

Darkness and Light: The Day of the Lord

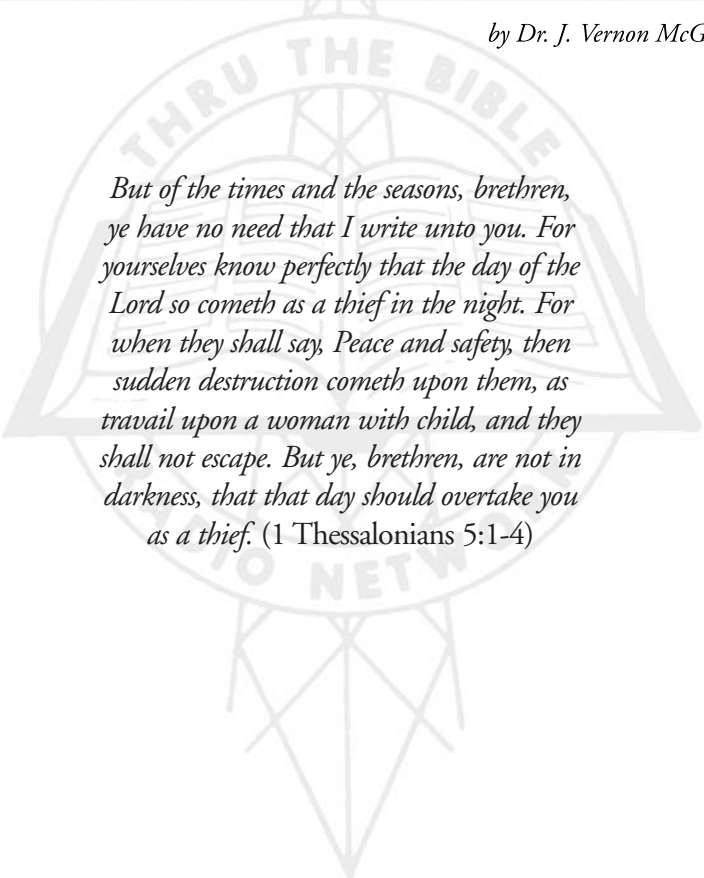
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But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. (1 Thessalonians 5:1-4)

Unless noted otherwise, all Scripture references are from the *New Scofield Reference Bible*.

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Darkness and Light: The Day of the Lord

The Day of the Lord was the high hope and the far-off goal of the Old Testament. It was that toward which the entire Old Testament program was moving. Everything in time and creation looked forward to and moved toward that day. The Old Testament closed without it being realized, and up to today the Day of the Lord has not yet come.

The Old Testament closes with almost a sundown of the nation Israel. The people were drugged to an unconsciousness of sin. They were in a spiritual stupor with no conviction, which is the lowest state of sin. The last word of the Old Testament is a curse, but it does not close with only a curse. It closes with a great hope that although the sun has gone down and it is very dark, there is coming a new day – the Day of the Lord – and the Sun of righteousness who will usher it in:

But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings.... (Malachi 4:2)

But when we come to the New Testament, we find even there that the Day of the Lord had not come. In Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians, we read that this Day of the Lord was still in the future:

But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.

(1 Thessalonians 5:1, 2)

So when Paul wrote this in about A.D. 51, the Day of the Lord was still in the future, and after almost 2000 years, it is yet future.

The expression “the Day of the Lord” occurs five times in the Book of Joel, a very brief prophecy, and all other prophets make reference to this momentous period of time, some using the terms “*the day*” or “the *great day*.” You will find that references to the Day of the Lord occur seventy-five times in the Old Testament. It became such a familiar phrase and was such an understandable subject of the Old Testament that by the time of Zechariah, one of the last of the prophets, you will find that he could use the term “in *that day*” and it was understood that he meant the Day of the Lord. It was the great theme of the Old Testament.

The New Testament does not drop the subject at all. It does not ignore the subject nor does it change it. Both Paul (in 1 and 2 Thessalonians) and Peter (see 2 Peter 3:3-10) address it. Now Paul and Simon Peter may have disagreed at Antioch about whether to eat certain meats or not and on other minor points, but they did not disagree on this all-important subject. The Day of the Lord was still a very important part of the program of God.

I believe that if you understand what the Day of the Lord is and get the picture that is set before us in the Word of God, you are well on the way to becoming a student of prophecy. In fact, you can become an authority in the field of eschatology.

When Will It Come?

Now, the question arises: Is it possible to identify this period known as the Day of the Lord? Can we define it? Can we get it out of the realm of the nebulous and tenuous? Can we avoid thinking of it as a vague theory and a spurious theology as is done today, even in many of our seminaries? I find it interesting to note that this theme has not been featured in any of the Christian journals that have come to my desk during the past few years. They have almost ignored this subject altogether. Our young people in many

of our so-called Christian schools are not taught these fundamental truths of what the Day of the Lord really means.

Now what about the boundaries to the Day of the Lord? Can we place it in the parenthesis of time? How can we fit it into the program of God?

Well, the Day of the Lord has definite reference to the return of Christ to the earth to establish His kingdom. That is made very clear when you turn to Old Testament prophecy. I have already referred to the prophecy of Zechariah. Now let's read this important section of his prophecy. Note the language carefully:

Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. 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. Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. 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 its midst 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. (Zechariah 14:1-4)

Here is a remarkable prophecy, a prophecy that says, "Behold, the day of the Lord cometh...." Note that it says in verse 4 that included in this day is the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. He is coming to the earth – it says specifically that His feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives.

These verses tell us this much: We know that the second coming of Christ to the earth to establish His kingdom is part of the Day

of the Lord. This great event is so important that actually many very fine expositors begin the Day of the Lord with this second coming of Christ to the earth at the end of the Tribulation period. The *Scofield Reference Bible* presents that viewpoint. The greatest teacher I ever sat under, Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer, taught that. But there is one small change I will make in that view: I think the Day of the Lord begins *before* Christ's second coming, and I trust I'll be able to sustain that thesis.

The Day of the Lord is associated by the prophets with the millennial kingdom that is to be established on this earth. In fact, the kingdom is equally as great a theme of the Old Testament as is the Day of the Lord. Therefore, the Day of the Lord includes the kingdom. However, I think the Day of the Lord is the all-inclusive term, while the kingdom is the smaller term.

And the LORD shall be king over all the earth; in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one. (Zechariah 14:9)

Then the verses following give actual details as to where they will begin to measure the land in that day, and Jerusalem is to become the very center. Our Lord called it the city of the great king, and our Lord shall be king in Jerusalem in that day. So now we know that the Day of the Lord includes the second coming of Christ when He establishes His kingdom, and it also includes His kingdom.

Now we need to see that the New Testament confirms this. When you turn to 2 Peter, you will find a confirmation:

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in 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 in it, shall be burned up. (2 Peter 3:10)

The Day of the Lord includes the millennial kingdom up to the establishment of the new heavens and the new earth. It extends therefore to the new heavens, the very beginning of eternity future.

70th Week of Daniel

When studying in the Book of Daniel, we find a great deal of information pertaining to the future of the nation Israel. Most significant is the “70 weeks of Daniel”* in chapter 9. Daniel was one of the Jewish captives in Babylon, and to him God gave some specific information – including actual dating – as to the end of their captivity, return to Israel, and their rebuilding of Jerusalem. That fits into secular history from 445 B.C. to 397 B.C. and was literally fulfilled.

Then, the second period consisted of 430 years – from 397 B.C. until Christ came. And we find that the very day He marched into Jerusalem, presenting Himself as the Messiah, was the exact fulfillment of this. According to the lunar calendar which Israel followed, it was right up to the very minute!

After the 483 years, there is a time break, and two events of utmost importance take place: “Messiah [will] be cut off” – this was the crucifixion of Christ. Also Jerusalem would be destroyed by the “people of the prince” who would come later on (Daniel 9:26). This was fulfilled when the Romans under Titus destroyed Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

God’s revelation to Daniel had nothing to say about the church age – it wasn’t necessary to mention it. He was saying that there

* “70 weeks of Daniel.” *The Hebrew word shabua translated by our English word “week” literally means “seven.” Therefore seventy weeks is seventy sevens. The context determines that “sevens” is being used as a unit of time and refers to years. Sir Robert Anderson, a brilliant and astute student of prophecy, worked out the dating of Daniel 9 in meticulous detail. It can be found in his classic work, The Coming Prince. See also Dr. McGee’s books on Daniel.*

were 490 years that pertained to Daniel's people, which is the nation Israel. Today there are seven years (the seventieth week) of this period that have not yet taken place.

Now when you come to the New Testament, you'll find that something has been added, that the church is brought before us. We learn that after Messiah was cut off, He rose from the dead and ascended back to heaven. He sent the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost and there took place something new: the calling out of a body of believers called "the church." And the calling out has been going on for almost 2000 years.

The next thing on God's program we call the imminent coming of Christ for His church. We found out that Paul, in effect, said to the Thessalonian Christians who were weeping for their loved ones who had died, "Sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. Of course you sorrow, but you have a hope!" (See 1 Thessalonians 5:13.) Why?

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord. (1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17)

Those who believe that Jesus died and rose again (verse 14) will go with Him immediately to heaven. And in heaven there will take place the judgment for believers at the judgment seat of Christ to see whether they are to receive a reward or not (2 Corinthians 5:10).

But, you see, momentous things will be happening on the earth during that period. The Great Tribulation will take place, designated in the Old Testament as the "seventieth week of Daniel." It is the seven-year period yet to run that will complete the 490 years

of the prophecy God gave to Daniel. It pertains to the nation Israel, and it will be concluded by the return of Christ to the earth as Zechariah chapter 14, verse 4, says: “His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives.”

Now you can understand that when Christ calls His own out of the earth and into the air to meet Him, His feet won't be touching the Mount of Olives. His taking of His church out of the world is the event we call the Rapture of the church.

Then there will take place the Great Tribulation here on earth, and at the end of that period Christ will return to establish His kingdom on this earth. During those seven years, the earth will have been under a world dictator who will combine both religion and politics. He will bring the ecumenical movement under one head, and only he himself will be worshiped as god. Paul's epistle reveals this fact, so does John in the Book of Revelation, and in the Old Testament Daniel confirms it. This world dictator, called the Antichrist, will show himself as god in the temple of God. He also will be the political ruler, the dictator of the entire world. No one can break his rule on this earth except Christ at His second coming. The Lord Jesus Christ will come in judgment to establish His kingdom, and that kingdom will last for 1000 years. His coming to the earth is the Revelation of Jesus Christ.

The Rapture is the great theme of 1 Thessalonians, while the Revelation, meaning Christ's second coming to the earth, is the theme of 2 Thessalonians. And the interesting thing is that all of this is called the “Day of the Lord” in the Bible.

Now we have something else to look at here that is very important for us to see. We can now put down our pegs and say that the Day of the Lord does not begin with the return of Christ to the earth at His Revelation, but it begins at the Rapture when He takes His church out of the world – because we're told very defi-

nately that the Day of the Lord comes without warning at all. You see, the Bible has given signs to look for that will indicate the coming of Christ to the earth, but there are no signs for the Rapture of the church.

The Day of the Lord begins when the church leaves the earth, and that triggers the Great Tribulation Period on the earth. The Day of the Lord does not begin therefore with the return of Christ to the earth; rather, it begins with the Rapture.

Evening Begins the Day

Now I want you to notice something very interesting. The Hebrew day always began with sundown; it never began with sunup. Have you noticed even in Genesis, the very first chapter, how carefully that is given to us? It says, “The evening and the morning were the first day.... The evening and the morning were the second day.... The evening and the morning were the third day....” Also, the Day of the Lord begins in darkness – at sundown. That may change the thinking of some for this reason: A great many people think the Day of the Lord means the coming of Christ to establish His kingdom. My beloved, the prophets make it very clear that this is *not* what they are talking about at all.

I turn now to the prophecy of Joel, and note this language carefully:

Blow 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 near at hand; a day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, like 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. (Joel 2:1, 2)

Our Lord Himself took that expression and called it the Great Tribulation. He said,

For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved [that is, survive]. (Matthew 24:21, 22)

There would be nothing like it before, nothing like it afterward. And Joel said that the Day of the Lord begins with *darkness and gloominess*. It begins with the Great Tribulation Period, a time of darkness, just as the Hebrew day must begin.

This is the whole tenor of Scripture. You will find that all the references to the Day of the Lord identify it with judgment. Listen to this language in the Book of Ezekiel:

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

Do you notice what Ezekiel said? “The day of the Lord is near, a *cloudy* day.” He agrees with Joel. Now notice the language used by Isaiah:

Wail; for the day of the LORD is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty... 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 out of it. (Isaiah 13:6, 9)

The Day of the Lord, you see, is always associated with judgment. That is the way you find it in the Word of God.

Now I turn to what is probably one of the most remarkable prophecies on this subject that we have in the entire Bible. It's found in the first chapter of the little prophecy of Zephaniah:

The great day of the LORD is near, it is near, and hasteneth greatly, even the voice of the day of the LORD; the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. That day is a day of wrath [and the Great Tribulation is called a day of wrath], a day of trouble and distress, a day of waste and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of the trumpet and alarm against the fortified cities, and against the high towers. 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 like dust, and their flesh like the dung. Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the LORD'S wrath, but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy; for he shall make even a speedy riddance of all those who dwell in the land. (Zephaniah 1:14-18)

You see, it is a time of judgment. The great day of His wrath is come, and it's the time of judgment upon the earth. This is the picture the Bible presents to us. Joel confirms it again:

And the LORD shall utter his voice before his army; for his camp is very great; for he is strong who executeth his word; for the day of the LORD is great and very terrible, and who can abide it? (Joel 2:11)

And then again in the third chapter:

Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision; for the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. (Joel 3:14)

Now, my beloved, all of these references relate the Day of the Lord to a period of judgment. It would be very easy to give you cross-references that show the direct application to the Great Tribulation Period, because in the Book of Revelation the Great Tri-

bulation Period has all of these things in it. Therefore the Day of the Lord will begin with night – the night of delusion, distress, and desolation.

But it is always God’s plan to move from darkness to light – always. We find His first recorded words in the Book of Genesis when He moved into this earth after some great catastrophe took place. He said, “Let there be light” (see Genesis 1:2, 3). Where there is darkness, God moves in with light. Where there is sin, He moves in with salvation. It is His method. And though the great Day of the Lord opens with judgment, it leads to light, if you please. There is both darkness and light in the Day of the Lord.

Now I want to reaffirm this. The Day of the Lord comes without warning. We noted in all those passages the thought of its coming quickly. This doesn’t mean it is coming soon, but when it comes, it strikes suddenly! If the Lord Jesus took the church off this earth tonight (I say this to you very carefully), I am convinced that the Day of the Lord would break on this earth tomorrow. It would break suddenly!

You see, at the Rapture when God removes the church (which has lost much of its influence, but it does have some) He would also remove something else – a Restrainer. The Holy Spirit is the Restrainer, and He would still be in the world but not restraining evil. Today He is holding back evil in order that the gospel might continue to go out, and He will do that up to the very moment the church leaves the world. Then, when that takes place, evil will break like a great flood or a dam giving way, and a flood of evil and of great judgment will come over this earth.

Now, the return of Christ to this earth to establish His kingdom has signs connected to it. However, there’s not a sign given to us for the time of the Rapture when He takes His own out of the world, which may be at any moment. It can take place at any

time, and no man can set a date. We can't even say it may be soon. We do not know. Somebody said to me, "Well, it may be this year that He will come." I said, "Don't say that, because the minute you begin to talk about dates, you contradict the Lord Jesus who said, 'In such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh' (Matthew 24:44)."

When He takes the church out of the world, that is called the Day of Christ. "Being confident of this very thing, that he who hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6) – that is the great hope that is before the church.

As we have already seen, the Day of the Lord begins when Christ takes the church out of the world. And though it begins in darkness, it is certainly light for those who were taken out – that is, the children of God. It is the end of the pilgrim pathway down here for them. The Day of Christ ends at the Rapture, and the Day of the Lord begins at that point.

In the prophecy of Hosea, there are some wonderful verses that speak of this period but are not identified as such. Note the picture that's given here:

For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim. (Hosea 3:4)

That's the period we're living in today. It has been true now for many years that Israel has not had a place of sacrifice. Then God says,

Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the LORD their God, and David, their king; and shall fear the LORD and his goodness in the latter days. (Hosea 3:5)

So when Christ comes to this earth to establish His kingdom, this verse will be fulfilled.

The Day of the Lord, I trust you can see, is a technical term; it is also a theological term that embraces many momentous acts of God. You and I today are living in the day of salvation, but that doesn't mean a 24-hour day. It doesn't really have reference to time but to a particular period. And that day of salvation for us ends when He takes the church out. Then the Day of the Lord begins. What a picture is presented to us here.

Let me give you someone else's very fine definition of the Day of the Lord. This is the definition of Dr. J. Dwight Pentecost, from his book, *Things to Come*:

It is thus concluded that the Day of the Lord is that extended period of time beginning with God's dealing with Israel after the rapture at the beginning of the tribulation period and extending through the second advent and the millennial age unto the creation of the new heavens and the new earth after the millennium.

God's Scenario

The Day of the Lord, we see, begins with the Rapture which happens "in the twinkling of an eye" (1 Corinthians 15:52). Then comes the Great Tribulation. And the Day of the Lord extends through the seven years of the Great Tribulation Period (Revelation 6 – 18) and the return of Christ to the earth (Revelation 19) when He returns to establish His kingdom. Then in Revelation 20, Satan is bound while Christ reigns one thousand years on the earth. Satan is then released for a little while – and don't ask me why, I don't know.

Someone asked the late Dr. Chafer, “Why in the world, when God gets Satan bound, does He release him for a little while?” And Dr. Chafer gave his characteristic answer, “You tell me why God released him in the beginning, and I’ll tell you why God releases him again for a little while.” Well, God has let him loose today, that’s for sure. And during that future day when Satan is loose for a brief period, he will lead a rebellion that God will put down.

The Great White Throne, the place of God’s final judgment, is brought before us in Revelation 20:11-15. The Tribulation saints, at this point, have been resurrected and are with the Lord Jesus during His millennial reign. Prior to the Great White Throne, we see that the lost dead are resurrected and “small and great” stand before God.

My friend, there are many people who say, “I’ll take my chances before God.” When I talked to a man in Altadena, California, several years ago, he said to me, “McGee, you don’t need to talk to me about these things. I’ve listened to you on the radio. I don’t agree with you. I think God is merciful, and I’ll take my chances with Him. I’m a good man. I pay my honest debts.” Well, that man is going to be there at the Great White Throne, and he’s going to have an opportunity to tell the Lord that he paid his honest debts.

But I tell you, it’s not going to be a pretty sight to stand before the One who has nail-pierced hands and hear Him say, “But I loved you so much I died for you. You, a sinner – lost, without hope. I bore your sins in My own body to pay the penalty for *your* sin. Why did you reject Me?” May I say to you, friend, paying your honest debts is going to look mighty small in that day. If you’ve come to Christ and accepted Him as your Savior, of course you pay your honest debts! But just paying your honest debts won’t get you into heaven – that’s for sure.

All the lost appear there before the Great White Throne, and the curtain closes with these fateful words:

And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire. (Revelation 20:15)

Then, after that final judgment, we find that eternity begins, and the new heavens and the new earth come into view (Revelation 21, 22).

Let me repeat: The Day of the Lord begins with the Rapture of the church and embraces everything from the Great Tribulation to the creation of the new heavens and the new earth. This is the tremendous picture that is presented to us in the Word of God.

You see, God makes it very clear that no Scripture, no prophecy, is to be interpreted by itself. Listen to what He says,

Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. (2 Peter 1:20)

In other words, Peter is saying this: You are not to lift out one little prophecy (the way many of the cults do today) and build a doctrine on it. You are not to interpret it apart from other references to the same subject because no prophecy is of any private interpretation. You don't interpret it by itself. It has to fit into God's program of prophecy, you see. Therefore, the great Day of the Lord is one of the great terms in the Word of God. And when the Bible mentions it, you know it is speaking of this entire period, including all of it. We can put the boundaries on it – beginning at the Rapture of the church and what takes place on the earth, then ending with the beginning of eternity. Therefore, you and I need today to interpret the present in terms of the future.

Watch and Wait

I think that we're living in a day when the attitude toward the future is becoming different. There has never been a time when so much attention was given to it. People years ago paid very little attention to the future, but now it is important to us. We find that the serious thinkers of the world are pondering and speculating in terms of the future. Should not *God's* people also think in those terms? Our Lord urged us to do so, if you please.

The fact of the matter is, one of the great injunctions that He has given us is to stay alert and watch. I want you to notice what He had to say in the Olivet Discourse as He was speaking of His coming to the earth to establish His kingdom:

Watch, therefore; for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the householder of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. (Matthew 24:42, 43)

Is the Lord Jesus coming as a thief for the church? No. It is not the thief we're looking for. We're "looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior, Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13). You'll notice that this is the very thing Paul deals with when writing to the Thessalonian believers:

For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. 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. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. (1 Thessalonians 5:2-4)

My beloved, our Lord will not come for His church as a thief. But when He comes to the earth to establish His kingdom, He

will come as a thief, breaking into this world, interfering with men's little plans and programs.

Several years ago, I decided to make a study of the Hebrew word for "watch and wait." I thought it was a single word, but I found out there are seventeen words in the Hebrew that are translated by the English words "watch" and "wait." It's amazing how many ways you can watch and wait. Let me illustrate.

It's the beginning of hunting season, and a man gets a deer license. He goes out into the woods of Utah, climbs up on a mountain, and waits there and watches. At every sound of movement he hears out there in the woods, he raises his gun. It better not be another hunter, because he's apt to shoot him – but he's waiting there for a deer to appear. That's one way to wait and watch.

Then later you can see him down at the airport, pacing up and down, and you say, "I see you're waiting and watching again." He says, "Yes, I'm waiting for the plane to come in. My mother-in-law's coming out from Iowa to visit us for the holidays. The plane is two hours late, and I do not have time to waste waiting for her!" So he paces up and down. That's another way to wait and watch, isn't it?

And then you meet him a couple of days later, during the Christmas rush, down here at the corner of Seventh and Hope Street. Again you see him pacing up and down and looking at his watch. He's waiting. You step up to him and say, "What in the world is the matter?" He says, "Well, I'm waiting for my wife. She's already forty-five minutes late!" Now that is different from waiting up yonder in the mountains for a deer! He's waiting differently again. My friend, you can wait in many different ways.

The world does not want Christ to come; they're in rebellion against Him. But He's going to break through one of these days.

And before He does, He's going to take His own out of the world. And they are watching and waiting, "looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior, Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13). The minute that Christ takes His church out of the world, the Day of Christ – the period of His grace – ends. No longer will He be calling the church out of the world, because the church shall be with Him.

Then there takes place the time of His wrath. The great Day of the Lord is darkness, not light, and the Great Tribulation breaks on the earth with a world dictator who will establish an ecumenical movement and a world political movement. Nothing can deter it except the return of Christ. He will break through like a thief, intruding into this world, establishing His kingdom on this earth. It will be a period in which He will reign on this earth for a thousand years. It ends by the new heavens and the new earth being established and with those who are His own living in the New Jerusalem.

This is God's program, my beloved. The Word of God tells us that we know not what a day will bring forth, but every child of God knows that we have a wonderful Shepherd and that we can never be taken out of our Shepherd's hands – either in time or in eternity. It is reassuring to know that our Shepherd has a program for the future. This gives hope, purpose, and direction to life. I do not know about you, but for me it adds a great deal of color to the drabness of living down here on this earth. It is an incentive today to live for God.

What about the future for you? Suppose Christ does come this year. Unless you are trusting Him as your Savior, there is nothing ahead of you but the day of judgment that will take place on this earth.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. (John 3:16, 17)

My beloved, today is the day of salvation.

Now I'm going to let the Apostle Peter conclude this message on the Day of the Lord with the information that God gave him on this great subject:

Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.

For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water, by which the world hat then was, being overflowed with water, perished. But the heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in 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 in it, shall be burned up.

Seeing, then, that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy living and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, in which the heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, in which dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless. And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation.... (2 Peter 3:3-15)