

MINISTUDY The Day of the Lord Begins

Prepared by Richard H. Sedliacik

The Good News, in conjunction with the Correspondence Course Department, presents brief excursions into the study of the Bible, delving into topics relevant to the development of future members of the God Family. Bible study is one means by which Christians are renewed daily (II Cor. 4:16), so let's refresh ourselves with more of the precious truths of God's Word!

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Most people know very little, if anything, about the "Day of the Lord." Yet it is the focal point of all prophecy! The awesome events to take place during this time are described in more than 30 different prophecies in both the Old and New Testaments.

Recall from our previous study that the heavenly signs of the sixth seal (Rev. 6:12-14, Matt. 24:29-30) are events intended to warn the world that God's wrath upon rebellious mankind is about to begin - that the Day of the Lord with its punishments for sin is about to commence. Let's pick up where we ended our study.

1. How does Isaiah 13:6-13 describe the Day of the Lord? Will the whole world be punished, and not just modern descendants of Jacob? Verse 11, Obad. 15. Also notice again the following scriptures dealing with the Day of the Lord: Joel 2:30-31, Zeph. 1:14-18, Rev. 6:15-17, Isa. 2:6-21

The Day of the Lord is going to be a terrible, awesome, fearful time!

God is going to intervene in world affairs in a powerful way, after having left the world to its own way, its own devices, its own governments for about 6,000 years.

Note that the main theme of the book of Revelation is the Day of the Lord. The apostle John said he was in spirit on the Day of the Lord (Rev. 1:10).

He saw unfold the horrible events described in many Old Testament prophecies. And so the sequence of events in this book deals with the Day of the Lord, except for those interludes relating to other matters.

2. Exactly why will God have to punish mankind severely? Rev. 11: 18, last few words; Zeph. 1:17; Isa. 24:5.

Jesus Christ, the Lord God of the Old and New Testaments, will be angry at the grievous sins of mankind. In order to bring mankind to its senses and save the human race alive, Christ is coming to "spank" humanity in love, otherwise man would destroy all life on earth (Matt. 24:22).

As any loving parent punishes his disobedient child who will not listen to gentle admonition, Christ will have to punish this world to wake it up. After which He will usher in peace, abundant prosperity, happiness and joy for all mankind.

3. What scriptures indicate how long the day of God's wrath on sinful man will last? Isa. X34 8 81:2, 3:4. Does a prophetic day often represent a year? Num. 14:34.

When the Bible talks about the "Day" of the Lord, it refers not only to the 24-hour day when Christ returns, but also the year of God's punishment that precedes it and culminates in that return.

4. What transpires as soon as the seventh seal is opened? Rev. 8:1-6

John sees in vision seven trumpets being handed to seven angels. The seven trumpets are, of course, symbolic. They represent real world events to come. These trumpets are plagues God shall send as physical punishment upon rebellious mankind.

Notice also that the seven trumpets constitute the seventh seal. This seventh seal occurs, then, in seven successive stages, each of the seven stages or parts being called a "trumpet."

5. What occurs on earth after the first trumpet is blown? Verse 7.

The result of limited use of chemical defoliants during the Vietnam War will seem trifling after this supernatural fire burns all the grass and one third of the trees on earth?

6. What does the blast of the second angel's trumpet announce? Verses 8-9

The seas will be gravely affected by this plague. One third of the seas will turn to blood and one third of all life in them will be destroyed.

7. Next, what happens to part of the earth's supplies of drinking water when the third angel's trumpet is sounded?

Verse 10. Will many die from drinking this poisoned water? Verse 11.

8. What terrifying plague is announced by the fourth trumpet? Verse 12

9. What are the last three trumpets called? Verse 13.

In vision, God continued to show the apostle John that the next tormenting events to afflict rebellious, heedless mankind will be renewed warfare. The last three trumpets are called "woes" because there will be great destruction of human life and natural resources as a result of this warfare.

Just as God punished ancient Israel by sending the armies of Assyria, and punished Judah with the armies of the Chaldeans, so He will send armies of one nation against another to punish them because their evil is bringing suffering, poverty and unhappiness on all peoples.

And so the last three trumpet plagues specifically picture three phases of coming world war. At the third stage - the third "woe" and last trumpet - men will be saved from extinction only by a miracle from God. If God did not personally intervene in this climactic way, men would destroy the last vestige of human life from the face of the earth (Matt. 24:22).

10. As the fifth angel sounds his trumpet, how is the first woe described? Rev_ 9:1-11. Are men to be tormented by symbolic locusts? Verses 3-6. Note in verse 5 that their torment is not "of" a scorpion, but "as ... of" a scorpion.

11. How are these "locusts" described? Verses 7-10.

These symbolic, locust-like "horses" with power to hurt men can only refer to terrifying war machines - possibly sophisticated attack helicopters. Today machines carry men as horses did then. And helicopter gunships are highly maneuverable so as to seem able to hop and jump and fly like locusts. Precisely what specific weapons are meant and how they will be used by power-crazed men will be plainly evident when the fifth trumpet (first woe) is blown and this terrible warfare begins.

12. Where does the super army of the first woe come from? Verses 2-3. Where do we find the "bottomless pit" interpreted? Rev. 17:8-14.

The final resurrection of the Roman Empire is the power that emerges from the bottomless pit or abyss. It is a war-making power (verse 14) with a super army equipped with sophisticated weaponry. Mussolini restored the pitifully weak, insignificant sixth "head" of the "beast" - the so-called Holy Roman Empire. A seventh and last revival is prophesied to come soon.

13. Who is the motivating force, the real leader, of this religiopolitical war-making power? Rev. 9:11.

The Hebrew word Abaddon and the Greek word Apollyon both mean "destroyer." The sinister power guiding the beast's army will be none other than the great destroyer himself - Satan the devil.

14. Who will be spared from this blitzkriegtype warfare? Verse 4.

When the forces of the beast attack its enemies, those who lived through the Great Tribulation, turned to God and were "sealed" by His Spirit (see all of chapter 7 and chapter 14, verse 1) will be protected during these terrible plagues. Meanwhile, hordes of other people in Asia will also have been preparing for war. The second woe is now ready to begin - the sixth trumpet is ready to sound.

15. Are the sixth angel's trumpet plague and the second woe clearly the same? Rev. 9:12-13. What happens when the sixth trumpet is blown - who will dare to threaten and even make war with the beast? Verses 14-16. And how are their weapons described? Verses 17-19.

To the east (from the point of view of Jerusalem), beyond the Euphrates River, lies the communist realm. From there an army of 200 million men will attack westward. Their war machines, here again described in symbolic terms, deal death from front and rear - principally by "fire," "smoke" and "brimstone." These symbols may mean firebombs and all forms of explosives, possibly including atomic and hydrogen bombs, as well as poison gas and other chemical agents.

16. How many people will suffer the torment, torture and death inflicted by this mighty army and its sophisticated weaponry? Verse 18.

More than one billion people will be killed as a result of the warfare pictured by the sixth angel. It is this wholesale carnage that Jesus Christ's personal intervention must halt, or no flesh would be saved alive (Matt. 24:22). '

THE DAY OF THE LORD CONTINUES

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The previous two ministudies covered prophesied events leading up to and including the first six trumpet plagues of the "Day of the Lord." This concluding study of the most eventful year of earth's history focuses on the final punishments God must bring upon a world that refuses to heed the chastisement of its loving Creator.

1. After the six trumpet plagues of God have exacted their toll upon the earth, will most of rebellious, hard-to-convince mankind remain unrepentant? Rev. 9:20-21.

2. But even during these plagues will God continue to plead with men to turn from their evil ways? Rev. 11:3-6.

Notice that the "two witnesses" are given spiritual protection as they deliver God's last warnings to all the earth.

3. Once the mission of the two witnesses is accomplished, will God allow the "beast" (the government of the final resurrection of the Roman Empire) to kill them? Verse 7. Where will their dead bodies be displayed? Verse 8. What will be the reaction of the world, especially of the people in the nations that will then be united under the Beast, when God's two witnesses are finally put to death? Verses 9-10.

4. What will God, who has the power over life and death, do for the two dead witnesses? Verses 11-12. Do some at this time begin to acknowledge God and give glory to Him? Verse 13. Do these events clearly take place at the end of the second woe, or sixth trumpet? Verse 14

5. What happens when the seventh trumpet sounds and the third woe begins? Verse 15. Is this clearly the time of Christ's Second Coming to take over the governments of the world and to establish the Kingdom of God on earth? Same verse.

We saw that, following hard on the heels of the first four trumpet plagues, warfare will rage. Hundreds of millions will die. Mankind will now be facing cosmocide - annihilation of the human race.

And so it is when the seventh angel sounds his trumpet that mankind will be saved from extinction by the return of Jesus Christ to intervene in

the titanic war that will be raging on earth - the war that would otherwise lead to the destruction of all life.

6. But what is the reaction of rebellious mankind at this time? Verse 18, first five words.

Jesus Christ, the new ruler of the world, will not be meekly accepted by the power-crazed nations already engaged in an all-out struggle for world domination. Men have never wanted God's rule - even though it is the only way to peace, happiness and joy. And so the nations are found angry at Christ's return.

7. What else occurs at the blowing of the seventh and last trumpet? Verses 14, 18. Notice the words "thy wrath is come" in verse 18.

The only thing described at the blowing of the seventh trumpet that could possibly be the third woe is the wrath of God. But all the trumpets have been plagues, pouring out the wrath of God - His punishments to bring this hell-bent world to its senses and to God. We will see that the seventh trumpet actually completes God's wrath.

8- Exactly what "fills up" or completes the wrath of God? Rev. 15:1. Are these plagues to be poured out in Christ's presence on earth? Rev. 11:15, 14:10.

All of the preceding six trumpets have heralded the unleashing of different types of grievous plagues upon this rebellious world. But notice that the seventh and last trumpet completes this wrath by ushering in the terrifying seven last plagues.

Just as the seventh seal is subdivided into the seven trumpets, so the seventh trumpet is divided into the seven last plagues, which are and constitute the seventh trumpet or third woe. Thus the seven last plagues are also a part of the seventh seal.

And the seven last plagues are poured out at Christ's coming - actually in the very presence of Jesus Christ and all the holy angels - immediately after He returns to save humanity from extinction in the warfare that constitutes the second woe.

9. Are these final plagues of wrath compared to "vials" about to be poured out? Rev. 15:7. On what are they poured out? Rev. 16:1. Read the rest of this chapter to get the story flow.

10. Will these plagues be poured out in one day? Rev. 18:8.

This scripture indicates that all seven vials will be poured out in one 24-hour day. This day is the climactic part of the much longer "Day of the Lord" that will have begun with the seventh seal (Rev. 8:1) ushering in the seven consecutive trumpet plagues.

And it will be during this one day that the great false church - "Babylon the Great" (Rev. 17:5) that directed the Beast's empire - will be utterly destroyed.

11. Upon whom does the first vial cause excruciating sores? Rev. 16:2.

It will be poured upon all who are participating in this world's pagan civil-religious system.

12. What will the second and third of these plagues do? Rev. 16:3-4. How just and righteous are these punishments of God upon mankind? Verses 5-7.

13. What great plague is produced as the fourth angel pours out his vial? Rev. 16:8. Does the Bible indicate how intense God will cause the light of the sun to become for a short time? Isa. 30:26. Will many repent as a result of this grievous plague, or will men curse God and continue to defy Him? Rev. 16:9.

14. What cumulative effect will all the plagues of God have on the earth's population? Isa. 24:6. Will comparatively few people be left at the start of Christ's rule? Same verse.

Note particularly that not all people will die. Millions will still be left alive. The Bible indicates that one tenth of the earth's population will survive (Amos 5:3, Isa. 6:13). With these as His subjects, Christ will begin His rule on earth.

15. What is the reason God must punish mankind so severely? Isa. 24:5.

Sin - disobedience to God's laws (I John 3:4) - is the cause of all human suffering and woe. The world is in reality bringing this wrath upon itself by having lived in sin. And so, as pointed out before, our loving Creator will have to punish the world severely to bring it to its senses and to humble it so men will be teachable - to prepare them for repentance and obedience to God's government. Yet, in spite of the severity of the fourth plague, most still will not repent.

16. What happens throughout the kingdom of the Beast after the fifth angel empties his vial on the Beast's headquarters? Rev. 16:10. Will this plague finally compel people to repent of their evil deeds and submit to Christ? Rev. 16:11.

God's Word clearly shows that the earth's inhabitants will refuse to yield to Christ's authority when He returns. That is why Jesus Christ will have to powerfully subdue the world and force mankind, at first, to submit to His rule. It is amazing to see just how this world will react to the glorious Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

17. Will the pouring out of the sixth vial begin preparations for the greatest battle in all human history? Rev. 16:12-16. Will Christ righteously judge and make war against these defiant men? Rev. 19:11, Isa. 11:4.

In a previous study we learned about the gathering of earth's armies at Armageddon and their subsequent march upon Jerusalem to fight Jesus Christ, only to be utterly defeated by the King of kings and His angelic host.

18. Will the earth be violently shaken by the mightiest earthquake ever to occur when the seventh and last plague is poured out? Rev. 16:17-18. Will even the islands of the sea be moved? Verse 20.

Many islands, being dormant volcanic cones, will literally blow up and disappear as this final plague is unleashed.

The Day of the Lord is often described as a time of thick darkness and clouds (Zeph. 1:14-15). Just imagine what the smoke and ash from hundreds, perhaps even thousands, of erupting volcanoes can do to obscure the light of the sun.

19. Will part of God's final punishment of men be with gigantic hailstones? Rev. 16:21.

The weight of each hailstone will be about a talent - in excess of 100 pounds! Can you imagine the tremendous destruction this storm will cause on earth?

20. Will the nations of the earth finally begin to seek God and ask Him to teach them His ways? Isa. 2:1-4.

At last worldwide peace, security and happiness will be ushered in by the righteous rule of Jesus Christ, for the law of God will go out to all nations from Jerusalem during the Millennium.

In the meantime, the nations of this world have yet to suffer enormously and be humbled before they will finally acknowledge the true God, and before they will turn wholeheartedly to Him. But individually, each of us can receive God's divine protection during these prophesied worldwide catastrophes.

If we stay close to God and do our part in furthering the Work of God's Church in this end time, He promises to deliver us from this terrifying time (Rev. 3:10, 12:14-16).

The Dramatic Return of Jesus Christ

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No news story could be more shocking. No newspaper headline could be more spectacular than: "JESUS CHRIST RETURNS!"

Yet, just before His death and resurrection - before His departure from the Mount of Olives to go to heaven more than 1,900 years ago - Jesus Christ promised, "I will come again" (John 14:3).

And only moments after His ascension, the apostles were startled by the appearance of two divine messengers who assured them, "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11).

In spite of these clear, plain statements in the Bible, there are professing Christians today who don't believe in Jesus' literal return to planet Earth. Then there are those who do believe in His Second Coming, only they think this time He will appear secretly to "rapture" true believers away with Him to heaven!

Let's examine the plain truth about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ as revealed in God's holy, inspired Word.

1. Until when does the Bible tell us Jesus Christ will remain in heaven before returning to earth? Acts 3:20-21, Isa. 2:2-4.

The glorified Christ is coming to restore the rule of the government of God over the entire earth. It was taken away from the earth when the archangel Lucifer (now Satan), whom God had made ruler over our planet, rebelled against the government of God and attempted to dethrone and replace God as ruler of the entire universe (Isa. 14:12-14).

2. Will God's intervention in world affairs and the Second Coming of Christ be universally expected? Luke 21:25-27, 31, 34-35.

3. To what period in earth's history did Jesus compare His future return? Matt. 24:37. Did the people before the Flood really expect God's supernatural intervention at that time? Verses 38-39. Will most people today be expecting God's intervention and the Second Coming of Christ? Same three verses.

4. Will those who are expecting Christ's return know the day and hour of His coming? Matt. 25:13, 24:36.

5. Would only the apostles be unable to know the day and the hour, or did Jesus mean all - even those of us today - would not know? Luke 12:40-43

Notice that Jesus' warning is especially for our end-time generation --- those alive "when he cometh" (verse 43).

6. Though we cannot know the day and hour of Christ's return, can we nevertheless know very nearly the actual time of His return? Matt. 24:32-33. What signs did Jesus say would precede His Second Coming? Verses 4-31.

7. What is a major sign that would indicate Christ's return was very near? Matt. 24:14, Mark 13:10.

Jesus made it plain that the Gospel of the Kingdom of God -- the Gospel message He preached --- must go to all nations before His coming. That Gospel is being proclaimed worldwide today by the end-time era of the very Church Jesus built more than 1,900 years ago (Matt. 16:18, Rev. 3:7-13)!

8. Does the Bible picture Christ coming as a "thief"? Rev. 16:15. Does this scripture mean Christ will return secretly or invisibly - in a clandestine manner, as so many modern Christians have come to believe? That's a fair question.

But here's another question to ponder. When thieves or burglars rob a home, do they come and go without anyone knowing about it? Do they come invisibly? Of course not!

A thief, however, usually comes when the household is away or asleep- He catches them unawares, off their guard - surprises them. You never know when a thief is coming. If you did, you would call the police and be prepared for him. The big question you would want answered if you already knew a thief was planning to rob your home would be, when?

So it is with the coming of Christ. He will not come invisibly any more than a thief comes invisibly- But He will come unexpectedly! No one will know exactly when He is going to come.

Jesus Himself explained: "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh" (Matt. 24:42-44).

And so Jesus likened His coming to that of a "thief" in respect to the uncertainty of the time of His coming and the element of surprise.

9. Is Jesus' Second Coming pictured as a dramatic event? Verses 29-30. Will a tremendous trumpet blast rend the air at His coming? Verse 31

10. Will Christ's return from heaven be accompanied by a tremendous shout, as well as a trumpet blast? I Thess. 4:16.

Christ's coming will not be a clandestine event at all, for the whole world will hear it!

11. When Christ returns, will He be visible to everyone? Matt. 24:27, 30

The Greek word *astrape* used in Matthew 24:27 may mean the lightning of thunderstorms, or any brilliant illumination. Now what brilliant light "cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west"? Why, the sun, of course. Can you see the sun? Of course you can.

Christ's presence will be "as the sun shineth in his strength" (Rev. 1:16). It will be obvious - nobody will be able to miss it.

12. Did the angelic messenger, who spoke to the disciples right after Christ's ascension from the Mount of Olives, affirm that He would return "in like manner" as He left? Acts 1:10-11. What was the manner of His leaving - was He seen until He disappeared in the clouds? Verse 9.

13. Will Christ return to that same Mount of Olives near Jerusalem from which He ascended? Zech. 14:3-4.

When Christ returns to the Mount of Olives in the same manner as He departed, He will not be alone. Notice who will come with Him:

14. Will all the "saints" - resurrected Christians - be with Jesus Christ when He returns to the Mount of Olives? Verse 5, last part.

15. Do the saints return from heaven with Christ, or just from the atmosphere of the earth - the clouds into which they will have risen to meet Christ? I Thess. 4:15-17. Is this the time they will have been "caught up" to be with Him? Verse 17. Who will have gathered them together from around the earth to be with Christ at His coming? Matt. 24:31.

16. Will this resurrection of the dead in Christ have occurred at the exact moment the trumpet ("trump") mentioned in I Thessalonians 4:16 is blown? I Cor. 15:51-52.

17. Is the trumpet mentioned in I Thessalonians 4:16 and I Corinthians 15:52 obviously the same as the one blown in Revelation 11: 15? Rev. 11:18.

In these verses of Revelation 11, John is describing the same momentous future event Paul did in I Thessalonians 4 and I Corinthians 15 - the time of the Second Coming of Christ and the resurrection of Spirit-begotten Christians. Thus we see that Christ will return and the saints will be resurrected at the mighty blast of a great trumpet, which will be heard by everyone around the earth.

Both the resurrected dead in Christ and living Christians, then made immortal, will rise to meet the returning Christ in the air, and then come down soon thereafter with Him to the earth.

18. Will the born-again saints stay with Christ forever? I Thess. 4:17. Where will they spend at least the first thousand years with Him? Rev. 5:10, 20:4.

19. Who is scheduled to come with Christ from heaven at His dramatic return? Mark 8:38, last part; Rev. 19:14-16.

When Jesus Christ comes again, He will return as King of kings and Lord of lords to set up the Kingdom of God on earth. He will return with great power and glory and a great army of angels will accompany Him from heaven.

Immediately after His return, the almighty Christ will have to use His great power to subdue the deceived, rebellious nations, until they at last learn that obedience to His law is the only way that will produce real happiness, joy and peace for all mankind!