

(Cont. from pg. 3) to some coming “day of the Lord.”

Peter, in his second epistle, uses the phrase in a manner that clearly points to the “day of the Lord” as the final day of judgement and destruction of this creation. He writes: **“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up”** (II Peter 3:10). If the earth, the works in it and the elements themselves will melt and be “burned up” it is clear that this is not referring to some preliminary judgement at some point in human history but to the final act of judgement upon this creation. Paul describes this as a day in which the spirit of the repentant believer will be saved. Writing to the Corinthians about their withdrawal from the man who had his father’s wife, he

charged them to: **“deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus”** (I Corinthians 5:5). Here the discipline that the church imposes is aimed at affecting the flesh to such an extent that it will motivate the sinner to repent and be right with the Lord so that when the end comes they will be ready to stand before God. This is a day in which the work that one has done in service to the Lord will become manifest. In the second epistle to the Corinthians Paul tells them, **“we are your boast as you also are ours, in the day of the Lord Jesus”** (II Corinthians 1:14b). In other words, the relationship that the Corinthians and Paul had maintained with one another throughout this life, would become to them an evidence (or boast) of their faithfulness on the final day of judgement.

By Kyle Pope

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“The Day of the Lord”

Many times in both the Old and New Testament the Holy Spirit will speak of the “day of the Lord.” Yet, it is clear that not every reference to this “day” refers to either the same point in time or the same things taking place. In this brief study we will examine how this phrase is applied and consider the lessons that the Spirit would have us to learn from its application.

The prophet Isaiah lived during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. Ahaz turned Judah to wickedness and idolatry. God shows through Isaiah, not only that He will call them to account for such sin, but offers the promise of the coming Messiah. As he talks about this Judgement, he declares: **“For the day of the LORD of hosts Shall come upon everything proud and lofty, Upon everything lifted up and it shall be brought low”** (Isaiah 2:12). As the prophet expands upon what will take place on this day, he speaks in the next chapter of when God, **“takes away from Jerusalem and from Judah the stock and the store, The whole supply of bread and the whole supply of water”** (Isaiah 3:1). Judah was punished in this way when God brought Babylon upon them, destroying Jerusalem and carrying off the people into captivity (II Kings 24-25). Later in his prophecy Isaiah says again, (Cont on pg. 2).

(Cont. from pg. 1) **“Wail, for the day of the LORD is at hand! It will come as destruction from the Almighty”** (Isaiah 13:6). And further, **“Behold, the day of the LORD comes, cruel, with both wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate; And He will destroy its sinners from it”** (Isaiah 13:9). Jeremiah, who witnessed this Babylonian conquest upon Jerusalem speaks of **“the terrors that surround me. In the day of the LORD’s anger there was no refugee or survivor”** (Lamentations 2:22). In these instances “the day of the Lord” refers to God’s day of judgement upon His people because of their sin. Upon this “day of the Lord,” physical punishment is brought on through the military conquest of an opponent.

There are other examples of this that refer to a day of physical punishment, but not through the hand of Babylon. Four times in the Prophecy of Joel the phrase is found, but with at least two applications. Thought to have been written earlier than Isaiah, Joel appears to use the phrase in reference to God’s judgement upon His people through the devastation brought by a “northern army” followed by a restoration. He declares, **“Blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; for the day of the LORD is coming, for it is at hand”** (Joel 2:1). And further, **“The LORD**

gives voice before His army, For His camp is very great; For strong is the One who executes His word. For the day of the LORD is great and very terrible; Who can endure it?” (Joel 2:11). There would be many times that Judah would be punished because of her sin from “northern armies” including those of Israel, Syria and Assyria. Any of these instances of Judgement would match this description of the “day of the Lord.” Yet, there is second way that the phrase is used in Joel which is described as taking place “afterwards” -- i.e. after the “day of the Lord” in the beginning of chapter two (Joel 2:28). This is preceded by the promise of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (which Peter will refer to - and we will consider below) and the promise of the sun being darkened and the moon turning to blood. These things are said to take place **“before the great and awesome day of the LORD”** (Joel 2:31). Was this another great physical day of judgement? Or was it an ultimate end times day of judgement? A common feature of many prophecies which speak of the “Day of the Lord” is the use of *eschatological* (i.e. end times) language such as the sun being darkened and the moon turning to blood. When “day of the Lord” is used in the sense of physical punishment by a military conquest this language doesn’t refer to a literal occurrence but is used to indicate the great

significance of the event. Later in Joel a similar pairing of two applications seems to occur. The first, which uses the phrase “day of the Lord” of judgement upon the enemies of God’s people (Joel 3:2) and the second which speaks of God’s judgement upon all mankind - with eschatological language (Joel 3:14-15).

Of the six times this phrase is used in the New Testament most of them clearly refer to a final day of judgement. The exception to this is the instance which is found in Acts 2:20. On the Day of Pentecost, after the Lord’s death burial and ascension into heaven, the apostles are given the Holy Spirit and begin to speak in tongues. They teach the gospel to those assembled in Jerusalem from other places. This is not a vision or a revelation of some future time. Yet, as Peter stands and teaches the people, by way of explanation he says:

This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: ‘And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams. And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; And they shall prophesy. I will show wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath: Blood and fire and

vapor of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD (Acts 2:16- 20).

Several things about this are significant. First, Peter says that what was happening on that day was “what was spoken by Joel.” The fulfillment of this text through the outpouring of the Spirit is obvious in the demonstration of miraculous tongue speaking. What would have been less apparent to those on the day of Pentecost was the rest of the text. Scripture does not indicate that on that day there were any literal signs in the heaven. The sun did not literally “turn to darkness” nor did the “moon into blood” and yet Peter says that what was happening was what Joel spoke about. The unanswered question in the text rests on the last part of the quote. When Peter quotes Joel to say that these things happened “BEFORE the coming of the great and awesome the Lord,” it is not clear whether he identifies Pentecost with the “day of the Lord,” or some coming day that is preceded by the outpouring of the Spirit and then (at some point in time) the signs mentioned. Peter is either saying that Pentecost is “the day of the Lord” (in which case and the eschatological language of Joel shows its great significance) or he is pointing out the aspect of Joel’s prophecy which was fulfilled on that day, looking (Cont. on pg. 4)