

## 22. THE DAY OF THE LORD

### **The main references in the OT to the Day of the Lord**

Isaiah	2:12-21, 13:4-16, 24:1-23, 29:1-8, 34:1-7, 63:1-6
Jeremiah	30:3-9
Micah	4:11-13
Zephaniah	1:2-3, 14-18, 3:6, 8
Daniel	11:36-45, 12:1, 6-7
Ezekiel	38:7-23, 39:1-6, 9-20
Joel	2:1-11, 30-32, 3:1-3, 9-15
Zechariah	12:2-9, 13:8-9, 14:1-3, 12-15
Haggai	2:21-22
Malachi	4:1

### **The Day of the Lord - Armageddon**

Various references to a day of the Lord in the Bible refer to God's intervention in judgment in Israel's affairs. However, most references to *the* Day of the Lord in the prophets refer to the end of the age when the Messiah returns to resurrect the righteous (Dan 12:1-2) and judge the nations laying siege to Jerusalem at the battle of Armageddon. The prophecies declare that all nations will gather to attack Israel and Jerusalem and they will be judged there by God. They will attack each other and a plague will destroy many. At the same time, there will be worldwide earthquakes, the most severe the world has known, and all the world's cities will collapse. The Mount of Olives will split in two and Jerusalem will be raised, while the surrounding land will become a plain. The ferocity of God's wrath is shocking. There is great

slaughter and retribution against rebellious mankind in the final moments before the Messiah returns to claim victory.

The following OT prophecies are the most pertinent:

**Ps 2:1-2** Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain? The world's kings are preparing for war, the rulers consult together *against the Lord and his Messiah saying*: Let us break their chains and throw off their shackles.

**Isa 2:17-19** The arrogance of man will be brought low and human pride humbled. The Lord alone will be exalted in that day and the idols will completely disappear. When the Lord arises to shake the earth, people will flee from the fearful splendor of his majesty and hide in caves in the rocks and holes in the ground.

**Isa 13:9-13** *Look, the Day of the Lord is arriving*, a cruel day, with wrath and fierce anger, to make the Earth desolate and to destroy the sinners within it. The stars and their constellations will no longer shine. The sun will be darkened from its rising and the moon will not give its light. I will punish the world for its evil, the wicked for their sins. I will put an end to the arrogance of the haughty and will humble the pride of the ruthless. I will make mankind scarcer than pure gold, rarer than the gold of Ophir. I will make the heavens tremble and shake the Earth from its place - the wrath of the Lord Almighty on the day of his burning anger.

**Isa 24:19-23** The Earth breaks up violently, the Earth splits apart, the Earth is shaken massively. The Earth reels like a drunkard, it sways like a hut in the wind. The weight of its transgression falls on it. It collapses, never to rise again. In that day, the Lord will punish the powers in the heavens above and the kings on the Earth below. He will herd them together into a dungeon and shut them up as prisoners to be punished after many days. The moon will be dismayed and the sun ashamed, for the Lord Almighty will reign gloriously on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, in the presence of the elders.

**Isa 29:5-6, 8b** But your many enemies will become like fine dust, those ruthless hordes will be like blown chaff. Suddenly, in an instant,

the Lord Almighty will come with thunder and earthquake and great noise, with storm and tempest and devouring flames. ... So will it be with the hordes of all the nations that fight against Mount Zion.

**Isa 34:2-4, 8** *The Lord is angry with all nations, he is furious with all their armies.* He will totally destroy them and massacre them. Their slain will be thrown away, the mountains will be soaked with their blood, and their corpses will stink. All the stars in the sky will be dissolved, and the heavens will roll up like a scroll. All the stars will fall like leaves from the vine, like withered leaves from the fig tree. For it is the Lord's day of vengeance, a year of retribution to uphold Zion's cause.

**Jer 30:5b-7** Cries of terror are heard; fear, not peace. Ask and learn whether a man can be in labor and bear children? Why then do I see all the strong men feeling their stomachs like a woman in labor and every face turned deathly pale? Alas! How awful that day will be! There is none like it. It is a time of trouble for Jacob (Israel), but he will be saved out of it.

**Dan 12:1** At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. And at that time your people, everyone whose name is found written in the book, will be rescued.

**Joel 2:1-11** Blow the trumpet in Zion; Shout aloud on my holy hill. Let all who live in the land tremble, for the Day of the Lord is coming, it is close at hand. It is a gloomy day, it will get dark, a day of black clouds. A mighty army comes like dawn spreading across the mountains. They are powerful, the like of which never was in ancient times and never will be in ages to come. Fire devours before them, flames blaze behind them. Before them the land is like the garden of Eden, behind them a desert waste, nothing escapes them. They have the appearance of horses, they gallop along like cavalry. They stamp over the mountaintops with a noise like that of chariots, like fire consuming stubble. They are like a mighty army drawn up for battle. At the sight of them, people panic and every face turns pale. They

charge like warriors, they scale walls like soldiers. They all march in formation, none swerve from their course. They don't jostle each other, everyone marches straight ahead. They lunge through their enemies unhindered by their weapons. They rush upon the city, they run along the wall. They climb into the houses, like thieves they enter through the windows. The earth shakes in front of them, the heavens tremble. The sun and moon are darkened, and the stars no longer shine. The Lord thunders at the head of his army, his forces are beyond number, and mighty is the army who obeys his command. The Day of the Lord is great and really dreadful. Who can endure it?

**Joel 2:30 – 3:2, 12-16** I will show wonders in the heavens and on the Earth: blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will go dark and the moon go red like blood before the coming of the great and awesome Day of the Lord. All who call on the name of the Lord will be saved, for there will be deliverance on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, as the Lord has promised. They are the survivors whom the Lord has called. In those days and at that time, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, I will gather all nations and bring them down into the Valley of Jehoshaphat. There I will put them on trial, for what they did to my people Israel, because they scattered my people among the nations and divided up my land. ... Rouse the nations, let them come up into the Valley of Jehoshaphat, for there I will sit to judge all the surrounding nations. Swing the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come and trample the grapes, for the winepress is full, and the vats overflow. Their wickedness is so great! Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of judgment! For the day of the Lord is near in the valley of judgment. The sun and the moon will become dark, and the stars will no longer shine. The Lord will roar from Zion and thunder from Jerusalem. The Earth and the heavens will tremble. But the Lord will be a refuge for his people, a stronghold for the people of Israel.

**Zeph 1:14-18** The great day of the Lord is near, it is near and approaching fast. The uproar on the Day of the Lord will be pitiable, even mighty warriors will wail there. That day will be a day of wrath, a day of suffering and distress, a day of calamity and destruction, a

day of darkness and gloom, a day of dark rainclouds. It will be a time of trumpet blasts and battle cries against fortified towns and high towers. I will make people suffer so that they walk around like the blind, because they have sinned against the Lord. Their blood will be poured out like water and their corpses will lie around like rubbish. Their silver and their gold won't be able to save them on the day of the Lord's wrath. The whole Earth will be consumed in his fiery zeal, for he will make a sudden end to all who live on it.

**Zeph 3:8-9** The Lord says, wait for me, until the day that I bring disaster on them. For I have decided to assemble the nations, to gather the kingdoms and to pour out my wrath on them, all my fierce anger. My fiery zeal will consume the whole Earth and I will purify the speech of the nations, so that all of them may call on the name of the Lord and serve him with one accord.

**Hag 2:6-7** The Lord Almighty says: In a little while I will once more shake the heavens and the Earth, the sea and the dry land. I will shake all nations, and they will bring their precious commodities, and I will fill this house with glory.

**Zech 12:1-9** The word of the Lord concerning Israel. The Lord, who stretched out the heavens, founded the Earth, and created man's spirit within him, declares: Listen! I will make Jerusalem like a cup whose contents will make all the surrounding nations stagger. They will besiege Judah as well as Jerusalem. On that day, when all the nations of the Earth are gathered against her, I will make Jerusalem an immovable rock for all nations. All who try to move it will injure themselves. On that day I will strike every horse with confusion and its rider with madness, declares the Lord. I will keep a watchful eye over Judah, but I will blind all the horses of the nations. The Jewish leaders will say in their hearts: The people of Jerusalem are strong, because the Lord Almighty is their God.

On that day I will make the Jewish leaders like like a firepot in a woodpile, like a flaming torch among sheaves. They will consume all the surrounding peoples right and left, but Jerusalem will remain intact in her place. The Lord will save Judah's dwellings first, so that

David's family and Jerusalem's inhabitants don't get all the glory. On that day, the Lord will protect those who live in Jerusalem, so that the weakest among them will become like David and David's family will be strong like God, like the Angel of the Lord who goes before them. On that day, I intend to destroy all the nations that attack Jerusalem.

**Zech 14:1-15** The Day of the LORD is coming, Jerusalem, when your possessions will be plundered and divided up in your presence. I will gather all the nations to Jerusalem to fight against it. The city will be captured, the houses ransacked, and the women raped. Half of the city will be taken captive, but the rest of the people will not be taken from the city. Then the LORD will come and fight against those nations, as he fights on a day of battle. On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, which will be split in two from East to West, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving North and half moving South. You will flee by this mountain valley, for it will extend to Azel. You will flee as your ancestors fled from the earthquake in the days of Judah's king Uzziah. Then the LORD my God will come, and all the saints with him.

On that day there will be no light; there will be cold and frost. It will be a unique day known only to the Lord, with no distinction between day and night, but there will be light in the evening.

On that day living water will flow from Jerusalem, half of it to the eastern sea (the Dead Sea) and half of it to the western sea (the Mediterranean), in both summer and winter.

The Lord will be king of the whole Earth. On that day he alone will be Lord, and his name the only name. The whole land, from Geba to Rimmon, south of Jerusalem, will become a plain. But Jerusalem will remain in its place and raised up high from the Benjamin Gate to the First Gate and the Corner Gate, and from the Tower of Hananel to the royal winepresses. Jerusalem will be inhabited, never again to be destroyed. It will be secure.

This is the plague with which the Lord will strike all the nations that attacked Jerusalem: Their flesh will rot while they are standing, their eyes will rot in their sockets, and their tongues will rot in their mouths. On that day the Lord will strike people with great panic. They will seize each other by the hand and attack one another. All the Jews will fight at Jerusalem. They will defeat the surrounding nations and gather their wealth, great quantities of gold and silver and clothing. A

similar plague will affect the horses, mules, camels, and donkeys, and all the animals in their camps.

## **The Day of the Lord in the OT**

The OT prophets focus on Israel and Jerusalem, places that will be the center of attention on the great Day of the Lord. They also show how future events will affect the nations and the world. It is wonderful and miraculous the way the prophets were given visions and dreams about the end of this age thousands of years into the future. They give us so many clues about the Great Tribulation, the Antichrist, the second coming of the Messiah, the resurrection, judgment on the ungodly nations, the salvation of Israel, and life in the Millennium. The prophecies all come in connection with their local contexts, and it takes some real detective work to gather all the information and put it together to form an accurate picture of the future events that God has revealed to us in his word. The final events are often mixed with prophecies of closer events, but phrases like “(great) Day of the Lord”, “in the last or latter days”, or “on that day” are signposts to end-time events. Fragments of truth are scattered among nearly all the prophets, and important contributions come from the Pentateuch and Psalms.

I have put the prophets I am commenting on in chronological order because each prophet had access to what had been revealed previously, which helped them build their vision of the future. There is a progression in revelation which all comes to a climax in the book of Revelation, the final book of the Bible.

Isaiah said the Lord has a day in store for all the proud and lofty, for all that is exalted, and they will be humbled (Isa 2:12). Forests and mountains and towers are metaphors for such people. God will put an end to the pomp and arrogance of the rich and ruthless. The eyes of the arrogant will be humbled and human pride brought low; the Lord alone will be exalted in that day (Isa 2:11). In the last days there will be great destruction, so that in the regeneration of creation and nature, everything will be made new. All of man’s magnificent structures will be brought low so that the Lord alone will be exalted on that day. Humanity will throw away their idols and seek refuge from the Lord’s awesome majesty in caves when he rises to terrify the earth.

The wrath of God is being stored up, but God is being patient, allowing as many as possible to be saved. Eventually, justice must be done, and God's wrath will be poured out on mankind. There will be a terrible slaughter of mankind and destruction of the cities that are the center of ungodliness as described in Revelation 18. Their sins are piled as high as heaven (Rev 18:5), and God's people are advised to leave the cities, as they were before Jerusalem came under judgment (Jer 51:45).

The punishment meted out on the ungodly cities will happen in a single day (Rev 18:8) because on that day, when the nations are gathered against Jerusalem, the tectonic plates will move, resulting in worldwide seismic activity, earthquakes, volcanoes, and tsunamis. It will be a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness (Joel 2:2, Zeph 1:15).

The Day of the Lord is the day that the Messiah returns. It is a day of wrath and judgment on the ungodly, but first of all, it will be a day of salvation for the righteous; they will be resurrected and raptured. God has not destined them for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thess 5:9). Those who serve the living and true God are waiting for his Son from heaven, Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come (1 Thess 1:9-10). He will not deliver them from the seven years of tribulation resulting from warfare and persecution, but he will deliver them from the Day of the Lord, from the earthquakes, the destruction of the cities, the terrifying darkness and gloom.

An interesting question to ask ourselves is this: The return of Jesus Christ to the Earth, is it for the benefit of Israel or the Church or both? Some say that God has only one people, the Church, which includes believing Jews. But these people ignore or spiritualize the teachings of the OT prophets. Without doubt, God does have two peoples: Israel and the Church. For 2000 years his people were descendants of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob, then for the last 2000 years, it has been the Church. For the next thousand years, God will have two peoples, Israel on Earth and the resurrected Church in New Jerusalem. Finally, at the last judgment, all God's people will be united as one. According to the OT prophecies, the Messiah is coming to deliver their nation from the armies of the nations at the battle of Armageddon. All Israel will be saved at that time, and they as a nation will be glorified as Messiah's nation at the center of the world during the Messianic

reign. They will be the guardians of the Holy City and the temple, where all the nations will come to worship. The Jewish Messiah will be King of kings and Lord of lords during that age. In the OT, the Messiah is presented as returning to Earth for the salvation of his people Israel. In the NT, it is the Church that is in focus.

The book of Revelation climaxes with Jesus' return to Earth, followed by his thousand-year reign. What does it say about the purpose of Jesus' return?

Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, especially those who pierced him, and all the tribes of the land will mourn because of him (Rev 1:7).

I have to disagree with translations that say that all the peoples on Earth will mourn on account of Jesus. There are no Scriptures that suggest that unbelievers will mourn for Jesus at his coming. To the contrary: The rest of mankind who were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands; they did not stop worshiping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone, and wood, idols that cannot see or hear or walk. Nor did they repent of their murders, their magic arts, their sexual immorality, or their thefts (Rev 9:20-21). Their reaction was to curse God (Rev 16:9, 11, 21).

John's words in Revelation 1:7 allude to Zechariah 12:10, 12a:

And I will pour out a spirit of grace and supplication on David's descendants and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son. ... The land will mourn, each clan by itself.

The Messiah will return at the breaking of the sixth seal, at the sound of the seventh trumpet, and before the seventh bowl is poured out. It is all on the same day. At the sound of the seventh trumpet, loud voices in heaven declare: The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign forever (Rev 11:15). In Revelation 19 the Messiah is seen arriving on a white horse. From his mouth comes a sharp sword to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. The Beast and the kings of the earth together with their armies are defeated. The OT tells us that this battle occurs in Israel, but Revelation is written to the churches, and Israel's

role in end-times events is largely ignored. To get the full picture, the allusions to the OT in Revelation have to be taken into account, and there are hundreds of them.

## **The Day of the Lord in the NT**

The Day of the Lord is the Day of the Lord's visitation; the day when the Messiah, Jesus, returns physically and visibly to the Earth to mark the end of this age. The phrase "Day of the Lord" occurs seven times in the NT, but there are an additional fifty references to "that day." The significance of that day is threefold:

### **What Jesus taught**

**Mt 24:36-38** About *that day or hour* no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. In the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage. They were carrying on as usual unaware of what was about to happen. In Noah's day, the Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the Earth. Every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only on evil and the Lord regretted that he had made human beings on the Earth and he said: I will wipe the human race that I have created from the face of the Earth.

**Mt 24:40-41** At that time, two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken, and the other one left. Those that are taken are raptured and meet the Lord in the air. He will put them in charge of all his possessions. Those who are left will be cut into pieces and assigned a place with the hypocrites.

**Lk 17:24** As lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one end to the other, that's how it will be when the Son of Man comes.

**Lk 21:34-36** Be careful! Don't be distracted by enjoyment, drunkenness, and life's worries, so that that day comes upon you suddenly like a trap. For it will surprise all those who live on the face of the whole earth. Watch and pray always so that you may prevail and

escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand (confidently) before the Son of Man.

**John 6:40** My Father's will is that every person who looks to the Son and believes in him may have eternal life, and I will resurrect him on the last day.

In Matthew 24:3-31 Jesus answered his disciples' question as to the sign of his coming and the end of this age. Jesus warns them about false prophets and says there will be wars, famines, and earthquakes, but these things are only the beginning of the birth pains. There will be much greater distress and tribulation when he comes.

The first real sign he gave is the Abomination that causes Desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel. That will be a sign for Jews living in Israel to flee. If God didn't cut those days short, no human being would be saved, a situation that suggests nuclear warfare. That is the desolation that the abomination engenders – great distress unequalled from the beginning of the world until now

Smoke resulting from worldwide warfare will darken the sun and moon. Darkness is a literal and fearful feature of the last days. The stars will fall from heaven and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Instead of the phrase “the stars will fall from heaven,” Isaiah 13:10 gives a more scientific description, “the stars of the heavens and their constellations will not give their light.”

“Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven.” As Jesus becomes visible to people on Earth, it is better to translate ‘heaven’ as ‘sky.’ The sign is what is seen first, high in the sky. When Ezekiel had his vision of the Lord returning to the temple in Jerusalem, he saw the glory of the God of Israel coming from the East. The sound of his coming was like the sound of many waters and the Earth shone with his glory (Ezek 43:2). In his first vision of the glory of the Lord, Ezekiel saw a massive cloud, with fire flashing back and forth, surrounded by bright light (Ezek 1:4). He also saw God resembling the figure of a man, suggesting that the vision was of the Messiah. Any vision or appearance of God on earth is of the Son rather than the Father, whether appearances of the Angel of the Lord, or visions seen by Moses, Jacob, Elijah, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, the disciples, Paul, or John.

Everyone will see this bright light and hear the loud noise, but the tribes of the land who mourn are the people of Israel because the only response from the nations at this time is to curse God for the calamities coming upon them (Rev 16:9, 11, 21). Zechariah said it will be the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem who will look on the Lord, the one whom their ancestors had pierced, and they will mourn for him in their various ethnic groups (Zech 12:11-12).

Jesus' first act on returning to Earth will be to send out his angels with a loud trumpet call to gather the elect from all over. The righteous dead will be resurrected and the living will be caught up with them to meet the Lord in the air before he descends to the Mount of Olives (Zech 14:4) and before the wrath of God is poured out.

## **What Peter taught**

**Acts 2:20** The sun will darken and the moon will turn red like blood before the great and glorious Day of the Lord arrives. Everyone who calls on the Lord's name will be saved.

**2 Pet 3:7, 10-13** The word of the Lord will ensure that the present heavens and Earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly. ... The Day of the Lord will come like a thief. At that time, the heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done on it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people should you be? You should live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. On that day the heavens will be destroyed with fire and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new (renewed) heaven and Earth, where righteousness dwells (finds a home).

## **What Paul taught**

**Rom 2:5-6** You became stubborn and unrepentant, and so are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed. He will repay each person according to their deeds. Those who seek glory, honor, and immortality by persistence in doing good will receive eternal life. As for those who

are led by self-interest and reject the truth and follow evil, they will experience God's wrath and anger.

**1 Thess 5:2, 4** You know very well that just as a thief comes at night, so it will be on the Day of the Lord. ... As for you, brethren, you are not in darkness so that this day should come on you like a thief.

**2 Thess 2:3-4** Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not arrive unless the rebellion occurs first and the lawless one who is heading for destruction is revealed. He'll oppose and exalt himself above everything that is called God or is worshiped, and he'll even take his seat in God's temple to show himself to be God.

The Lord's coming is not imminent. Several events must happen before "the coming of the Lord and our being gathered to him" (2 Thess 3:1): the building of a third temple in Jerusalem, the rise of the Antichrist, his seven-year agreement with Israel, the act of rebellion that causes desolation, and the trampling underfoot of the saints (Dan 8:13, 9:27).

## **What John taught**

After the Messiah returns to earth in a powerful and glorious display, and the righteous have been resurrected to meet him in the air, he will descend to Earth to take vengeance on the nations who have rebelled against God and joined the Antichrist in his effort to destroy Israel and capture Jerusalem. This is not the end of the world, nor is it the final judgment day for all mankind, where each person will be judged according to what he has done. That remains until after the millennium.

**Rev 6:15-17** The kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the powerful, and everyone else, both slave and free, hid in caves and mountain clefts. They call to the mountains and the rocks: Fall on us and hide us from him who sits on the throne and save us from the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can withstand it?

**Rev 16:13-14** Then I saw three foul spirits that looked like frogs coming out of the mouths of the Dragon, the Beast, and the False Prophet. They are demonic spirits that perform signs, and they were

going out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for battle on the great day of God Almighty.

**Rev 19:11-16** Then I saw an opening in the sky and a white horse appeared whose rider's name is Faithful and True. He judges and wages war justly. His eyes are like flames of fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on his head that no one knows but he. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is God's Word. The armies of heaven follow him, riding on white horses and wearing bright white linen. A sharp sword comes out of his mouth to strike down the nations who he will rule with an iron scepter. He tramples grapes in a winepress, representing the fury of Almighty God's wrath. On his robe and his thigh he has this name written:

KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS