

The Day of the Lord, Redemption, and Christ: What's the Difference?

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In recent days, the doctrine of the Pretribulation rapture has been questioned by a few of our grace brethren. Some of the saints have been teaching that the Body of Christ will go through all or part of the 70th week of Daniel (Tribulation Period). As a result, there were meetings held at the Grace Impact Summer Family Bible Conference in July 2005 to discuss the matter. While the meetings were productive and very instructive, one thing was evident I and others had been teaching things that were not necessarily correct. No one had an adequate understanding of both the day of the Christ and the day of the Lord.

Day of Christ is not the Rapture

For years, I have been teaching that the Day of Christ was the catching away of the Body of Christ to meet the Lord in the air, the event commonly referred to as the Rapture [i] . I have always understood the formation of the church the Body of Christ to be the subject of the mystery first revealed through writings and ministry of the Apostle Paul [ii] . Due to the secret nature of this current dispensation of Grace, it stands to reason that an unpropheied age would end in an unpropheied manner. Therefore, the meeting of Christ with his saints in the air should be understood as a different event from the literal bodily return of Jesus Christ back to earth to establish the kingdom and fulfill the Davidic Covenant [iii] .

Traditionally the doctrine of the pretribulation rapture has been maintained by observing a literal distinction between prophecy and mystery. Any educated Bible student knows that the 70th Week of Daniel is prophesied in Daniel 9 as part of the prophetic time schedule. In contrast, the entire dispensation that we are currently a part of is found nowhere in the prophetic scriptures. Therefore, any position on the Rapture that places the Body of Christ in all or any portion of the 70th week of Daniel would violate the prophecy/mystery distinction. This creates a problem for any Mid-Acts Dispensationalists because everything we teach about the current dispensation of grace being different from the pervious dispensations comes through recognizing that the prophetic program is currently on hold until God's plan with the body of Christ has been accomplished. If the prophetic program is on hold that prophecy is not being fulfilled during the current dispensation.

Herein, lies the problem with defining the day of Christ as the rapture. The Apostle Paul is the only Biblical writer to use the term day of Christ. Consider the following passages:

Philippians 1:6--Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform [it] until the day of Jesus Christ:

Philippians 1:10--That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ;

Philippians 2:16--Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither labored in vain.

The above verses clearly demonstrate that in Paul's mind the day of Christ is a positive event. In the day of the Christ the good work that Christ began in the saints will be completed. Paul states that he will rejoice in the day of Christ that he had not run in vain nor labored in vain. The Philippians are instructed to have behavior that is sincere and without offence until the day of Christ arrives. All of this points to the event that Paul calls our "blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ; [iv] . The next time Christ appears it will not be literally physical back to earth as predicted by the prophets, rather it will his return to meet the saints in the air, the unprophesied event we commonly call the rapture. Furthermore, since only good things are associated with the day of Christ in Paul's thinking, and the catching away of the body was part of the revelation of the mystery given to Paul, then the day of Christ must be the Rapture.

Problems arise with defining the day of Christ as the rapture in II Thessalonians 2:2-3. Read carefully the following verse,

II Thessalonians 2:2--That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.

First of all, it should be noted that almost every Bible commentator believes that the above verse is improperly translated. These men state that the King James is incorrect when it reads day of Christ and that the correct reading should be day of the Lord. This is quit interesting when one considers that the Greek word in question is the word Christos which means Christ. This writer will not stand with those who would seek to correct God's Word rather than try and understand it as it is written.

Second, Paul tells the Thessalonians not to be, "shaken in mind, or be troubled. . ." that the day of Christ was near. If the day of Christ was the rapture why would the Thessalonians need to be troubled or shaken that it was near? After all do not all the verses about the day of Christ teach that it is a good and positive event, not something that should be waited for with fear and trembling?

Salt is poured on the wound in the following verse. II Thessalonians 2:3 complicates matters further, when it reads,

Let no man deceive you by any means: for [that day shall not come], except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;

The day in question in verse 3 is the day of Christ from verse 2. Verse 3 clearly states that before the day of Christ can come three things must occur first. The arrival of the day of Christ will be preceded by the following events: 1) the falling away which is said to happen first, 2) the revelation of the man of Sin, 3) the revelation of the son of perdition. If the day of Christ is the

rapture than prophesied events such as the revelation of the man of sin and the son of perdition must take place before the body of Christ can be ruptured thus ending the dispensation of Grace.

The above possess problems for the day of Christ being defined as the rapture. Most important the prophecy/mystery distinction is destroyed because prophecy would be being fulfilled during the current mystery dispensation. In addition, the day of Christ does not sound like something Paul could rejoice in because it would that the body of Christ would go through all or part of the tribulation period.

In order to properly understand the day of Christ we must first understand the day of the Lord. We will return to II Thessalonians 2 and the day of Christ after some further study.

Definition of the Day of the Lord

The expression "day of the Lord" occurs 18 times in the Word of God. Only three of which are found in the New Testament. In addition, the phrases "that day," "the day," and "the great day" occur more than 70 times in the Old Testament. At this point it is prudent to consider each time the phrase day of the Lord occurs, in order to clearly understand what the terms meaning. All references will be looked at in their Canonical order.

Isaiah 2:12-21—12) For the day of the LORD of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low: 13) And upon all the cedars of Lebanon, that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan, 14) And upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills that are lifted up, 16) And upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all pleasant pictures. 17) And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day. 18) And the idols he shall utterly abolish. 19) And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth. 20) In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats; 21) To go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the tops of the ragged rocks, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth.

Our first passage informs us that the day of the LORD is a day when the proud and lofty are brought low and the LORD alone will be exalted. In addition, men hide from the LORD as He arises to shake terribly the earth.

Isaiah 13:6-11—Howl ye; for the day of the LORD is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty. 7) Therefore shall all hands be faint, and every man's heart shall melt: 8) And they shall be afraid: pangs and sorrows shall take hold of them; they shall be in pain as a woman that travaileth: they shall be amazed one at another; their faces shall be as flames. 9) Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. 10) For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine. 11) And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for

their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogance of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible.

Adding to his previous description Isaiah describes the day of the LORD as "destruction from the Almighty." As verse 9 states it will be day of wrath and fiercer anger which will result in the destruction of sinners. It is also important to note the cosmic disturbances that will be associated with the day of Lord. These events will factor heavily into this discussion at a late time.

Isaiah 24:21-23-- And it shall come to pass in that day, that the LORD shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth. 22) And they shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison, and after many days shall they be visited. 23) Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the LORD of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously.

This passage is critical to our study. The careful reader will notice that the day of the Lord includes both the punishment of the "kings of the earth upon the earth" but also the "host of the high ones that are on high." During this time God will deal with his enemies in both heaven and on earth. Cosmic disturbance is once again associated with the day of the Lord. Finally, we are told that during this time the kingdom will be established as the LORD reigns in mount Zion.

Isaiah 34:4-8--And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll: and all their host shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling [fig] from the fig tree. 5) For my sword shall be bathed in heaven: behold, it shall come down upon Idumea, and upon the people of my curse, to judgment. 6) The sword of the LORD is filled with blood, it is made fat with fatness, and with the blood of lambs and goats, with the fat of the kidneys of rams: for the LORD hath a sacrifice in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Idumea. 7) And the unicorns shall come down with them, and the bullocks with the bulls; and their land shall be soaked with blood, and their dust made fat with fatness. 8) For it is the day of the LORD'S vengeance, and the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion.

Once again the reader will notice that in the day of LORD the Lord's sword will be bathed in heaven before it come down to earth. This implies that the day of the Lord begins in heaven before it comes down to earth. In addition, the day of Lord is once again described as the day of the Lord's vengeance when the controversy over Zion will be settled.

Jeremiah 46:10--For this is the day of the Lord GOD of hosts, a day of vengeance, that he may avenge him of his adversaries: and the sword shall devour, and it shall be satiate and made drunk with their blood: for the Lord GOD of hosts hath a sacrifice in the north country by the river Euphrates.

Ezekiel 13:5--Ye have not gone up into the gaps, neither made up the hedge for the house of Israel to stand in the battle in the day of the LORD.

Ezekiel 30:3--For the day is near, even the day of the LORD is near, a cloudy day; it shall be the time of the heathen.

Joel 1:15--Alas for the day! for the day of the LORD is at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come.

The above passages describe the day of the Lord as a day of destruction, a cloudy day, a day of battle, a day of vengeance, and the time of the heathen. It is the day when God will avenge his adversaries and remove all things that offend.

Joel 2:1-11--Blow ye 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 cometh, for it is nigh at hand; 2) A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains: a great people and a strong; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, [even] to the years of many generations. 3) A fire devoureth before them; and behind them a flame burneth: the land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness; yea, and nothing shall escape them. 4) The appearance of them is as the appearance of horses; and as horsemen, so shall they run. 5) Like the noise of chariots on the tops of mountains shall they leap, like the noise of a flame of fire that devoureth the stubble, as a strong people set in battle array. 6) Before their face the people shall be much pained: all faces shall gather blackness. 7) They shall run like mighty men; they shall climb the wall like men of war; and they shall march every one on his ways, and they shall not break their ranks: 8) Neither shall one thrust another; they shall walk every one in his path: and when they fall upon the sword, they shall not be wounded. 9) They shall run to and fro in the city; they shall run upon the wall, they shall climb up upon the houses; they shall enter in at the windows like a thief. 10) The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble: the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining: 11) And the LORD shall utter his voice before his army: for his camp is very great: for he is strong that executeth his word: for the day of the LORD is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?

Joel's description of the day of the Lord matches those that we have already studied. Namely the day is characterized by darkness, gloominess, clouds and thick darkness, shaking and trembling of heaven and earth, as well as cosmic disturbances. Joel also depicts the Lord's army at the second coming. Image fighting an army that has a fire burning before it devouring everything in its path and that cannot be wounded much less killed. No wonder Joel states in verse 11 that "the day of LORD is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?"

Joel 2:30-32--And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. 31) The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come. 32) And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call.

The prophet Joel continues his disruption by stating that, "The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come." The careful reader will notice that the cosmic disturbance in the sun and moon occur before the day of the Lord "comes" not before the day of the Lord "begins." This distinction will be crucial in our next article dealing with the timing of the day of LORD. In addition, Joel states that during the day of LORD deliverance will be in mount Zion and in Jerusalem. The day of the LORD then includes the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom with Christ reigning and ruling on his throne in Jerusalem.

Joel 3:14-21-- Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. 15) The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining. 16) The LORD also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the LORD will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel. 17) So shall ye know that I am the LORD your God dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain: then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more. 18) And it shall come to pass in that day, that the mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come forth of the house of the LORD, and shall water the valley of Shittim. 19) Egypt shall be a desolation, and Edom shall be a desolate wilderness, for the violence against the children of Judah, because they have shed innocent blood in their land. 20) But Judah shall dwell for ever, and Jerusalem from generation to generation. 21) For I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed: for the LORD dwelleth in Zion.

Furthering his description from chapter 2 Joel again states that in the day of LORD the "LORD also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the LORD will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel. So shall ye know that I am the LORD your God dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain: then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more." It is during the day of the LORD that the LORD enters into his rest described in Psalm 132:12-13:

For the LORD hath chosen Zion; he hath desired [it] for his habitation. 13) This [is] my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it.

In the above passage the Psalmist states that the LORD chose Zion for habitation or dwelling place. He further says that when the LORD dwells or lives in Zion he will have entered his rest. Bible students should note that in Joel's description of the day of LORD He says that the LORD is dwelling in Zion his holy mountain. Therefore, the day of LORD must include the establishment of Davidic kingdom with Christ himself sitting on the throne of David in Jerusalem.

Amos 5:18-20--Woe unto you that desire the day of the LORD! to what end [is] it for you? the day of the LORD is darkness, and not light. 19) As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him. 20) Shall not the day of the LORD be darkness, and not light? even very dark, and no brightness in it?

Obadiah 1:15-17--For the day of the LORD is near upon all the heathen: as thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee: thy reward shall return upon thine own head. 16) For as ye have drunk upon my holy mountain, so shall all the heathen drink continually, yea, they shall drink, and they shall swallow down, and they shall be as though they had not been. 17) But upon mount Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness; and the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions.

Zephaniah 1:14-17-- The great day of the LORD is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the LORD: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. 15) That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, 16) A day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers. 17) And I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the LORD: and their blood shall be poured out as dust, and their flesh as the dung.

Zechariah 14:1-9-- Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. 2) For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. 3) Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. 4) And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, [and there shall be] a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south. 5) And ye shall flee [to] the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee. 6) And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark: 7) But it shall be one day which shall be known to the LORD, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass,

that at evening time it shall be light. 8) And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be. 9) And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one.

The four passages quoted above match the descriptions of the day of the LORD given in other passages upon which we have commented. However, some interesting things should be noted from the passage from Zachariah. First of all in verse 4 we read that in the day of the LORD Christ will stand upon the mount of Olives. This is quite interesting when one considers the manner of Christ's ascension into heaven in Acts 1. The angles inform the disciples that "this same Jesus, which was taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." Acts 1:12 goes on to say, "Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a Sabbath day's journey." Jesus Christ will return to earth in like manner to his reception into heaven. Jesus Christ ascended into heaven from the mount of Olives. Therefore, Jesus Christ will return to the mount of Olives when He comes back the second time. It is logical to conclude, then that the day of the LORD has something to do with the second coming of Jesus Christ.

In addition, Zachariah 14:9 states the following, "And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one." Clearly the day of the LORD also includes the establishment of the Davidic kingdom when Jesus Christ rules as the king over all the earth.

Malachi 4:5-- Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD:

Malachi adds another important piece of information to our study. God will send the prophet Elijah back to earth before the coming of the day of the LORD. This verse will be critical to the next section of this study as we look at the timing of the day of LORD. For now the reader should notice that is Elijah is sent before the coming of the day of LORD not before the beginning of the day of LORD.

Acts 2:17-21-- And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: 18) And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: 19) And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke: 20) The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come: 21) And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

In Acts 2 Peter quotes from a passage we have already studied, Joel 2:30-32. While this passage reach a partial fulfillment with the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost it has not yet reach its complete fulfillment. Once again we see the cosmic disturbance of the sun and moon occurs before the day of the LORD comes to earth not before the day of the LORD begins.

I Thessalonians 5:2-4-- For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. 3) For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. 4) But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.

The Apostle Paul also comments on the day of the Lord in I Thessalonians 5:2-4. It is interesting to note that Paul's discussion of these events follows his description of the Rapture in chapter 4 the event where the saints will meet the Lord in the air. Following the follow of the passage Paul's message to the Thessalonians is clear. Any believers which are alive and remain will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air; therefore, they do not need to worry about the prophetic day of the Lord coming upon them. Believers have already escaped the wrath of God through the Rapture in chapter 4.

II Peter 3:10-- 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.

Peter adds the final piece to our puzzle in defining the day of Lord. Peter says that in the day of the Lord the heavens and earth will be destroyed and burned up. A few verses later in II Peter 3:13 we read, "Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for a new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." According to Peter the day of the LORD continues through Revelation 21:1 "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea."

The day of the Lord is time in which the Lord will enforce his will over his creation. It is a prophetic day as recorded in the Old Testament and is not under way in the current dispensation of Grace. In our next study we will begin looking at the timing of the day of Lord. When will these events begin to occur on earth? Stay tuned.