



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

“Joel’s prophecy (ch. 2) was fulfilled at Pentecost and predicted certain incredible events which would occur ‘before the great and notable day of our Lord’. What day was this? Was it judgment day?”

“The Day of the Lord” is an eschatological term, i.e. it has to do with death, judgment, Heaven, and Hell. In Jewish eschatology, it is Jehovah manifesting Himself in triumph over His foes, and interposing on behalf of His people to deliver them. It is even the judgment of Jehovah against His own chosen people, the nation of Israel, because of their infidelity and their open state of rebellion against His decrees. The deliverance was usually from external oppression by other nations; sometimes it was release from social injustice and misery; in such cases it was a day to be desired.

AMOS

The theme of the prophecy of Amos is the judgment of the Lord. He prophesied in the days of Uzziah, king of Judea, and Jeroboam, king of Israel. I suppose one could say that the herdsman of Tekoa was a monotheist, i.e., he believed in the doctrine of only one God. He knew that the Creator was a providential God, the sovereign ruler of individuals and nations, a God who was loving but inflexible in justice. It was his appreciation of such a God which led him to tell of the vision of God standing on a wall holding a plumb-line; the wall had been built using a plumb-line. God was to set the plumb-line in the midst of His people, Israel; He was to rise against Jeroboam “with the sword.” Amos speaks of God’s judgment upon 6 bordering Gentile nations, then against Judah, and finally against Israel which was guilty of the greater sin (see ch. 1 & 2).

It is in this context that Amos speaks about ‘The day of the Lord’. In ch. 5 he says, **“Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord! to what end it is for you? the day of the Lord is darkness, and not light . . . Shall not the day of the Lord be darkness, and not light? even very dark, and no brightness in it”** (vv. 18-20). It seems that the prophet here is speaking about the ultimate destruction of Israel for he goes on in 9:8,9, **“Behold, the eyes of the Lord God are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from off the face of the earth: saving that I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob, saith the Lord. For lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth.”** It was in the reign of Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria, that the Assyrians began emptying the land of the ten Tribes of Israel of its inhabitants. Later, many found themselves in Mesopotamia where they settled.

Judah, of course, endured captivity in Babylonia. In 605 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar came to Jerusalem, and carried off the vessels of the Temple to Babylon, along with many of the royal seed (See 2 Chron. 36:5-8. Also Dan. 1:1-5). In 586 B.C. his army burned the Temple, destroyed Jerusalem, and carried off the residue of the people into captivity (See Kings 25:2-21). Ps. 137 is perhaps one of the most poignant passages in the Bible, but it seems while in exile, the Jews enjoyed many privileges. In 539 B.C. Babylon fell into the hands of Cyrus the Great who authorised the Jews to return to the land of their fathers and to rebuild the Temple (See Ezra and Neh.). Many, however, preferred to remain in Mesopotamia and there, with others formed what became known as the Diaspora. (In this context, notice also Acts 2:9).

DESTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE A.D.

If the 'day' predicted by Amos was the judgment of the Jews by God, then the judgment was on-going. We must look at the whole picture as it unfolds in the Bible. God is King. His reign is characterised by the undeviating principles of justice which men have seen throughout the ages. He punishes and blesses according to His Will. We Christians use an expression on many occasions which says that God is 'in control', that means, of course, that He *controls* events. Many times we do not see that control exercised; at other times, when it is revealed to us, we do.

There is a sense in which we can say that the advent of Jesus was a 'day of the Lord', because when He was born, God passed judgment on the world through Him. To be saved, people had to accept Him as Saviour; to be lost, they could reject Him. As if to demonstrate His control, God sent Christ at 'the proper time'. He was sent to 'His own', the Jews, but they rejected Him and finally murdered Him. They called Him Beelzebub; that constituted a sin against the Holy Spirit of God and from that there could be no escape. We see Jesus weeping over the city of Jerusalem, and ending by saying, "**Behold, your house is left unto you desolate**" (Matt. 23:37,38). Desolation means, 'de-populated, devastated'. In the very next chapter Jesus tells the Disciples about the destruction of the Temple. Those in Judea are to flee into the mountains when they see "**The abomination of desolation, spoken by Daniel the prophet**" (24:15,16). Dan. 9:27 & 12:11 seem to refer to the Antiochus Epiphanes, 8th in the Seleucid dynasty who robbed the Temple, erected a statue of Jupiter in the Holy of Holies, and threw down the walls of the city, in about 168 B.C. Jesus seems to be referring to the final desolation in A.D.70 when, besieged by the Roman commander Titus, the Temple was burned to the ground and the city virtually destroyed. Rather strangely, the emperor Hadrian built a temple to Jupiter on the site of the destroyed Temple. It said that in 363 A.D., the emperor Julian, in order to defeat the prophecy of Christ (Matt. 24:1,2), undertook to rebuild the Temple but flames burst out in the foundations. Truly, these days were days of visitation and judgment by God on a rebellious nation.

THE GREAT ASSIZE

At the final consummation of all things, there will be another great 'day of the Lord'; The Bible in many places speaks of it, and Jesus specifically mentions it (See Matt. 25:31-46). Judgment is certain, but we ought to understand a little about it. The Bible teaches us that 'now' is the day of salvation. The Jews wrought their destruction by the lives they lived *as they lived them*. Christians must realise that so far as God is concerned it is always 'now'; the past cannot be recalled; the future cannot be known. The actions that we do, the thoughts we think, are always in the present, whenever that present may be. Therefore, we must not, like the student, think we can have a period of 'cramming' towards the end of our lives in order to prepare ourselves for the final examination. When we stand before God we shall be what we have made ourselves while here on earth. He will then pass sentence.

Throughout the New Testament we are told about the day of Christ's coming in the glory of the Father. It is variously described as a day of wrath (Rom. 2:5); a day of judgment (Matt. 10:15; Rom. 2:16); a great day (Jude 6); sometimes it is called 'that day' and sometimes just 'the day' (1 Thess. 5:4; 1 Cor. 3:13); the day of Christ (Phil. 1:6,10).

I have gone to some length to show that we need to make a detailed study of what the prophets and other writers refer to when they speak about events which have already been fulfilled, events which were happening at the time they wrote, or events that had to be fulfilled in the future. There is much debate about some of these things, e.g., there are some who say that the revelation is not speaking about the things *to be* fulfilled, but about things that have been fulfilled, namely, the destruction of the

temple in A,D 70, and the destruction of Jerusalem. There is no doubt that the record speaks about things 'shortly to come to pass', and the 'time being at hand', and the words of Jesus when He told His Disciples that 'this generation will not pass away' without certain things being fulfilled. There are those who will say, "Well, does it really matter"? In answer to that I must say that I have found no suitable alternative to good Bible exegesis.

In this reply I have only been able to illustrate just how complex this subject can be. Could I suggest that readers make a detailed study of 'the judgments of God'; the historical importance of the Inter-Testamental period; and so far as the N.T. is concerned, an understanding of the expressions 'the Day of Christ' and the 'Day of the Lord'. A study of the word 'day' would be rewarding.

(All questions, please, to Alf Marsden, 20 Costessy Way,
Winstanley, Wigan WN3 6ES).