord — the thousand-year reign of Christ—the Millennial Kingdom. Though this period begins with a time of intense war, it will be a time of increasing peace and order due to the absolute rule of the Kingdom of God on earth. [15]

Isaiah foresaw the Lord judging the nations and the restorative work that was yet to be done after the Lord's return.

Isaiah 40:10 (NKJV)

10 Behold, the Lord GOD shall come with a strong hand, And His arm shall rule for Him; Behold, His reward is with Him, And His work before Him.

He saw the law of the Lord going forth from Jerusalem, the people coming there to learn of the ways of the Lord and converting their weapons of war to tools of agriculture (see Isa 2:1-4). The result of the law of the Lord ruling the earth is a time of peace on earth such that the wolf will lie down with the lamb, the lion will eat hay like the ox, the child will play by the hole

of the viper, and nothing shall hurt or destroy, for the whole earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea (see Isa 11:6-9).

Micah saw the same vision and spoke of the first dominion being restored to the daughter of Zion.

Micah 4:8 (KJV)

And thou, O tower of the flock, the strong hold of the daughter of Zion, unto thee shall it come, even the first dominion; the kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem.

This first dominion is that which God gave to Adam in the Garden of Eden when He said, "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth" (see Genesis 1:28). The period of restoration will result in the earth being restored to a paradise much like the Garden of Eden! [16]

At the end of the thousand years, Satan, who will have been bound during that time, will be loosed for a season. He will deceive and gather together an army (those who submitted to the Kingdom of God but were not true believers) to make war against the saints. At this time fire shall come down from heaven and consume Satan's army. (see Rev 20:7-9). Ultimately, Satan and his army will be cast into the lake of fire to be tormented forever and ever (see Rev 20:10).

God will allow the devil to be released again for a purpose. This purpose is to gather together all those out of God's Kingdom who still do not serve Him from their hearts and respond in rebellion for final judgment. [17]

Two Sides of God's Nature

Some may find the picture of God's judgment somewhat disturbing, not fitting with their understanding of God's kind nature. God is certainly kind, but we open ourselves up for deception if we do not see His severity as well. "Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off" (Rom 11:22). [18] This verse should put a healthy fear of God in the hearts of all Christians, causing us to examine our hearts and our understanding of God. The failure to possess a godly fear has many ramifications, not the least of which is the lack of wisdom. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (see Ps 111:10).

But thank God for His Kindness! Near the beginning of His ministry, Jesus went to the synagogue where He read from the Prophet Isaiah:

Luke 4:18-19 (KJV)

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

After reading this passage, Jesus made a bold statement that would launch His ministry. He said, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:21 NASB). In saying this, He proclaimed that those things Isaiah spoke of could be experienced in the present. However, if we read from the Book of Isaiah, we find that Jesus stopped in mid-sentence and did not finish the passage, which then continues, "...and the day of vengeance of our God" (see Isa 61:12).

Why did Jesus stop short of saying this? Probably because it was not yet time for the people of God to exercise vengeance. Though Jesus' disciples tasted the powers of the age to come and were sent out to perform miracles, they were not sent out to exercise vengeance. When they had thoughts of doing so, Jesus rebuked them and said, “Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them...” (Luke 9:55-56). Though judgment is God's prerogative at any time, thankfully, we live in the age of grace. Though He will return as the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, judging and making war, we experience Him now as the Passover Lamb of God offering grace and forgiveness.

Vengeance Belongs To God

Paul also warns us not to seek vengeance ourselves by quoting the scripture that says, “Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord” (Rom 12:19). James echoes the same warning telling us that the wrath of man will not produce the righteousness of God (see James 1:20).

As we see in Romans 13:1-4, civil governments are authorized biblically to use the sword in this age and should be influenced by Christians and Christian principles. However, vengeance is not a job for the Church on this side of the resurrection. [19] Throughout history, when this important point has been ignored or misunderstood and the Church has become the civil government instead of influencing it, the result has been tragic and far from Christian. Such governments have been some of the most brutal and oppressive the world has ever seen.

Jesus' return will initiate the day of vengeance, but in this age we are the ministers of grace and mercy. Knowing that the day of vengeance is coming should fill our hearts with holy fear and motivate us with a holy passion to seek and save the lost before the great and terrible Day of the Lord.

Paradigm Builder

During the Kingdom reign of Christ (The Day of the Lord), we who serve Him will give an account of our stewardship in this age. Each of us will be rewarded according to our faithfulness and many will be given positions of authority such as ruling cities in His kingdom government.

Before reading this chapter, how would you describe your position regarding this concept?

1 Strongly Disagree - 2 Disagree - 3 Neutral/Unsure - 4 Agree - 5 Strongly Agree

How would you describe your position regarding this concept after reading this chapter?

1 Strongly Disagree - 2 Disagree - 3 Neutral/Unsure - 4 Agree - 5 Strongly Agree