**Biblical Theology**

Lesson 19 – A Biblical Theology of The Day of the Lord

**Definition**

1. One theologian defines “The Day of the Lord” as, “the conviction expressed in the Bible that at specific times through specific events God’s rule will be re-established on earth and the elect will be released from sin’s sources, adherents, and effects now and/or forever.” Paul House says that on this day, “Yahweh will intervene directly in human affairs through clear actions to judge sin in Israel and the world.”

**Old Testament After the Fall**

1. Since the day of the Lord involves judgment, the first hint of it that comes in Scripture is Genesis 3:15 where God says to the serpent, “He [the seed of the woman] will crush your head and you [serpent] shall bruise His heel.” The Lord God is the first one to talk about a specific time when the liar and deceiver will be defeated as God executes His judgment upon the serpent. And this will be accomplished by a particular human being (“seed of the woman”) through whom God will execute this divine judgment.
2. But this also comes in the curse of God punishing Adam and Eve and the serpent for their own crimes against Him. In a sense, Genesis 3:13-19 is an anticipation of the final Day of the Lord. The same 3-fold sin of Eve (“saw”🡪”desired”🡪”took”) is used of Achan in Joshua 7:21 with the result that he and his family and possessions are destroyed. Jericho was “devoted to destruction” to the Lord for her sin, but since Achan took some of what was “devoted to destruction” to the Lord, he and all that was his became “devoted to destruction” to the Lord. So the Israelites devoting Jericho to destruction as well as Achan being devoted to destruction are miniature foreshadows of the larger Day of the Lord.
3. The flood in Genesis 6-8 is also a taste of the Day of the Lord. There God punishes all of mankind save 8 people because the intention of man’s heart was continually wicked (Gen. 6:5). Creation is almost completely undone as the division between water and land from Genesis 1 is reversed and it is formless save for the ark. James Hamilton describes this and other judgments in the OT as “judgments on the microcosms which point forward to the judgment that God will bring on the macrocosm (the world).”
4. Another “day of the Lord” in miniature is the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 18-19. It comes upon those doing “very grave” sin (18:20). It is a Day when the righteous will not be swept away with the wicked (18:22-33). It is a day the righteous will not want to look upon (19:15-22). It is a day of fire as the Lord rained “sulfur and fire…out of heaven and He overthrew those cities and all the valley and all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground” (19:24-25).
5. The plagues in Egypt in the book of Exodus represent another picture of the Day of the Lord. Zechariah 14 goes into great detail about the “day of the Lord” or “that day” and included in that day of judgment is a “plague” that “shall fall on the horses, mules, camels, donkeys, and whatever beats may be in those camps (v.15). Verse 18 refers to Egypt not going to the Lord to present themselves and if they do not go up, there will be no rain and there will be “the plague with which the Lord afflicts the nations…”
6. Jeremiah laments the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in terms of what happened in Sodom. Lamentations 4:6 says, “The chastisement of the daughter of my people has been greater than the punishment of Sodom, which was overthrown in a moment and no hands were wrung for her [to help her].”
7. Zephaniah 1 talks about God’s judgment upon Judah in terms of the Day of the Lord. Here the Day of Lord is described as a day of “uncreation” where the Creator sweeps away His creation, including Judah (vv.2-6). This is a day of judgment upon God’s covenant people for their idolatry (v.4), their syncretism (v.5), and their apostasy (v.6). It is divine judgment upon injustice such as murder and theft (v.9). It is a day of great anguish as all that the wicked have accrued for themselves will be destroyed (vv.10-13). These are ones who have taken for granted God’s longsuffering and patience and have turned it into a God who is not angry at all (v.12). It is a day of distress and darkness (vv.14-18).
8. The prophetic literature of the OT is prevalent with the language of “the Day of the Lord.” You can read Isaiah 2:6-22; 13:6, 9; 58:13; Jeremiah 46:10; Ezekiel 13:5, 30:3; Joel 1:15, 2:1, 22, 31; 3:14; Amos 5:18, 20; Obadiah v.15; Zephaniah 1; and Malachi 4:5. Isaiah is full of references to “that day” (45 mentions).
9. To sum the OT testimony regarding “the Day of the Lord,” it is a Day wherein God judges sin and sinners, either in the nations or among His own people, through His chosen human being, by overthrowing sin and sinners with heavenly fire so that sinners cry out in anguish and confusion at the darkness of that day for them which is a day of destruction as God uses creation to bring about their undoing.

**New Testament**

1. Jesus draws on the Noahic flood imagery in Matthew 24:37-39 where he says, “For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.” Jesus uses this OT imagery to talk about the “suddenness” of the Day of the Lord. It will be unexpected as sinners will be doing what they always do then without any warning, BAM. Also, notice that Jesus equates the Day of the Lord with the 2nd coming of the Son of Man.
2. Additionally, Jesus draws on the flood imagery when He speaks of His death as a baptism in Mark 10:38-39. James Hamilton notes, “Jesus described His death as an immersion in the waters of God’s judgment. Jesus died under the full weight of God’s wrath against sin. The death of Jesus is the fulfillment of what Noah’s flood anticipated. This is the judgment through which God saves His people.” In other words, the 1st coming of Jesus also involves the idea of “the Day of the Lord” except in the 1st coming it is Jesus Himself who experiences “the Day of the Lord” in His flesh on behalf of His people. This is why Peter can say the flood correlates to baptism which now saves us (1 Pet. 3:20-21). Baptism does not save but it points to salvation and in Scripture there is a close connection between the sign and what is signified. Just like the signs on the road get you to your destination (the reality), so the signs of the covenant in Scripture point to and are connected to the reality.
3. Jesus also draws on the Sodom and Gomorrah imagery in Matthew 10:15 which says, “Truly, I say to you, it will be more bearable on the Day of Judgment for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town.” In other words, it seems that there are going to be levels of unbearableness in the divine judgment. The towns and people that rejected Christ and His apostles bear a greater judgment as they rejected the reality to which the OT pointed, Jesus, and His chosen messengers who proclaimed Christ as the reality revealed.
4. Paul refers to the day of the Lord in the context of church discipline (1 Corinthians 5:5). Excommunication is a mini-“day of the Lord” with the hopes that the prospect of that day will bring the excommunicated person to repentance and back into the fold. In both 1 and 2 Thessalonians, Paul talks about the Day of the Lord either in its suddenness (1 Thess 5:2) or how it will not come until other things first happen (2 Thess 2:2-12).
5. Peter draws on OT judgment imagery to talk about the Day of the Lord as well. 2 Peter 3:10-13 says, “But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. Since all these things are to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, **12**waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! **13**But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.” So here we see the “suddenness” like the Flood, and “fire” like Sodom and Gomorrah, and Peter adds that the Day of the Lord will expose the works of the wicked that they think they are doing secretly in the dark.
6. Additionally Peter says in 2 Peter 2:6-10 that God’s extinction of Sodom and Gomorrah is an “example of what is going to happen to the ungodly” and that means the Lord knows how to keep the unrighteous under punishment “until the day of judgment.”
7. Jude brings several different OT strands together when he writes in Jude vv.5-7, “Now I want to remind you, although you once fully knew it, that Jesus, who saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe. **6**And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day— **7**just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.” The Day of Judgment will be like the plagues in Egypt, and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and there might be allusion to the days of Noah with reference to the angels or it might be a reference to the casting down of Satan from heaven which Jesus states came at His first coming (Luke 10:18).
8. Revelation draws upon the plague imagery of Exodus in chapter 16 and says “and great hailstones, about one hundred pounds each, fell from heaven on the people, and they cursed God for the plague of the hail, because the plague was so severe.” This happens on the Day of the Lord. The unbelievers will be afflicted as the Lord uses creation in an abnormal or judgmental way to pour out His judgment upon the wicked.

**New Heavens/Earth**

1. The day of the Lord will be an eternal day of torment for Satan and those whom he deceived. Revelation 20:10 says “they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.” Revelation calls this the “second death” and describes it as a lake of fire, where Satan, Death, Hades, and anyone whose name is not written in the book of life will be found (20:14-15). This draws upon the imagery of Sodom and Gomorrah. Revelation 21:8 adds that this lake burns with fire and sulfur, drawing upon the imagery of Sodom and Gomorrah.
2. To sum up the NT testimony, the Day of the Lord has begun with the 1st coming of Christ. He is that seed of the woman who has bound the strong man and is plundering his house. He has crushed the serpent’s head at the cross. He has bore the day of the Lord judgment in the place of His people who have been baptized into His death. But the day of the Lord has not been completed yet, but will be at Christ’s 2nd coming when He comes to judge the wicked nations and pay them for their deeds and completely crush Satan under His divine wrath.

**Take-Aways**

1. The Day of the Lord is great comfort and provides much hope for us who believe. It is a comfort to know that though wickedness may seem to go unpunished here and now, we have God’s sure promise that He will repay and the wicked will not escape. Justice will occur, though for now justice is delayed. We see our brothers and sisters persecuted, even put to death, and nobody intervenes on their behalf. But on the Day of the Lord, God Himself will intervene. He will not let the martyrdom of His saints go unpunished and there’s nobody better to do than intervention that God Himself who will do it perfectly.
2. The Day of the Lord reminds us of God’s call to holiness and to bear fruit in keeping with repentance, thereby demonstrating that we truly are the children of God. We cannot sin so that grace may abound, otherwise we demonstrate that we are bearing rotten fruit and will be broken off of the vine as dead branches and cast into the fire.
3. In defending Scripture as the Word of God, the Westminster Confession of Faith 1.5 says, “We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the Church to a high and reverent esteem of the Holy Scripture. And the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole (which is, to give all glory to God), the full discovery it makes of the only way of man’s salvation….” In talking about earthly proofs that demonstrate the Bible as God’s Word, biblical theology helps us with those 3 that are underlined. Biblical Theology helps us see how the Bible is consistent and coherent in all it parts. In various themes, we see the unity between the Old and New, between various books of different genres and authors. The Old Testament and New Testament interlock together to form 1 big, beautiful picture which is God’s story of His plan to save man for His own glory. The Bible comes together like no other book even though it was written over about 1,600 years by approximately 40 human authors. That is because it was 1 divine author, God Himself, who cannot lie, and biblical theology wonderfully demonstrates this.