

The Day of Christ

Introduction

The phrase “the day of Christ” or “the day of the Lord Jesus” is unique to the Apostle Paul. Paul also called the day of Christ “that day” in his last letter. The phrases are found in 1 Corinthians 1.8, 3.13, 5.5; 2 Corinthians 1.14; Philippians 1.6, 10, 2.16; 2 Timothy 1.18, 4.8.

On the other hand, the phrase “the day of the Lord” (also called “that day”) is common throughout the Old Testament. The prophets referred constantly to it. In the New Testament, the Lord Jesus Christ, Paul, and Peter referred to it. Some of the passages are the following: Isaiah 2.12, 13.6, 9; 34.8; Ezekiel 13.5; 30.3; Joel 1.15, 2.1, 11, 31, 3.14; Amos 5.18, 20; Obadiah 1.15; Zephaniah 1.7, 14; Zechariah 14.1; Malachi 4.5; Matthew 24.1-51; Acts 2.20; Romans 2.5; 1 Thessalonians 5.2; 2 Thessalonians 2.2; 2 Peter 3.10; Revelation 1.10 and “that day” Isaiah 2.11, 17, 20; 3.18. This day is a time of terror, darkness, and wrath. It is a “day of visitation” (Isaiah 10.3), a “day of the wrath of the Lord” (Ezekiel 7.19), the “great day of the Lord” (Zephaniah 1.14).

Contrasting the Two Days

A stark contrast exists between these two days. The chart below outlines the differences.

Day of Christ	Day of the Lord
For the Church (the Body of Christ)	For Jew and Gentile rejectors of Christ
A day of blessing and reward	A day of judgment
A heavenly hope	An earthly despair
Eagerly anticipated	Feared and dreaded

The Day of Christ

The chart below notes the verses that refer to the Day of Christ. They are all from Paul since God did *not* reveal it in the Old Testament, during Jesus' earthly ministry, or later to the Twelve. The ascended Lord revealed this Day unto Paul for it is a day that has reference to the Church, the Body of Christ exclusively. Paul called it our "blessed hope" (Titus 2.13) and is the day which believers eagerly anticipate.

Day of Christ	Comment
<p>¹¹ Do this, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed. ¹² The night is almost gone, and the day is near. Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light (Romans 13.11-12).</p>	<p>Paul's first allusion to the Day of Christ encouraged the Romans to live holy lives. The salvation mentioned was the Lord's return, the Rapture, when the believer will receive a resurrection body (glorification). Paul believed the Lord would return in his lifetime.</p>

<p>⁴ I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus, ⁵ that in everything you were enriched in Him, in all speech and all knowledge, ⁶ even as the testimony concerning Christ was confirmed in you, ⁷ so that you are not lacking in any gift, awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁸ who will also confirm you to the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 1.4-8).</p>	<p>Paul wrote the Corinthians that they were enriched in Christ, in all speech and knowledge, that they were true believers, and lacked in no gift. They eagerly awaited the return of Christ who would establish them blameless until the end. No hint of judgment is in this day (cf. 1 Thessalonians 1.9-10, 5.9).</p>
<p>Each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is <i>to be</i> revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work (1 Corinthians 3.13).</p>	<p>In the "day of Christ" believers works will be judged. This will most likely determine rewards, responsibilities, and rank.</p>

¹ It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father's wife. ² You have become arrogant and have not mourned instead, so that the one who had done this deed would be removed from your midst. ³ For I, on my part, though absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged him who has so committed this, as though I were present. ⁴ In the name of our Lord Jesus, when you are assembled, and I with you in spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus, ⁵ *I have decided* to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. (1 Corinthians 5.1-5).

Paul had to deal with a situation of immorality so offensive he said it didn't even happen among pagans. Paul's judgment in the matter was "to deliver the person to Satan for the destruction of his flesh." In other words, he prayed for his death so that he might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Sometimes it is more merciful for someone to die before their normal time if their actions will harm the Church or themselves. This man was saved and Paul wanted the best for him when Christ returned for his Body.

³ I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, ⁴ always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all, ⁵ in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now. ⁶ *For I am* confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus (Philippians 1.3-6).

The Philippians embraced the gospel faithfully from the beginning (the first convert in Europe was Lydia, cf. Acts 16.14). Paul wrote encouragingly that God would continue his good work until Christ returned. Again, no mention of wrath is in the day.

⁸ For God is my witness, how I long for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. ⁹ And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, ¹⁰ so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ; (Philippians 1.8-10)

Paul expressed his love for these Philippians and prayed their love would abound in real knowledge (ἐπίγνωσις) and they would approve (δοκιμάζω) “try,” “test” things that were excellent to be unsullied when Christ returned.

¹⁴ Do all things without grumbling or disputing; ¹⁵ so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, ¹⁶ holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I will have reason to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain (Philippians 2.14-16).

Paul encouraged the Philippians to good behavior, to be above reproach, to stand as examples in a perverse world, and to hold fast to the Scriptures. They were his glory and he wanted his hard work to them to bear fruit and celebrate their success when Christ returned for his Body.

¹² For our proud confidence is this: the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you. ¹³ For we write nothing else to you than what you read and understand, and I hope you will understand until the end; ¹⁴ just as you also partially did understand us, that we are your reason to be proud as you also are ours, in the day of our Lord Jesus (2 Corinthians 1.12-14).

Paul wrote the Corinthians that in good conscience he had conducted himself with integrity towards them. Together, they had a mutual source of pride: they could be proud of him and he them in the day of Christ. When Christ returns for his body there will great celebration and reward. Again, no hint of wrath, woe, or fear is present.

<p>¹⁶ The Lord grant mercy to the house of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains; ¹⁷ but when he was in Rome, he eagerly searched for me and found me— ¹⁸ the Lord grant to him to find mercy from the Lord on that day—and you know very well what services he rendered at Ephesus (2 Timothy 1.16-18).</p>	<p>Paul asked the Lord for special mercy to Onesiphorus and his household for he had not been ashamed of Paul's imprisonment but searched determinedly for him. Paul wished Onesiphorus reward when the Lord returned. No wrath.</p>
<p>⁶ For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. ⁷ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; ⁸ in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing. (2 Timothy 4.6-8).</p>	<p>Paul knew his execution was near. He knew he had been faithful to the Lord and that the Lord had a crown of righteousness for him when he returned as well as for all who eagerly anticipate His return. Once again, no mention of wrath or terror in this return of the Lord.</p>

The Day of the Lord

Many scriptures speak of the Day of the Lord (יהוה יום). It is concisely described by the prophet Zephaniah:

¹⁴ *Near is the great day of the LORD, near and coming very quickly; Listen, the day of the LORD! In it the warrior cries out bitterly.*

¹⁵ *A day of wrath is that day, a day of trouble and distress, a day of destruction and desolation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness,*

¹⁶ *A day of trumpet and battle cry against the fortified cities and the high corner towers.*

¹⁷ *I will bring distress on men so that they will walk like the blind, because they have sinned against the LORD; And their blood will be poured out like dust and their flesh like dung.*

¹⁸ *Neither their silver nor their gold will be able to deliver them*

On the day of the LORD's wrath; And all the earth will be devoured in the fire of His jealousy, for He will make a complete end, indeed a terrifying one, of all the inhabitants of the earth (Zephaniah 1.14-18).

Jesus spoke of this day in Matthew 24.1-51. He echoed the horrors of this time with his words:

²¹ *For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will.* ²² *Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short (Matthew 24.21-22).*

The Day of the Lord is that time of judgment in which God will judge Israel for her unbelief (Jeremiah 30.7) and the nations of the world for their rejection of Christ. The day will end with the return of the Lord (Matthew 24.30; Revelation 19.11-19). He warned his listeners to be prepared for this day (Matthew 24.42-51).

The earliest reference to this day is in Psalm 2. An understanding of this Psalm is critical to a correct understanding of Jewish eschatology. It succinctly outlined the whole prophetic program for Israel (1st and 2nd Advents) and the Messianic Kingdom on earth.

Psalm 2	Comment
¹ Why are the nations in an uproar and the peoples devising a vain thing?	Nations refer to Gentiles; peoples refers to Jews.
² The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers take counsel together against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying,	Verse 2 parallels verse one. Gentile powers consorted with Israel to crucify the Messiah and will consort again when the Antichrist comes.
³ "Let us tear their fetters apart and cast away their cords from us!"	The mental attitude of rebellion of Jews and Gentiles against God's rule.
⁴ He who sits in the heavens laughs, the Lord scoffs at them.	God laughs in scorn in response to man's foolish rebellion (v. 3).
⁵ Then He will speak to them in His anger and terrify them in His fury, saying,	This verse refers to God's judgment primarily to the Day of the Lord. He will judge the world for its unbelief.
⁶ "But as for Me, I have installed My King upon Zion, My holy mountain."	God's plan is for the Son to rule earth from Mt. Zion (Jerusalem).
⁷ "I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to Me, 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.	The Son declares His right to rule: Begotten refers to Christ's resurrection (Acts 13.33; Romans 1.4; Hebrews 1.3, 5).

⁸ 'Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, and the very ends of the earth as Your possession.	The Messiah is worthy to fulfill God's prophetic plan to establish His kingdom on earth because of who He is and his work on the cross.
⁹ 'You shall break them with a rod of iron, you shall shatter them like earthenware.'"	Christ will return to defeat his enemies and rule earth with a rod of iron (Revelation 2.27, 12.5, 19.15).
¹⁰ Now therefore, O kings, show discernment; Take warning, O judges of the earth.	Again parallelism: God warns kings (Gentiles) and judges (Israel) to be forewarned of His intent.
¹¹ Worship the LORD with reverence and rejoice with trembling.	God's counsels worship of Him with reverence: Christ is coming to rule.
¹² Do homage to the Son, that He not become angry, and you perish in the way, for His wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!	God's final warning: the fate of all who refuse to acknowledge and honor His Son is doom. On the other hand, all who love Him are blessed forever.

Paul's Warnings

Paul made it clear that the Church would not experience the Day of the Lord. Notice the difference between the following two passages:

¹³ But **we** do not want **you** to be uninformed, **brethren**, about those who are asleep, so that **you** will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. ¹⁴ For if **we** believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. ¹⁵ For this **we** say to **you** by the

word of the Lord, that **we** who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then **we** who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so **we** shall always be with the Lord. ¹⁸ Therefore comfort one another with these words (1 Thessalonians 4.13-18).

. . .

¹ Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. ² For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. ³ While **they** are saying, "Peace and safety!" then destruction will come upon **them** suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and **they** will not escape (1 Thessalonians 5.1-3).

. . .

⁴ But **you**, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief; ⁵ for **you** are all sons of light and sons of day. **We** are not of night nor of darkness; ⁶ so then let **us** not sleep as others do, but let **us** be alert and sober. ⁷ For those who sleep do their sleeping at night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night. ⁸ But since **we** are of the day, let **us** be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation. ⁹ For God has not destined **us** for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁰ who died for **us**, so that whether we are awake or asleep, **we** will live together with Him. ¹¹ Therefore encourage one another

*and build up one another, just as **you** also are doing (1 Thessalonians 5.4-11).*

In the first passage, Paul's subject was believers. The bolded text, "we," "you" refers to believers. Paul wrote that the Lord would come for believers and closed the passage with a word of comfort (cf. 1 Thessalonians 1.9-10). Notice the contrast in the next passage. The bolded text "they," "them" refers to unbelievers. They, unbelievers, not believers, will experience the Day of the Lord (Tribulation). He closed this passage with "us," "we," "you" again as the subject to contrast and demonstrate that God has not destined believers for wrath, i.e., the Day of the Lord, the Tribulation. Because of this hope and confidence, we are to encourage one another. These passages indicate clearly that the Church, the Body of Christ, will not undergo God's wrath of the Tribulation.

Paul wrote another letter to the Thessalonians to correct a false teaching that had come to this congregation. The false teachers taught the Church would undergo the Tribulation.¹ Paul wrote,

¹ Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, ² that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come (2 Thessalonians 2.1-2).

Apparently, someone had written a letter and signed Paul's name which stated that the "day of the Lord" had come.² This had shaken the Thessalonians because Paul had taught them that before the Day of the Lord came the Lord would come and remove them (the body of Christ) from the earth (1 Thessalonians 4.14-18 cf. 1 Corinthians 15.51-52) which was a source of

comfort (1 Thessalonians 4.18). Paul taught that this “day” was a secret (μυστήριον), unknown until the risen Lord had revealed it to him (1 Corinthians 15.51).

³ Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, ⁴ who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God. Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things? (2 Thessalonians 2.3-4)

Paul cautioned the Thessalonians not to be deceived by anyone who was teaching them that they had entered the Tribulation. This is not possible for God will remove His Church before this occurs. He reminded them of his teaching that the sign of the Day of the Lord was the appearance of the “man of lawlessness,” “the son of destruction.” This individual has several other names, e.g., “lawless one” (2 Thessalonians 2.8), “the beast” (Revelation 11.7), “antichrist” (1 John 2.18). He will be identified ultimately by his blasphemy of God for he will establish his throne in the Jewish temple and declare himself to be God (cf. Revelation 13.12, 15, 14.9, 11).

⁶ And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed. ⁷ For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way (2 Thessalonians 2. 6-7).

At the present time, the Antichrist is restrained by God. The most likely reason is the presence of the Holy Spirit who indwells believers. When the Body of Christ is complete, God will remove it and hence, the Holy Spirit. This event is known

as the Rapture of the Church, the Body of Christ. It is synonymous with the Day of Christ. Sometime after that (the Bible does not reveal how much time will pass) the Antichrist will become manifest. Another "mystery" the Lord revealed to Paul was this "mystery of lawlessness". See [Paul's "Mystery."](#) Paul wrote that this "mystery of lawlessness" was already at work. This means that Satan has been at work to set up his man to rule the world since the first century. It is possible that he may have someone ready to assume this role in every generation.

⁸ Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; ⁹ that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, ¹⁰ and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. ¹¹ For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, ¹² in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness (2 Thessalonians. 2.8-12).

Sometime after the Body of Christ is removed, the Antichrist will be revealed. God will destroy him at his coming (Revelation 19.11-20). The Antichrist will exercise Satanic powers (ability to perform miracles) which will deceive most of humanity. The world's population will be deceived because it has rejected the truth. Just as nature abhors a vacuum, when one rejects truth deception fills the place of truth. Such deception will be similar to what happened to Pharaoh in Moses' day. Pharaoh hardened his heart to Moses' words. As a result, God hardened Pharaoh's heart (Exodus 7.13-14, 22; 8.15, 19, 32; 9.7, 12, 34-35; 10.1, 20, 27; 11.10; 14.8; 1 Samuel 6.6) so that he would believe a lie; he continued to

trust in the gods of Egypt.

¹³ But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. ¹⁴ It was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. ¹⁵ So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us (2 Thessalonians 2. 13-15).

Paul encouraged his readers that they were beloved by the Lord and secure in Him. Paul, as was his habit, emphasized his gospel, “the gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 24.20; 1 Corinthians 15.1-4)³ as opposed to the “gospel of the kingdom”⁴ and encouraged the Thessalonians to stand firm in what *he* had taught them and not be deceived by false teaching.

Conclusion

The Day of Christ is distinct from the Day of the Lord as daylight is to dark. The first is a time of great anticipation, joy, blessing, and reward. The second is a time of terror, wrath, dread, and woe. Paul taught the Thessalonians that the two days were different and not to be deceived by anyone who taught that the Church would go through the Tribulation or Day of the Lord. Paul taught Christ would remove the Church, the body of Christ, before that Day for we are not “appointed unto wrath” (1 Thessalonians 1.10, 5.9). Paul’s doctrine is as pertinent today as it was over 1,900 years ago. Christ’s second advent occurs in two phases: in the first phase the Lord returns for the Body of Christ; in the second phase the Lord returns to destroy his enemies. The Day of Christ is the Rapture, our blessed hope (Titus 2.13), the resurrection of the Church, in which we receive eternal bodies. This truth is for the Body of Christ alone and we

should comfort one another and rejoice in it.

¹ Paul wrote a false teacher is one who teaches the Church will go through the Tribulation.

² The KJV reads “day of Christ.” The KJV is based largely upon the Majority text which along with the second corrector of D, read D², (9th century) reads “Day of Christ” instead of “Day of the Lord.” Earlier evidence in all forms (Greek, versions, fathers) supports the text “Day of the Lord.” Such a reading also fits Paul’s theology for he taught that we are not “appointed unto wrath” (judgment, i.e., the Day of the Lord, cf. 1 Thessalonians 1.10, 5.9) since the Body of Christ will be removed from the earth before the appearance of the Antichrist and God’s judgment. Paul’s usage of ἐνίστημι in 2 Thessalonians 2.2. Paul used this term in Romans 8.38; 1 Corinthians 3.22, 7.26; Galatians 1.4; 2 Thessalonians 2.2, 2 Timothy 3.1; Hebrews 9.9. In almost every instance he used it to mean things “present.” In the first two usages he distinguished it from future occurrences (οὔτε ἐνεστώτα οὔτε μέλλοντα; εἴτε ἐνεστώτα εἴτε μέλλοντα). Thus, a reading of “day in Christ” would read, “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 present.” Such a reading does not make sense. They knew the day of Christ (Rapture) had not taken place because they were still there. The question they had (and were being taught by false teachers) was whether they were experiencing the day of the Lord. Paul wrote 2 Thessalonians to correct this false teaching. Thus, the correct reading is “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 the Lord is present (or has come).” See the companion study on the [Rapture](#) and on [1 and 2 Thessalonians](#).

³ See the study, [The Gospel](#).

⁴ See the study, [The Gospel of the Kingdom](#).

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