

The Church of the Servant King

Prophecy Series

(Proph14D_Prophecy in the Prophets_Joel_Part 1_The Day of the Lord)

Introduction

In preparation for the study of this prophet and book in the Bible, it will be important for us to gain a good grasp of the phrase – “the day of the Lord.” This is a very significant phrase in both the book of Joel and Zephaniah not to mention its use in other prophetic books.

A Definition

The phrase – “the day of the Lord” – can be defined as God's intervention into world events to execute judgment upon His enemies in order to insure that His sovereign purpose in human history unfolds. This is a rather broad definition since the phrase is used in a broad range of ways in Scripture.

Historical (Past) Days of the Lord

On occasion in Scripture, a writer uses the phrase in a manner that is referring to God's judgment in a more immediate historical context from the vantage point of the writer. An example of this usage is found in Jeremiah 46.¹ The background for this passage is the impending invasion and siege of Jerusalem by the Babylonians beginning with Nebuchadnezzar's campaigns in 605 B.C. and including his other campaigns up to 586 B.C. In 605 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar defeated Pharaoh Necho at Carchemish near the Euphrates river. The Egyptian army was then pursued by Nebuchadnezzar all the way back to Egypt.

Jeremiah had been proclaiming the word of God and predicting impending judgment upon Judah and surrounding nations for twenty-three years. Jeremiah predicted that Judah would experience seventy years of divine wrath (25:11). But Judah would not be alone. All the nations of the near eastern world would experience divine judgment in this day of the Lord (Jer 46:10). Details of these conquests are found in Jeremiah 46-49. Egypt is mentioned first (Jer 46:2-28) and had just suffered a humiliating defeat at the battle of Carchemish. However, this was just the beginning of Egypt's problems – a nation in whom Judah had placed her trust instead of the Lord. “Nebuchadnezzar would not be content until Memphis itself was laid waste and Thebes brought under Babylonian control. All this was achieved by 567.”²

The Philistines would also experience the judgment in this day of the Lord (Jer 47:1-7) as would Moab (Jer 48:1-47), Ammon (Jer 49:1-6), Edom (Jer 49:7-22), Damascus, Kedar and Hazor (49:23-33).

The Future Day of the Lord

The passages that relate to this future “day of the Lord” are too numerous to examine in one lesson. Nevertheless, when one examines these passages, one will discover that the phrase – “day of the Lord – refers to a period that extends from the Rapture of the Church to the creation

¹ The prophet Ezekiel uses the same phrase in reference to the same divine judgment upon Egypt via Nebuchadnezzar and the neo-Babylonian empire (Ezek 30:3).

² Eugene H. Merrill, *A Kingdom of Priests* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1987), 461.

of the new heavens and new earth after the close of the Messianic age.³ The future day of the Lord has both cursing and blessing associated with it. The darkness and outpouring of divine wrath in the day of the Lord is associated with the 70th week of Daniel 9, i.e. the Tribulation period (see Zeph 1:14-15; Isa 2:10-22 cf. Rev 6:12-17). It will also be characterized by light and divine blessing over the earth during God's administration of His rule through Jesus Christ. After Joel describes the darkening of the sun, moon and stars associated the judgment during the day of the Lord against the armies gathered against Israel (Joel 3:9-16), Joel also describes the divine blessing associated with that day (Joel 3:18-21). The prophet Zechariah follows a similar pattern of judgment in that day (Zech 14:1-5) followed by light and great blessing (Zech 14:6-9).

The future day of the Lord can also be understood to have a broad and a narrow sense in Scripture. The broad sense refers to an extended period of time that spans the period of Daniel's 70th Week and the Millennium. The narrow sense of the phrase refers specifically to the day of Christ's return to the earth with His angels and resurrected saints to conquer His enemies and establish the Messianic kingdom.

The Narrow Day – the 2nd Advent of Christ

Revelation 16:12-16 pictures the armies of all of the nations of the world gathered in Israel's Armageddon valley at the time of the judgment of the 6th bowl (the next to the last judgment of the Tribulation). These armies will begin to gather toward the end of that period (after the seven seals, seven trumpets, and first five bowl judgments of the broad day of the Lord have been poured out upon the earth).

Joel 3:9-16 and Zechariah 14:1-5 indicate that after the nations' armies have gathered in Israel, "the day of the Lord" will arrive (Zech 14:1 cf. Joel 3:14). This day of the Lord will not take place until after the armies have gathered in Israel and a significant part of the broad day of the Lord has already passed. The day of the Lord in these passages is the day that the Messiah Jesus fights the armies gathered in Israel and according to Revelation 19:11-21, it is the day that Christ comes to the earth. See also Matthew 24:21, 29-30.

In these passages, we also see that the expression – the great and the terrible day of the Lord – is applied to the narrow day, not the broad day of the Lord. In this day there will be an end to opposition to God, His plan and His people. (See and compare Matt 24:29-30; 25:31; Re 19:11-12, 15 with Matt 13:40-42, 49-50; 25:31, 41, 46; Re 19:14,17-20:3).

³ Clarence E. Mason, Jr., "The Day of Our Lord Jesus Christ," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 125:500 (October, 1968), 357.