

Truth for Today

The Bible teaching radio programme

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Broadcast Date: 29 September 2013

No. T0800

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Important days in God's calendar: The day of the LORD

Good morning and welcome to *Truth for Today*. We are continuing our series of talks on "Important days in God's calendar." The title of the talk we have before us is "The day of the LORD." Most Christians are very interested in prophecy, especially in relation to what will happen in the future. In the Old Testament of the Bible, we have many prophecies which have already been fulfilled when Jesus Christ the Son of God came into this world. Men like David and Isaiah were used by God to record the future, hundreds of years before Christ. They explained in distinct detail the very sufferings that Jesus would go through as He died on the cross of Calvary (see Psalm 22; Isaiah 53). When we come to the New Testament of the Bible, we read of many things which are going to happen in our future. As a Christian I am very sure that what God promises in His word, the Bible, for the future will come to pass.

Today people are worried about the future; scientists don't help as they try to work out what is going to happen to planet earth. Will the ice caps melt and the earth flood? Not a chance! God promised He would never flood the earth again (Genesis 9:11), and as a sign, gave us the rainbow in the sky as a reminder of this promise (Genesis 9:12-17).

Will some trigger happy dictator or disgruntled despot destroy the earth with nuclear power? Not a chance! God is the only one who will one day destroy this earth, see 2 Peter 3:6-7. The Bible is very clear that God will not allow man to destroy the world that He has made. If you do not believe in God you may very well disagree with me, but don't tell me that you don't worry about the future.

I am absolutely delighted that I know personally the One who is in control, my Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. In Colossians 1:16-17 we read, *"For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him and for Him: and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist."* Who controls the universe? Who keeps everything in perfect balance? Have you ever thought why that after the dark night the sun never fails to rise to give us light? God made this wonderful world for us to live in and enjoy. My prayer is that you will listen with an open mind as we talk about some of the future events in God's calendar.

I would like to try and make very clear the sequence of events that the Bible teaches will take place during the "day of the LORD." Lets us begin by explaining what a "day" means to God. A day to us is 24 hours but we must remember that God is outside of time. God is eternal and He lives in eternity. In 2 Peter 3:8, God tells us that *"one day is with the Lord as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day."* Time means everything to us; everything we do is controlled and measured by it.

When God speaks about a "day", He is speaking of a period of time during the ages. Today we live in a period of time called "the day of grace, or the day of salvation" (see 2 Corinthians 6:2) This day began when Jesus Christ left this world to go back to heaven, and will end when Jesus Christ will come again.

The day we live in is a wonderful period as we have the opportunity to accept Jesus Christ as our Saviour. But this "day" will end. God has appointed a day when the Lord Jesus will return to the air to call those who belong to Him to be with Himself.

They will then appear before His judgement seat (see 2 Corinthians 5:10) to be rewarded according to their measure of faithfulness to Him while they have served Him here below. Jesus is already preparing a place for the believer in His Father's house above (see John 14:3), where they will live eternally with the Saviour. When is the exact time of the "coming of the Lord"? Nobody knows (see Matthew 24:36), it is not given in the Bible but we are assured by many verses that it will be soon. You can read about this in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. Once the rapture has taken place the next period of time in God's calendar is called the "day of the LORD." It will be a time when the judgements of God are poured out on the earth. It has been said that the believer will be taken for blessing and the unbeliever left for judgement. The "day of the LORD" does not concern the believers at all; it falls on the world that has rejected Him. Before the "day of the LORD" can come His believers have to be gathered with Him.

The expression "the day of the LORD" is used many times in both the Old Testament and the New. In the Old Testament, it usually refers to a day of retribution and judgement. We see this particularly in the books of the

prophets where they pointed ahead to the day when the LORD would reign in righteousness; some indicate how that day begins; others how it continues and ends. The New Testament continues with references to "the day of the LORD" as a day of judgement. The references also tell us clearly that the heavens and the earth will know its influence. Earth dwellers will be caught unawares. They will not expect it when it arrives. Peter's second epistle concentrates on the closing of that age, whereas Paul in 1 Thessalonians and 2 Thessalonians refers to the early period of the "day of the LORD."

The "day of the LORD" begins with seven years of tribulation, and then we have the visible manifestation of the Lord when He appears with His people from heaven. He comes to execute judgement on His foes and to take possession of the kingdom so long ago predicted. Then He will reign in righteousness for a thousand years in this very world where He was crucified. When the thousand years reign comes to an end, the heavens and earth shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat (see 2 Peter 3:10). The heavens and this special planet earth with all its wonders and works will be burned up. The Bible tells us in Psalm 102:25-27 and in Hebrews 1:10-12 that everything of the old creation is dismissed; it is put away like an old, well used garment. But the verses also assure us that the Lord is the same; He will always be the same. In Hebrews 13:8, we read "*Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever.*"

I would now like with God's help, to go briefly through the various events to explain what the Bible tells us will happen during "the day of the LORD", who will be involved and what it will be like. There are at least seven years between the rapture of the Church which is His body, that is all who believe in Him, and the second coming of Christ with the Church to reign with Him over this world in power and glory. This is known as "the appearing."

At the rapture before the tribulation period begins, the believers will be removed and the Holy Spirit who is present in this world will also be removed. How will this affect the world? The influence of the Holy Spirit and the Christian in this world is a restraint on evil so we have some form of order. But the Bible speaks of man's heart as "*desperately wicked*" (Jeremiah 17:9); so sin can cause him to do anything.

The first three and a half years of the tribulation period will be relatively calm and peaceful but Satan is cast down to the earth and the second three and a half years will prove to be horrendous, as evil will get out of hand. We read in 2 Thessalonians 2:2-4, that there will be a complete falling away from the God given faith that we know today. In fact the Christian faith will be abandoned by Christendom. The man of sin (see 2 Thessalonians 2:3), the antichrist will be revealed and men will believe a lie (2 Thessalonians 2:11). The antichrist will be under the power of Satan and will be believed by the apostates of Christendom. Attention will turn to the nation of Israel, God's chosen people, the very people that once rejected the Lord Jesus as their Messiah and plotted His death. A small faithful remnant of the Jews will preach the Gospel of the Kingdom which was once preached by the Lord and His disciples. They will be severely persecuted and some will be martyred. Some will accept this Gospel although others will again reject the Gospel and still be looking for signs and wonders. The Gospel of the grace of God that we know today will no longer be preached; there will be no second chance for anyone living in this present age.

The nations will rise up against Israel and focus in on Jerusalem. The king of the North and the king of the South (see Daniel 11) will surround Israel and when there seems to be no hope and almost certain destruction, the Lord will appear in power and great glory with His saints, you and me and every blood bought believer in Christ.

Where the rapture was a private affair, the "appearing" is a public affair. The Bible tells us that "*every eye shall see Him*" (Revelation 1:7). Can you imagine what this will be like? Every eye all over the world will witness this great event. The Bible also tells us that "*they [the Jews] shall look on Him who they pierced*" (Revelation 1:7).

What will it be like for Christ to come with all His own, to execute judgement upon the living nations and set up His Kingdom in this world? He will come personally as we read in Zechariah and Habakkuk where the following references are made about His appearing: His feet which will touch the mount of Olives (Zechariah 14:4), His throne will be in Jerusalem (Jeremiah 3:17), His dominion will be from sea to sea, Psalm 72:8 and from the river to the ends of the earth. They will see His glory and His beauty, Psalm 72:15 and He shall be praised.

Joel 2:30-31 speak of the signs and wonders preceding the appearing: he describes it as "*a great and terrible day of the LORD.*" There will be wonders in the heavens and on the earth. On the earth blood, fire and pillars of smoke which probably refer to the results of bitter conflict. Alternatively they may be results of some natural disasters such as volcanic eruptions or violent storms. In the sky, the sun will turn to darkness and the moon to blood. Unexpected darkness always brings with it a sense of fear and horror as it did in the plagues of ancient Egypt (Exodus 7:14-11:10). Matthew 24:29-30 explain even more how the coming of Christ will be preceded by a global midnight darkness which will suddenly be dispelled by the lightning and the brightness of His coming. All earth will be in no doubt that the Lord Himself has come. Maybe you are interested in studying this subject more. Here are some of the key portions of the Bible about this period: Isaiah 2:10-22 and Revelation 19:11-21.

The Lord will come to execute judgement but also to set up His kingdom in this world. Revelation 20:1-3 explain that Satan will be bound and the Lord will reign supreme in righteousness as the King of kings and Lord of lords (see Revelation 19:16) for a thousand years. Isaiah 32:1, Isaiah 35:1-10 and Revelation 20:4-6 are some of the verses that speak of the Millennium period. What a wonderful time this will be: The Righteous One ruling in true peace and righteousness. Isaiah 35:1-10 it tells us some amazing things:

- The wilderness and the parched land will be glad and the desert shall blossom like a rose, like the crocus it will burst into bloom (Isaiah 35:1)
- The very earth will rejoice and shout for joy (Isaiah 35:2).
- Blind people will see, deaf people will hear (Isaiah 35:5)
- The lame shall leap like a deer and the dumb person will shout for joy (Isaiah 35:6).
- Water will gush out of the desert and other dry places (Isaiah 35:6-7).
- God's chosen redeemed people Israel will return with joy and singing on a path to Zion where they will face no danger from man or beast (Isaiah 35:10).

What a wonderful day, the Creator has come back and put this cursed earth to rights for this millennium period. It's as if the earth breathes a sigh of relief when the Lord Himself returns to this very earth to take complete control. I

Imagine the world we live in to today if righteousness had dominion over sin. No armies and navies will be tolerated during the reign of peace and righteousness; prisons, offender's institutions and hospitals will not be required. Doctors, lawyers, judges and the multitude of professions and trades that are required because of man's sin will not be needed at this time. The death rate will be very low so the population will increase. Today righteousness suffers but in that day it will reign. People will live in peace, real peace, the peace that men and women have been trying to bring in this world for many years by campaigning and lobbying the politicians. The curse on nature will be greatly minimised and water will cause the earth to blossom even in places like the vast Sahara desert. What a wonderful day!

But Revelation 20:7-9 tells us that after a thousand years have expired Satan will be loosed from his prison. Even after the nations have lived through the wonderful millennium period they are very quickly deceived by Satan, just as men and women today are being blinded by Satan in relation to the things of God. Man will once more reject the King and will take up arms and will join a great army to make war with God's people and the beloved city Jerusalem; then cometh the end! (see 1 Corinthians 15:24). Fire comes down from heaven and devours them. As we said earlier the end times of the "day of the LORD" are found in 2 Peter 3:10-11. First the heavens will pass away with a great noise, the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth and also the works on the earth shall be burned up. The heavens and earth will melt which means "to disintegrate or to be dissolved."

Who or what power could do this? Only one man could do this, Jesus Christ God's Son, the King of kings and the Lord of lords. The worlds were made by Him and the worlds will be destroyed by Him. In 2 Peter 3:13 we read of another day when there will be new heavens and a new earth. Those who have accepted the Gospel of the Kingdom throughout the "day of the LORD" will live eternally on the new earth. We who have accepted Christ as our Saviour today will reign with Him in heaven.

This world is heading, in God's time, to destruction. Are you at all concerned about this? Are you troubled about your standing with God? Is your future secure? Why don't you turn to the Saviour while you can? Repent from your sins, put your faith and trust in the Lord Jesus who loves you and took the punishment of sin on your behalf on the cross of Calvary. It's a wonderful thing to have the peace and assurance that you know the God who holds the future in His hand. As believers in Christ, let us never forget the bright future lies before us. We shall soon be where,

*"All taint of sin shall be removed,
All evil done away,
And we shall rest with God's beloved
Through God's eternal day."*

GA Wellesley (1735-1781)

We shall be with our Saviour in the Father's house above. What happens to this world in the future in a sense does not matter to us, but Peter does go on to tell us what type of persons we should be. We have to live godly lives here in this world, looking with anticipation to that glorious day. May God encourage and bless you today. Amen.

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