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THE DAY OF THE LORD

The Day of the Lord is the seventh (and last) 1,000 year day of this world. It begins with the appearing of Jesus Christ – the “second coming” – and ends with the advent of eternity future. The Day of the Lord is also the Millennial Kingdom about which we have been speaking. Some Christians, not realizing that the Day of the Lord is a one thousand year day, often experience confusion when reading verses concerning it. Hopefully this chapter will help to clear up some of that confusion.

At least part of people’s misunderstanding about the Day of the Lord stems from the fact that when the Bible mentions the Day of the Lord, it not only talks about Jesus’ coming in the clouds and His judgment of the saints, but it also speaks of the heavens and the earth dissolving, burning up and passing away (II Pet 3:10). From reading verses such as these, a person might be led to believe that Jesus’ return is the beginning of eternity. Such is not the case. With the knowledge that the Day of the Lord is a 1,000 year day, all perplexity disappears. Many things happen during the Day of the Lord, and in this chapter we are going to be investigating some of them.

One of the first events to occur during the Day of the Lord is something which we already mentioned – the judgment of the believers. When Jesus Christ returns we will rise to meet Him in the air, and then come back with Him to the earth to help Him set up His Millennial Kingdom. *After* the rapture (the term which some people use for the catching up into the air of the saints) and *before*

we begin our role in Christ's Kingdom, there will be a judgment. We will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ and give account to Him of the things which we have done in our body (II Cor 5:10). The word "we" here must refer to believers since it is to them that this epistle was written.

This judgment is different from the final judgment of all people at the end of the Millennium which is usually called "the great white throne judgment." The "judgment seat of Christ," on the other hand, is before the Millennium and involves only believers. It is at the first judgment that what we have done will be weighed. This judgment of believers is an essential element in the Day of the Lord. There are many interesting aspects of it which Christians should understand; however, most of them will be covered in succeeding chapters. Suffice it to say here that there will be a thorough examination of believers at the beginning of the Day of the Lord and before their entrance with Him into the Millennial Kingdom.

Please allow me to take a few moments here to speak concerning the rapture, which signals the beginning of the Millennium. This is the event in which all the saints of God are caught up from the earth to meet the Lord in the air (I Thess 4:17). Describing this event, Jesus says that where "the carcass is there the eagles (vultures) will be gathered together (Mt 24:28). This is a reference to how often large numbers of vultures, will circle in the air over the carcass of a dead animal. Do not allow yourself to be offended with Jesus' use of an analogy about vultures. There is no negative connotation to be taken from this. It is simply the best natural illustration which He could use and something that everyone of His day would understand. This is a very common sight in many parts of the world today.

When the Lord appears all believers will be gathered together to Him. No matter where we are, we will rise into the air and be gathered to the place where He is. We will meet Him in the air and then come back with Him to the earth. And to where is He coming? He is coming to Jerusalem. His feet will touch down upon the Mount of Olives, the earth will split open and many will flee into this crevasse for protection (Zech 4:4,5). All believers will

be eyewitnesses of this event. Not only will we be caught up but at the same time the dead in Christ shall rise from their graves and ascend to meet Him in the air. "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven... with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air" (I Thess 4:16,17).

A friend of mine once shared with me an interesting idea concerning this word "meet." He said that in New Testament times when a victorious king would return to his city with his army and all of his captives, the inhabitants of that city would come out to *meet* him and *then would return with him* to enjoy his victory celebration. What a picture! This exactly portrays how the rapture will occur. We will ascend to meet Him in the air and we will return with Him to the earth. The reason for being caught up seems to be mainly for gathering the believers together into one place. When the Lord comes back we will be caught up to where He is so that we can come back with Him to where He is going – the land of Israel and the city of Jerusalem. Now in order to avoid confusion we must remember one thing: this event is not the beginning of eternity. It is just the first part of the Day of the Lord, the day toward which we should all be looking.

Many have thought that the judgment which happens at this time will take place while we are suspended in mid-air. Others have speculated that we will go with the Lord back to heaven, wait for a while and then return again with Him, thus requiring several "appearings" of Jesus Christ at the end of the age. However, it seems possible that the judgment of believers could take place right here on earth. One thing the scripture does tell us plainly is that there will be such a judgment and that we will be involved in it.

Another thing which we can know with certainty is that when we are caught up our bodies will be glorified. We read, "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet... the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (I Cor 15:52). Oh what glory there will be in that day! Our vile bodies will be made heavenly. The

evil effects of the fall – death working in our bodies – will be eliminated completely. This receiving of our glorified body is just the beginning, a preparatory step for our inheriting the Kingdom which Christ is preparing.

Notice here that this verse tells us exactly when the rapture will occur – “at the last trumpet.” Most Christians realize that during the tribulation period there are seven trumpets which sound (see Rev 8:2 ff.) In order for this trumpet of which Paul speaks to be the “*last trump*” it must of necessity be either *after* the seven mentioned in Revelation or possibly it could be the seventh. This would place the time of the rapture at the end of the tribulation period, or at least toward the end.

Another passage which sheds some light on the timing of this event is Matthew 24:29-31 where we read, “Immediately *after* the tribulation of those days...He will send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together his elect from the four winds.” Although there are some who would insist that the “elect” here refers to the Jews and not to Christians, this idea does not fit with the Old Testament prophecies which tell that the people of the earth (not the angels) will bring the Jews back to Israel after the Lord’s return (Is 49:22). Also, believers are often referred to as “God’s elect” (Rm 8:33, Col 3:12, Lk 18:7).

Actually, the time of the rapture is not the central theme of this book. Neither should it be a point of controversy. I am offering these thoughts only for the reader to contemplate and form his own conclusions. Therefore please do not be distracted by it from the content of the rest of the book. The timing of the rapture has very little bearing upon the remainder of this message.

THE SABBATH DAY

Many of you may know from memory the scripture which says, “For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day” (Ex 20:11). This seventh day is the sabbath day. It is the day of the Lord’s rest. Not only was it the initial rest of God but it also foreshadows a further day of rest, the Day of the Lord. The Millennial Kingdom is the

seventh 1,000 year day, which is also a time of rest for God and His people. Although it is not the final rest, or the complete rest which will be in eternity, still it is a partial rest that God will be having; and we, God's people, will be enjoying it with Him. In Hebrews chapters three and four the writer mentions this rest of God which is coming, and he exhorts his readers to labor to enter in lest any of them should seem to come short of it (Heb 4:1). It might be worthwhile for every reader to pause a moment here and read these two chapters (Hebrews 3 and 4) to see how this idea fits into the context of them.

Not only is the sabbath day a foreshadowing of the rest which we will have with God in the Millennium, it is also a type of the rest which we can now have in Jesus Christ. Today spiritually we can enter into the sabbath rest of God through Him. We can cease from our own labors as God did from His. As a matter of fact this is a real key to a living Christian experience. We must learn to cease from our own works – that is, doing what we want to do by ourselves, for ourselves and with our own energy – and rest in God. Do not get me wrong, this resting does not imply that we do nothing. It is only a cessation of doing our own thing.

When the Pharisees challenged Jesus about not keeping the sabbath day, He said, "My Father has been working until now, and I have been working" (Jn 5:17). Even though God rested from His labors after He created the heavens and the earth, Jesus tells us that He is still working. He is still doing something to accomplish His purposes. The reason that God continues to work is that His enemy, the devil, corrupted what He originally made and there arose a need for Him to do something further to fulfill His plans.

Yes, today Jesus Christ is working and we are to be working with Him. We are to perform the "good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them" (Eph 2:10). However, such laboring can also be resting. If we abide in Him, and rely on His strength to do His bidding, we will find peace. He explains to us that His yoke is easy, His burden light and that we will find rest in doing His work (Mt 11:29,30). When we find ourselves

striving and trying very hard to serve the Lord – when we realize that we’re weary and exhausted – this is only an indication that we are not experiencing the rest of God. We have not entered into the supernatural rest which is available for us. Of course we know that this present rest is incomplete. During the Day of the Lord we will enjoy an even deeper rest and, in eternity, a full rest.

One reason we will be able to rest during the 1,000 years is that Jesus Christ will defeat all of His enemies. In the scriptures we read that He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet (I Cor 15:25). This Millennial or “Kingdom” reign of Jesus Christ is another aspect of the Day of the Lord. In it He is going to establish His rightful rulership over the whole earth. All the peoples, nations, animals, and even nature itself will be subdued before Him. We read that He will rule the nations with a rod of iron (Rev 2:27). We are also told that the lions will eat straw like oxen and the children will be safe around venomous beasts (Is 11:6-8). It sounds as if the whole course of nature will be changed and made to be at peace. The last enemy to be destroyed will be death. At the end of the Millennium the victorious Son will deliver up the Kingdom which He has subdued to Himself to God the Father, that God may have complete rulership of all that He has made (I Cor 15:24-28).

During the Kingdom reign of Christ, He will make all things right. He will stop injustice, clear up the problem of pollution and bring an end to war (Mic 4:3). All crimes which are committed will be punished in a just and equitable way which only God Himself could administer. The many things about our present evil world which so perplex and grieve us will be straightened out when Jesus returns. He will rule this world perfectly.

Another thing which will greatly further His correcting of this world’s mess is that the devil will be chained up for 1,000 years. During this time he will be bound and cast into the bottomless pit (Rev 20:2,3). Satan’s influence – his rulership over this present world – will be eliminated, and Jesus Christ will take his rightful place as King. Jesus will be reigning and establishing His Kingdom over the peoples and nations of the earth.

Unfortunately this rulership of Jesus Christ will be in many cases only an outward subjugation. When the devil is again loosed for a little while at the end of the 1,000 year reign, all the nations will follow him in a rebellion against the Lord (Rev 20:7-9). They will gather themselves an army and encompass the holy city to fight against Him and His saints. This uprising ends when fire comes down out of heaven and consumes them (Rev 20:9). This tragic episode graphically illustrates an important fact. The Millennial Kingdom reign will not reach into the hearts of all men. Although the whole earth will be outwardly subdued to Jesus, inwardly the evil nature of fallen man continues living on. The sinful nature which they inherited from Adam is still existent. Even though outwardly there may be righteousness with the external manifestations of sin put away, the hearts of men do not change unless they have a real, personal experience with God. Without this essential ingredient all the inward sins such as covetousness, greed, lust, hate – the things that cannot always be seen on the outside – will still be active in the hearts of these people who inhabit the earth during the reign of Christ.

How blessed we are today to have the opportunity to know Jesus personally – to have His life living inside of our being and to have Him cleansing us from the inside out. Through the indwelling Spirit, He can purify our lives of that very sinful nature which causes us to do immoral things. He can save us completely from all of the evil that is in our hearts. We Christians are able not only to stop performing those outward deeds which are sinful, but we can be changed inwardly to be like Jesus. Oh what a salvation!

Another aspect of the 1,000 year, earthly reign of Jesus Christ is that it is the fulfillment of God's promise to David the king that there would never fail of his seed one to sit upon his throne. David, the king of Israel, was promised that one of his descendants would reign in his stead forever (II Sam 7:12,13). This descendant is the "Prince of Peace"! Of His Kingdom there will be no end (Is 9:6,7). What God promised to David, He will do, and we will be part of it.

The Kingdom reign of Christ is also the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham that his seed would inherit the

land of Israel and possess it forever (Gen 17:8). When Jesus Christ returns He will gather all the Jews out of the nations where they are scattered – every last one of them – and will bring them back to the land of Israel (Ezek 39:28). After this Jesus will, according to Ezekiel chapter 48, re-portion this land among the twelve tribes. These verses in Ezekiel are very interesting reading and they detail the division of the land minutely. Also mentioned here is the fact that there will be a strip of land going from east to west called the Land of the Prince (Ezek 48:9,10). It is in this land that the people of God may be dwelling. And it is from the city of God, called at that time “the Lord is there” that He will be reigning (Ezek 48:35). Abraham’s seed, the Jews according to the flesh, will inherit the land which God promised. Those who are of “the seed of faith,” the New Testament Jewish and Gentile believers, will reign over the earth with Him. Here is the literal fulfillment of God’s promises once again.

Of course we do not know exactly what form our reigning with Christ will take. One thing we do know, however, is that we will be in our glorified bodies, which are bodies just like Jesus Christ has had since His resurrection. This body is not confined to time and space. In the Bible it is recorded that Jesus walked through walls and seemingly appeared at will wherever He wished. No doubt our new bodies will have these same capabilities. So during the Millennial reign we also will probably not be limited in our abilities regarding time and space.

The scriptures do not state specifically whether our presence and our reigning during this time will be fully realized by the inhabitants of the earth. Although we may be visible to them and known by them, it is equally possible that we may not be. There are today spiritual rulers of this world, led by the devil, which are not seen by men but which nevertheless exert full sway over them. Believers’ role in the coming Kingdom could conceivably be similar to this. Another possibility is that they may function in ways similar to the Old Testament judges (see Mt 19:28). Although it is impossible to form any definite conclusions, we do know certainly that we will reign with Jesus Christ on this earth (Rev 5:10).

The people of the earth over whom those who are with Him will reign are the descendants of the men and women who survive the tribulation. During the great tribulation a large portion of the world's population will be killed by various plagues and judgments from God. Also, at the Battle of Armageddon (which takes place just before the return of Jesus Christ), literally millions of soldiers will be slain. The Bible describes the number of people on the earth after this time as being like an olive tree which has been shaken (a method of harvesting the olives) and as a grape vine after it's been picked (Is 24:13). In other words, during the first part of the Millennium the inhabitants of the land will not be many. But one thousand years is a long time and these men no doubt will multiply. Without wars and various other natural calamities they will increase quite rapidly and the earth will again be populated.

THE WEDDING FEAST

Not only is the thousand year Day of the Lord the judgment day for believers, a day of judgment upon the unbelievers who oppose Him at the battle of Armageddon, the seventh day, the sabbath day of rest, and the day of restoration of God's Kingdom, but it is also the Lord's wedding day. Perhaps many of you have heard or read about the wedding feast which is being prepared. The general concept among Christians seems to be that when the Lord returns and we are caught up to meet Him, everyone will quickly sit down around a large table and gulp down a huge feast. Possibly it will consist of turkey or ham or something like that (well, probably not ham), and then we will all rush back to the earth to set up the Kingdom. Some people think this feast occurs in a few days. Others surmise that it takes weeks or even three and one half to seven years.

But, let us consider for a moment that this is the wedding feast of the Son of God. It is no small or unimportant event. This will be the most meaningful, supremely holy and spectacular wedding ever to occur in the whole universe. This will not be a feast of several days or even seven years. There is going to be nothing hurried about the wedding feast of God. This feast will actually be taking place

over 1,000 years because the Day of the Lord is also the Lord's wedding day and it is during this "day" that we will be feasting. Jesus said: "And I bestow upon you a kingdom, just as My Father bestowed one upon Me, that you may eat and drink at My table *in My kingdom*" (Lk 22:29,30). Another verse which supports this idea is found in Mt 8:11 where we read: "Many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom." This phrase "sit down" means literally "recline" and is speaking about how the Jews of Jesus' day reclined when they ate and feasted together. (See also Jn 13:25).

In Biblical times it seems the way people celebrated a wedding was to put on a large feast and invite all their friends and family. They started sometime during the day, perhaps in the morning, and they began to eat and drink and make merry. All of the guests would have a good time with their companions and relatives. They feasted throughout the day until evening when the bride and the bridegroom went off to consummate the marriage. This is exactly how the Lord's wedding day will be. We know from the scriptures that it is at the end of the Millennium that the wedding, the marriage of the Lamb, occurs (Rev 21:9-27). This is when the marriage of Jesus Christ and His holy bride is consummated. There is no such thing as our gulping down a feast, racing off to reign with Christ 1,000 years, and then being involved in the wedding later on. No, the marriage supper of Jesus Christ will last for 1,000 years. Our reigning with Christ, our resting with Christ, and our feasting with Christ are all simply different aspects of the same period of time. This is the Millennial Kingdom.

In the book of Revelation, in the letters to the seven churches, Jesus not only speaks about our sitting with Him on His throne (reigning) (Rev 3:21), and ruling the nations with a rod of iron (ruling) (Rev 2:27), but He also promises that we will eat of the hidden manna and the tree of life (feasting) (Rev 2:7,17). These verses portray to us two of the aspects of Kingdom living into which we are to be entering. During the 1,000 year reign of Christ, we will be

feasting. We will be feasting with Jesus Christ and we will be feasting on Jesus Christ. He explained to His disciples that He is the living bread that came down. He is our feast. Certainly at that time we won't need turkey, bread, or wine to sustain us. Our desire will be the supernatural elements of the divine life of Jesus Christ.

Today we have a foretaste of this. On that day we will have a full taste. The new wine will be abundant and the heavenly manna will be spread everywhere. None of God's chosen people will go hungry. We can then feast on Jesus Christ and be fully satisfied. Of course it's a good idea to get our appetites ready. There is no doubt in my mind that our capacity for enjoying God in that day will be very much dependent upon how we develop that capacity right now. If we learn to feed on the Lord, in His Word and through prayer, and to have intimate times daily with Him basking in His presence, then I believe our enjoyment of Him during the Millennial reign will be greatly enlarged. It's worth it, I would say, to apply ourselves in this direction. Not only will we be rewarded today for our efforts, but we will also be rewarded greatly in the age which is to come.

