

Christians May Discern the Approaching End

by Lewis Sperry Chafer

The Bible teaches that the instructed child of God may see the approaching of the day of the Lord, and the Church must be aware of the times and seasons.

Scripture: John 14:1, 1 Corinthians 15:51, 1 Thessalonians 4:13, 1 Thessalonians 5:1, Hebrews 10:24

Topics: "Eschatology", "Prophecy"

Description

Lewis Sperry Chafer emphasizes the importance of understanding the different prophetic days mentioned in the Bible, particularly 'The day of the Lord' and 'The day of Christ.' He explains how 'The day of the Lord' is focused on Israel and the world, extending from Christ's glorious appearing to the end of the millennium, while 'The day of Christ' pertains to the Church, involving her judgments and rewards. Chafer delves into the mystery of the Church being caught up to meet the Lord in the air, contrasting it with the events of Christ's return to establish His kingdom on earth and judge the nations.

Transcript

Hear the Word of God:

"And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (Heb. 10:24-25).

"But of the times and seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief" (1 Thess. 5:1-4).

These Scriptures give us sufficient evidence that the instructed child of God may see the approaching of that day. But what day?

There is nothing indefinite in the Scriptures as to the goal toward which the world is moving. The great prophetic hope of the Old Testament is toward "The day of the Lord" (indicated also by various phrases as "That day," or "The day of vengeance," etc.). It is one of the major themes of the prophets. Isaiah alone speaks of it over sixty times. It is also a great theme of the New Testament; but here it is held in contrast to

another day, -- a new day which is not seen in the Old Testament. The new day is "The day of Christ." Read with your concordance and you will discover that "The day of the Lord" is Israel's day and a day for the whole world. It extends from the glorious appearing of Christ to the end of the millennium. "The day of Christ" concerns only the Church. It is the time of her judgments and rewards.

In the second passage just read the Apostle writes: "But of the times and seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you." "Times and seasons" is another prophetic phrase, the Biblical meaning of which is made clear. The Jewish disciples came to Jesus after His resurrection and just before His ascension saying: "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" They had every right to ask this question. That kingdom is covenanted to Israel by explicit promises which cannot be broken. Christ did not say to them that their national, earthly kingdom had been abandoned and merged into a spiritual conquest of the whole earth. He said, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power." The prophetic term, "times and seasons," then, indicates the time when Israel's kingdom will be established in the earth. When the Apostle wrote, "Of the times and seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you," he made reference to the day of Israel's blessing which is also the day of blessing for the whole earth (Psalms 72). Of that great theme there was no need that he should write, for it is everywhere in the Old Testament.

Since this passage begins with the word "But," it is evident that this statement about "The day of the Lord" is mentioned in contrast to something which has gone before. Turning back we discover a description of the events connected with "The day of Christ,"--the new day, the day of the departure of His redeemed from the earth to be forever with Him. Of this day he writes:

"I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, [Ignorance of this day was more likely since it is not revealed in the Old Testament], concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent [go before] them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, 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: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words" (1 Thess. 4:13-18).

This great event is one of the mysteries, or sacred secrets, of God, which means that it was not before revealed as it is here and now. Other passages on this same event read thus:

"Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump" (1 Cor. 15:51-52).

"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:1-3).

In contrast to this last passage and but a few hours before, Christ spoke of Israel's day. He then pictured His return to the earth on the clouds of heaven, the tribes mourning, the regathering of His elect (Israel), and His judgments of the nations when He sits on the throne of His glory (Matt. 24:3 to Matt. 25:46).

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