

## Destined for Salvation

By Linda Rex

**November 19, 2023, Proper 28 / After Pentecost**—As I was reading the New Testament passage for this Sunday, I recalled the automatic go-to response I used to have whenever I heard the phrase “day of the Lord.” This phrase brought up all types of references to dispensations and a great tribulation and many other end-times presuppositions, that may or may not have been grounded in well-studied theology.

The more I have gotten to know and grown to love the Lord Jesus Christ, the more I have come to see that we need to keep the phrase “day of the Lord” within the context of Jesus’ *parousia*, which is an already-not-yet event in which we currently participate right now by the Holy Spirit. Even though the “day of the Lord” is most often associated with the “second coming” of Jesus Christ, it actually can be applied to the whole of the *parousia*, that the Word of God came in the incarnation of Jesus Christ, is present now by the Spirit, and will one day return in glory.

The apostle Paul, in 1 Thessalonians 5:1–11, told the believers that they didn’t need to have anyone tell them how the “day of the Lord” will come “like a thief in the night.” The apostle Paul had personally experienced this when the glorified Jesus met him on the road to Damascus, illuminating his darkened life profoundly, setting him firmly in the present reality of kingdom of God as Jesus asked, “Why are you persecuting me?” Paul discovered suddenly that everything he trusted in, depended upon, and was allied with was worthless, useless, and valueless in comparison with knowing Jesus Christ his Lord (Phil. 3:4-11).

When we look at the Old Testament passage for this Sunday, Zephaniah 1:7, 12–18, we find a prophetic passage about the “day of the Lord”. Keeping in mind the lens through which we view the Old Testament, Jesus Christ, we see that in many ways, Jesus has fulfilled this prophecy in his incarnational life and ministry.

<b>Scripture Passage</b>	<b>My Reflections</b>
<sup>7</sup> <i>“Be silent before the Lord GOD! For the day of the LORD is near, for the LORD has prepared a sacrifice,</i>	For many centuries, God prepared his covenant people for the coming of Jesus, the Lamb of God. In Advent, we rehearse this time of preparation and expectation.
<i>He has consecrated His guests.</i>	In the fullness of time, God prepared his offering and invited his disciples, the ancient Jewish people and their leaders, etc.
<sup>12</sup> <i>‘It will come about at that time that I will search Jerusalem with lamps, And I will punish the men who are stagnant in spirit, who say in their hearts, ‘The LORD will not do good or evil!’</i>	The Light of the world, Jesus, came to his people, then to Jerusalem, where the chief priests, scribes, Pharisees and Saducees rejected him and moved to have him crucified, exposing the dark depravity and brokenness of our human flesh.
<sup>13</sup> <i>Moreover, their wealth will become plunder and their houses desolate; yes, they will build houses but not inhabit them, and plant vineyards but not drink their wine.’</i>	This consequence of ancient Israel’s rejection of their Messiah was tragically fulfilled in AD 70 when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans.
<sup>14</sup> <i>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. <sup>15</sup>A day of wrath is that day,</i>	This day of wrath, the sacrifice of the Lamb of God, the pouring out of his blood, was filled with God’s passion against evil, sin and death.

<i>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, <sup>6</sup>a day of trumpet and battle cry</i>	As he hung on the cross and died, the earth shook and the sky grew dark. On the cross, Jesus Christ conquered over evil, sin, and death (and triumphed in the resurrection).
<i>Against the fortified cities and the high corner towers.</i>	Satan and his minions are defeated, his kingdom invaded—Jesus is triumphant!
<i><sup>17</sup>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. <sup>18</sup>Neither their silver nor their gold will be able to deliver them</i>	Jesus' blood, from his human flesh, was poured out, as he was beaten and torn by the humans he created, in our place and on our behalf. Judas tried to stop the results of his betrayal, but giving back the 30 pieces of silver didn't stop the crucifixion.
<i>On the day of the LORD'S wrath; and all the earth will be devoured in the fire of His jealousy,</i>	Jesus' baptism of fire included all human flesh—all are included in Jesus' life, death, resurrection, and ascension. As Jesus said, "Behold, I make all things new."
<i>For He will make a complete end,</i>	On the cross, Jesus said, "It is finished."
<i>Indeed a terrifying one, of all the inhabitants of the earth.</i>	All are included, but not all will receive and participate in his grace. One day, Jesus will return in glory, and evil, sin, and death will be no more—how will we respond in that day? What will become of those who refuse to participate in all Christ has done or to allow Jesus to be their Lord and King? What about us today who have heard this good news?
<b><i>Zephaniah 1:7, 12–18</i></b>	<b><i>Already-not-yet fulfilled in Jesus Christ</i></b>

Indeed, there will be a day when Jesus returns in glory. Every human being will need to face the reality that from then on, how Jesus says things are to be done is how they will be done. There will be no place left for evil and death—for these are destined for the lake of fire. Keeping this in mind, then, we live our daily lives soberly, attentive to and open to the faith, hope, and love which is ours in Jesus Christ, in the gift of salvation. This was always God's plan for each of us—that we live together with Him, now and forever. Let us begin to participate in that life right now, and encourage and build each other up, as we go along.

*Father, Son, and Spirit, thank you for giving us such a profound destiny, of life in union and communion with you forever. Grant us the grace to respond in faith, opening ourselves up to receive and participate in this perfect gift. And inspire us to encourage and build each other up, as we travel this road of faith together, in Jesus by his Spirit. Amen.*

*"Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. 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. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief; for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness; so then let us not asleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober. For those who sleep do their sleeping at night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night. 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. For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him. Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing." 1 Thessalonians 5:1–11 NASB*