

## The Day of YHWH

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The original meaning of the “Day of YHWH” was that YHWH fought for Israel and defeated her enemies.<sup>1</sup> The first example of this is the Battle of Rephidim in the area of Horeb.<sup>2</sup> With YHWH’s help the Amalekites were defeated and Moses commemorates the event:

And Moses built an altar and called the name of it, **The LORD Is My Banner**, saying, “A hand upon the throne of the LORD! **The LORD will have war** with Amalek from generation to generation.” (Exodus 17:15-16 ESV)

YHWH had promised Moses he would deliver Israel by a “strong hand” and “fight” for them:

Say therefore to the people of Israel, ‘I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and **I will deliver you** from slavery to them, and I will redeem you **with an outstretched arm and with great acts** of judgement. **The LORD will fight for you**, and you have only to be silent. (Exodus 6:6, 14:14 ESV)

This was amply demonstrated by the Exodus plagues and Yam Suph crossing as documented in the Song of the Sea:

**The LORD is a man of war**; the LORD is his name. (Exodus 15:3 ESV)

In the Plains of Moab, Moses reminded the people of Israel of YHWH’s promise to fight for them:

**The LORD your God who goes before you will himself fight for you**, just as he did for you in Egypt ... This day **I will begin to put the dread and fear of you** on the peoples who are under the whole heaven, who shall hear the report of you and shall tremble and be in anguish because of you. ... **the LORD your God is he who goes with you to fight for you against your enemies, to give you the victory**. (Deuteronomy 1:30, 2:25, 20:4 ESV)

This was amply demonstrated in the defeats of Sihon,<sup>3</sup> Og,<sup>4</sup> and the Midianites.<sup>5</sup> The Book of Joshua is a record of YHWH fighting for Israel to give them the promised land:

... **the LORD said to Joshua** ... “Moses my servant is dead. Now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the people of Israel. **Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you**, just as I promised to Moses. ...” And the LORD said to Joshua, “See, **I have given Jericho into your hand**, with its king and mighty men of valor. ...” And the LORD said to Joshua, “Do not fear and do not be dismayed. Take all the fighting men with you, and **arise, go up to Ai**. **See, I have given into your hand** the king of Ai, and his people, his city, and his land. ...” (Joshua 1:1-3, 6:2, 8:1 ESV)

At the Battle of Gibeon, the appearance of **cosmic phenomena** is first recorded in association with **a Day of YHWH**:

And the LORD said to Joshua, “Do not fear them, for I have given them into your hands. Not a man of them shall stand before you.” So Joshua came upon them suddenly, having marched up all night from Gilgal. And **the LORD threw them into a panic before Israel**, who struck them with a great blow at Gibeon and chased them by the way of the ascent of Beth-horon and struck them as far as Azekah and Makkedah. And as they fled before Israel, while they were going down the ascent of Beth-horon, **the LORD threw down large stones from heaven on them** as far as Azekah, and they died. There were more who died because of the **hailstones** than the sons of Israel killed with the sword.

At that time Joshua spoke to the LORD **in the day when the LORD gave the Amorites over to the sons of Israel**, and he said in the sight of Israel,

**“Sun, stand still at Gibeon, and moon, in the Valley of Aijalon.”**

And the sun stood still, and the moon stopped,  
until the nation took vengeance on their enemies. (Joshua 10:8-13a ESV)

<sup>1</sup> See Gerhard von Rad, *The Message of the Prophets*, Harper and Row, New York, 1965, pages 95-99

<sup>2</sup> See Exodus 17:8-16

<sup>3</sup> See Numbers 21:21-30, Deuteronomy 2:26-37

<sup>4</sup> See Numbers 21:31-35, Deuteronomy 3:1-11

<sup>5</sup> See Numbers 31:1-12

The Book of Judges is an almost repetitious legacy of Israel's apostasy, punishment, repentance, and deliverance by YHWH. The Song of Deborah again identifies supernatural phenomena in YHWH's fighting for Israel:

The kings came, they fought; then fought the kings of Canaan,  
at Taanach, by the waters of Megiddo; they got no spoils of silver.  
**From heaven the stars fought**, from their courses they fought against Sisera.  
**The torrent Kishon swept them away**, the ancient torrent, the torrent Kishon.  
March on, my [life], with might! (Judges 5:19-21 ESV)

Gideon's victory over the Midianites was no less miraculous:

As soon as Gideon heard the telling of the dream and its interpretation, he worshiped. And he returned to the camp of Israel and said, "**Arise, for the LORD has given the host of Midian into your hand.**" And he divided the 300 men into three companies and put trumpets into the hands of all of them and empty jars, with torches inside the jars. And he said to them, "Look at me, and do likewise. When I come to the outskirts of the camp, do as I do. When I blow the trumpet, I and all who are with me, then blow the trumpets also on every side of all the camp and shout, '**For the LORD and for Gideon.**'"

So Gideon and the hundred men who were with him came to the outskirts of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, when they had just set the watch. And they blew the trumpets and smashed the jars that were in their hands. Then the three companies blew the trumpets and broke the jars. They held in their left hands the torches, and in their right hands the trumpets to blow. And they cried out, "A sword for the LORD and for Gideon!" **Every man stood in his place around the camp, and all the army ran.** They cried out and fled. When they blew the 300 trumpets, **the LORD set every man's sword against his comrade and against all the army. And the army fled** ... (Judges 7:15-22 ESV)

In the battles of Saul and David to liberate Israel from Egypt and their Philistine proxies, and to establish an independent Kingdom of Israel, the hand of YHWH was ever present until David could pray:

Who am I, O Lord GOD, and **what is my house**, that you have brought me thus far? And yet this was a small thing in your eyes, O Lord GOD. **You have spoken also of your servant's house for a great while to come ... Because of your promise**, and according to your own heart, you have brought about all this greatness ... And now, O LORD God, confirm forever the word that you have spoken concerning your servant and **concerning his house**, and do as you have spoken. And your name will be magnified forever, saying, 'The LORD of hosts is God over Israel,' and **the house of your servant David will be established before you.** For you, O LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, have made this revelation to your servant, saying, '**I will build you a house.**' Therefore your servant has found courage to pray this prayer to you. And now, O Lord GOD, you are God, and your words are true, and you have promised this good thing to your servant. Now therefore may it please you to **bless the house of your servant, so that it may continue forever before you.** For you, O Lord GOD, have spoken, and **with your blessing shall the house of your servant be blessed forever.**  
(2 Samuel 7:18b-29 ESV)

David's "**house**", of course, means his "dynasty", a descendent of his. "**Because of your promise**" alludes to the promise to Abraham of universal blessing through a descendant of Abraham now particularized to a descendant of David. The Descendant is of course Jesus Christ, who as YHWH, had fought for Israel. This Descendant will ultimately fulfill all the prophecies of the Day of YHWH.

With the establishment of the Kingdom of Israel, God began to deal with the nation differently. Rather than fighting for the nation, God began to work with individuals. David recognized this group as the "saints", the "godly":

But know that **the LORD has set apart the godly** for himself ... (Psalm 4:3 ESV)  
As for **the saints in the land**, they are the excellent ones, **in whom is all my delight.** (Psalm 16:3)  
All your works shall give thanks to you, O LORD, and **all your saints shall bless you!**  
**They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom** and tell of your power,  
**to make known to the children of man your mighty deeds,** and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.  
(Psalm 145:10-12 ESV)

This process was intensified as Solomon led the nation into idolatry:

... **when Solomon was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods**, and his heart was not wholly true to the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father. For **Solomon went after** Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after **Milcom** the abomination of the Ammonites. So **Solomon did what was evil** in the sight of the LORD and did not wholly follow the LORD, as David his father had done. Then **Solomon**

**built a high place** for **Chemosh** the abomination of Moab, and for **Molech** the abomination of the Ammonites, on the mountain east of Jerusalem. (1 Kings 11:4-7 ESV)

This was an abyss from which Israel never recovered. But old beliefs die hard. The memory lived on of the “Days of YHWH” when YHWH fought for Israel. But due to Israel’s apostasy, it became YHWH’s intention to punish Israel. Now the Day of YHWH was against Israel:

**Woe to you who desire the day of the LORD!**

**Why would you have the day of the LORD?**

It is darkness, and not light, as if a man fled from a lion, and a bear met him,  
or went into the house and leaned his hand against the wall, and a serpent bit him.

**Is not the day of the LORD darkness,** and not light, and gloom with no brightness in it?  
(Amos 5:18-20 ESV)

The castigation of the sins of Israel by Amos, and his contemporary Hosea, is famous. The sins of Israel were now the object of YHWH’s scorn. **The Day of YHWH had become a day of punishment for Israel:**

For three transgressions of Judah, and for four, **I will not revoke the punishment,**  
because they have rejected the [torah] of the LORD, and have not kept his statutes,  
but their lies have led them astray...

For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, **I will not revoke the punishment** ...  
Behold, **I will press you down in your place** ... (Amos 2:4, 6, 13 ESV)

The more they increased, **the more they sinned against me** ...

... **I will punish them** for their ways and repay them for their deeds.

**Ephraim shall become a desolation in the day of punishment;** among the tribes of Israel

I make known what is sure. ...

But they do not consider that **I remember all their evil.**

Now **their deeds surround** them; they are before my face. ...

For **Israel has forgotten his Maker** and built palaces, and Judah has multiplied fortified cities;  
so **I will send a fire** upon his cities, and it shall devour her strongholds. ...

**The days of punishment have come;** the days of recompense have come; Israel shall know it.  
(Hosea 4:7, 9, 5:9, 7:2, 8:14, 9:7 ESV)

The punishment of Israel was of course just a type of **the ultimate Day of YHWH when God will punish all humanity who refuse to repent.** The dates of the Books of Joel and Obadiah are much debated. The internal evidence would suggest dates in the mid to late ninth century for both books.<sup>6</sup> If these dates are correct, both books are earlier than Amos and Hosea and contain prophecies of the Day of YHWH which clearly look to the ultimate day of YHWH:

For **the day of the LORD is near upon all the nations.**

As you have done, it shall be done to you; your deeds shall return on your own head. (Obadiah 15 ESV)

Alas for the day! For **the day of the LORD is near,** and as destruction from the Almighty it comes. ...

Blow a trumpet in Zion; sound an alarm on my holy mountain!

**Let all the inhabitants of the [earth] tremble,** for **the day of the LORD is coming; it is near,**

a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness!

Like blackness there is spread upon the mountains a great and powerful people;

their like has never been before, nor will be again after them through the years of all generations. ...

The LORD utters his voice before his army, for his camp is exceedingly great;

he who executes his word is powerful.

For **the day of the LORD is great and very awesome; who can endure it?** ...

The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood,

**before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes.** ...

Multitudes, multitudes, in the valley of decision!

For **the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision.**

The sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining.

(Joel 1:15, 2:1-2, 11, 31, 3:14-15 ESV)

Isaiah chapter thirteen contains a description of a vision in which Isaiah saw the destruction of the Babylonian Empire by the Median Empire. He casts the destruction as a type of the ultimate Day of YHWH:

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<sup>6</sup> See Keil, C.F., and Delitzsch, F., *Commentary on the Old Testament*, volume 10, Minor Prophets, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, Massachusetts, 2011, originally published by T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1866-1891, pages 111-112, and 227-234

Wail, for **the day of the LORD is near**; as destruction from the Almighty it will come!  
Therefore all hands will be feeble, and **every human heart will melt**. ...  
Behold, **the day of the LORD comes**, cruel, with wrath and fierce anger,  
to make the [earth] a desolation and **to destroy its sinners** from it.  
For the stars of the heavens and their constellations will not give their light;  
the sun will be dark at its rising, and the moon will not shed its light.  
**I will punish the world for its evil**, and the wicked for their iniquity;  
I will put an end to the pomp of the arrogant, and lay low the pompous pride of the ruthless.  
I will make people more rare than fine gold, and mankind than the gold of Ophir.  
Therefore I will make the heavens tremble, and the earth will be shaken out of its place,  
**at the wrath of the LORD of hosts in the day of his fierce anger**. (Isaiah 13:6-7, 9-13 ESV)

Similarly, Jeremiah is given a vision concerning the Battle of Carchemish in 605BC between Nebuchadnezzar and Necho II. Jeremiah casts the destruction as a Day of YHWH:

**Why have I seen it?** They are dismayed and have turned backward.  
Their warriors are beaten down and have fled in haste; they look not back—terror on every side! ...  
The swift cannot flee away, nor the warrior escape; ...  
**That day is the day of the Lord GOD of hosts**, a day of vengeance, **to avenge himself on his foes**.  
The sword shall devour and be sated and drink its fill of their blood.  
(Jeremiah 46:5-6, 10 ESV)

Jeremiah's contemporary Zephaniah similarly sees the impending destruction of Jerusalem as a Day of YHWH, typical of the ultimate Day of YHWH:

Be silent before the Lord GOD!  
For **the day of the LORD is near**; the **LORD has prepared a sacrifice and consecrated his guests**.  
And on **the day of the LORD's sacrifice**—I will punish the officials and the king's sons ...  
**The great day of the LORD is near**, near and hastening fast;  
the sound of the day of the LORD is bitter; the mighty man cries aloud there.  
**A day of wrath** is that day, a day of distress and anguish, a day of ruin and devastation,  
a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness,  
a day of trumpet blast and battle cry against the fortified cities and against the lofty battlements.  
**I will bring distress on mankind** ... (Zephaniah 1:7-8, 14-17 ESV)

The Book of Malachi contains the last prophetic message from God in the Old Testament. This has incredible significance for True Christians today. The prophecy explicitly looks to the Ultimate Day of YHWH and adjures us to understand why fathers and children's hearts require realignment to prevent the total annihilation of humankind:

Remember the [torah] of my servant Moses, the statutes and [mish<sup>e</sup>patim]<sup>7</sup> that I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel. "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet **before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes**. And he will **turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers**, lest I come and **strike the [earth] with a decree of utter destruction**." (Malachi 4:4-6 ESV)

The New Testament authors uniformly look to the ultimate Day of YHWH with anticipation of the subsequent event, the Second Advent, the Parousia, the arrival of the King of kings:

And I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below,  
blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke; the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood,  
**before the day of the Lord comes**, the great and magnificent day.  
And it shall come to pass that **everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved**.  
(Acts 2:19-21 ESV)

When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus, you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, **so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord**. (1 Corinthians 5:4-5 ESV)

Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves are fully aware that **the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night**.  
(1 Thessalonians 5:1-2 ESV)

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<sup>7</sup> The Hebrew word *mish<sup>e</sup>pat* has no equivalent English word – there are many nuances of meaning. The most important meaning is "justness" as a character attribute of God. The plural, *mish<sup>e</sup>patim*, in this context means "understanding", "discernment", "wisdom", that comes from living by the Way of God.

Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we ask you, brothers, not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. (2 Thessalonians 2:1-2 ESV)

The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. (2 Peter 3:9-10 ESV)

The whole context of the Book of Revelation is the Day of YHWH:

I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet saying, "Write what you see in a book ... " (Revelation 1:9-11 ESV)

The day of which Jesus Christ is "Lord" is of course the Sabbath:

One Sabbath he was going through the grainfields, and as they made their way, his disciples began to pluck heads of grain. And the Pharisees were saying to him, "Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?" ... And he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath." (Mark 2:23-28 ESV)

Revelation 1:10 is referring to "the day of the Lord", NOT the Sabbath. The Greek in Revelation 1:10 is: ἐν τῇ κυριακῇ ἡμέρᾳ - en te kuriake hemera, "on the Lord's day". The Greek in each of the other references to the Day of the Lord is different: ἡμέρα κυρίου - hemera kuriou, "day of Lord" in Acts 2:20, 1 Thessalonians 5:2, and 2 Peter 3:10; ἡ ἡμέρα τοῦ κυρίου - he hemera tou kuriou, "the day the of Lord" in 1 Corinthians 5:4-5 and 2 Thessalonians 2:2. The best explanation of the unique expression in Revelation is that John was writing without the assistance of someone with better skills in the Greek language. It is well documented that the Greek of the Book of Revelation is poor.<sup>8</sup>

The Day of YHWH is specifically the seven last plagues:

Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and amazing, seven angels with seven plagues, which are the last, for with them the wrath of God is finished. ...

Then I heard a loud voice from the temple telling the seven angels, "Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God." (Revelation 15:1, 16:1 ESV)

With the seventh bowl, "world city", the kingdoms of this world, the amassed human beings under Satan's influence who hate God, God's enemies, represented by "Babylon", is finally and completely destroyed:

The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple, from the throne, saying, "It is done!" And there were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, and a great earthquake such as there had never been since man was on the earth, so great was that earthquake. The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell, and God remembered Babylon the great, to make her drain the cup of the wine of the fury of his wrath. And every island fled away, and no mountains were to be found. And great hailstones, about one hundred pounds each, fell from heaven on people; and they cursed God for the plague of the hail, because the plague was so severe. (Revelation 16:17-21 ESV)

After this the King of kings arrives with the resurrected saints:

Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. (Revelation 19:11-14 ESV)

Then we can begin to turn this earth into the prophesized utopia we call "The Wonderful World Tomorrow".

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<sup>8</sup> See Guthrie, D., New Testament Introduction, Inter-Varsity Press, Downers Grove, Illinois, 1970, pages 940-942  
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