

The Day of the Lord

Yahweh Yom Adonai. Day of Yahweh. We see this specific phrase 15 times in the Old Testament. And you will see other combinations of this word. For example, “the day of Yahweh’s anger” or “the day of Yahweh’s vengeance” or “the day of God’s wrath”.

Let me see if I can very briefly outline some basic characteristics of this Old Testament motif, or picture that is repeated, and “Day of the LORD”

It is a Day of GOD’S VENGEANCE

We are often not comfortable

Related Texts: Jeremiah 46:10; Joel 1:15; Isaiah 13:6-9; Zephaniah 1:2-3, 14-18; Amos 5:18; Isaiah 2:12, 17-19

Yahweh Will Descend as a Mighty Warrior with a Heavenly Army

The Day of Lord is a Day of Vengeance for our God. Not only that, unlike the rather impersonal destruction of the earth which took place at the time of Noah and the flood, this will be intensely personal. Yahweh is pictured consistently in these various prophecies as somehow visibly coming to the earth as a great Warrior with His heavenly hosts.

Related texts: Isaiah 13:4; Joel 2:1-11

There Will Be Cosmic Disturbances Immediately Before This Day

In both Isaiah and Joel, we see that immediately before the coming of the Day of the Lord, or perhaps that which begins the Day of the Lord are several signs in the heavens that will be absolutely terrifying for those on the earth. There is trilogy of signs that are immediately prior to or commencing the Day of the Lord:

- Sun will be darkened
- Moon will turn blood red
- Stars will no longer shine

Related Texts: Isaiah 13:9-10; Joel 2:10, 30-31

So when the inhabitants of the earth see these cosmic signs in the sky, they will know that the Day of the Lord has finally come.

- It will be a day of Vengeance for Our God
- Yahweh will descend as a Mighty Warrior with His Heavenly Army
- There will be cosmic disturbances immediately before this Day that terrify the inhabitants of the earth
- BUT not only that...

It Will Be a Day of Deliverance for God's People

We see in both the Old Testament and New, that God will actually assemble the nations around Jerusalem. They-the nations- will think that they are gathering together to wipe out His people Israel once and for all, but in fact, He is gathering them together to overthrow them once and for all.

Related Texts: Joel 3:12-16; Zechariah 12:3-4, 9

Most scholars feel the Valley of Jehoshaphat is likely the same valley as the Valley of Armageddon. Now, some feel that these might be actual geographic valleys that we can point to today. Others feel that it is more figurative in nature. Jehoshaphat means "Yahweh Judges". So He is going to gather the nations into the Valley of His Judgement. Armageddon is actually three Hebrew words combined to mean literally, "a heap of sheaves gathered in a valley of judgment"

- Arema – a heap of sheaves
- Gai – valley
- Dan – judgement.

There is this picture of harvest. But not the joyful harvest that we typically think of. Rather, a bringing together the sheaves and the grapes which are ripe unto harvest for judgment.

Yahweh Will Be King Over All the Earth

Zechariah 14:9

⁹The LORD will be king over the whole earth. On that day there will be one LORD, and his name the only name.

So understand with me, this is the prophetic backdrop that is in the minds of the disciples when they ask Jesus in Matthew 24:3—

...what will be the sign of YOUR coming and of the end of the age?"

Matthew 24:4-31

The Beginning of Birth Pains (4-8)

⁴ Jesus answered: "Watch out that no one deceives you. ⁵ For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Messiah,' and will deceive many. ⁶ You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. ⁷ Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. ⁸ All these are the beginning of birth pains.

Increased Persecution (9-13)

⁹ "Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. ¹⁰ At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, ¹¹ and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. ¹² Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, ¹³ but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved.

Global Evangelism (14)

¹⁴ And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

The Abomination That Causes Desolation (15-28)

¹⁵ "So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let the reader understand—

Related texts: Daniel 9:27; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4

The Great Tribulation (16-28)

¹⁶ then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. ¹⁷ Let no one on the housetop go down to take anything out of the house. ¹⁸ Let no one in the field go back to get their cloak. ¹⁹ How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! ²⁰ Pray that your flight will not take place in winter

or on the Sabbath. ²¹ For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again.

²² “If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened. ²³ At that time if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Messiah!’ or, ‘There he is!’ do not believe it. ²⁴ For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. ²⁵ See, I have told you ahead of time.

²⁶ “So if anyone tells you, ‘There he is, out in the wilderness,’ do not go out; or, ‘Here he is, in the inner rooms,’ do not believe it. ²⁷ For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ²⁸ Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather.

Cosmic Disturbances (29)

²⁹ “Immediately after the distress of those days

“the sun will be darkened,
and the moon will not give its light;
the stars will fall from the sky,
and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.”

The Second Coming of Jesus Christ (30-31)

³⁰ “Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. And then all the peoples of the earth will mourn when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory.

³¹ And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.

Questions for Personal Reflection/Group Discussion

1. It is clear from the Old Testament that the Day of the Lord is a Day of Yahweh’s vengeance on the wicked. How does this picture of God’s justice and wrath toward sin impact you?
2. In what ways have we overemphasized, or deemphasized, this aspect of God’s character?
3. Jesus said there will be both a great falling away before He returns but ALSO that the Gospel will be preached to all lands. How should these two prophecies inspire us to live regardless of how difficult things may become?