

# Truth for Today

The Bible teaching radio programme

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## Important days in God's calendar: The Day of the Lord Jesus Christ

The Day of the Lord Jesus Christ reflects a time when the glory of the Lord Jesus, along with His saints, will be seen both in heaven or on earth. It begins at the rapture when He snatches away His own. This includes the redemption of their bodies, that is to say, the moment they receive bodies like to His own glorious body (see Philippians 3:21). It passes on to the Judgment Seat of Christ (see 2 Corinthians 5:10) where the saints are rewarded by the Lord for the work they have done for Him on earth. It includes the marriage of the Lamb in heaven (Revelation 19:7-8) along with the marriage supper (Revelation 19:9); and it embraces the thousand year reign of Christ over earth. It is during that period that the words of the Lord Jesus found in John 17:23 will be fulfilled: *"I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me."*

This is summarised in the following verses:

*The Day of Christ is soon to come;  
A wondrous day 'twill be.  
For He shall call us to Himself  
And His dear face we'll see.*

*The dead in Christ shall rise that day  
In bodies bright and fair;  
And in a moment they shall be  
Snatched up into the air.*

*At that same point, His own who live  
Shall have their bodies changed;  
And with the risen they shall be  
Above the clouds arranged.*

*Before the judgment seat, they'll stand,  
Their service there assessed.  
And, by God's grace, they will receive  
Rewards for faithfulness.*

*Then comes the marriage of the Lamb  
To His most glorious bride.  
And this the wonder of His love,  
She'll never leave His side.*

*With Him she'll reign a thousand years;  
His trophy, she shall be.  
And when the earth has been well purged,  
They'll rest eternally.*

GE Stevens

In this talk we will look briefly at the scriptures that make reference to this "day" and then look more closely at the events that were listed in the introduction.

### The Day of the Lord Jesus Christ

In Philippians 1:3-7 the Apostle Paul states: *"I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now; being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:*

*even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace."*

There was always a particular care in the heart of Paul for the saints of God. Those at Philippi were well aware of this and had supported him in a variety of ways as he went about proclaiming the good news concerning God's Son (Philippians 4:14-19). It was with joy that he could pray for them. Then, speaking of the Lord who had started a work in them by His Spirit and His word, he indicates that their spiritual growth would continue (under the Lord's good hand) until the day of Jesus Christ (Philippians 1:6). It is in that day that the work of God in these Christians would be completed. This also includes the redemption of their bodies (Romans 8:23). This will occur either when our bodies are raised from the dead or changed at the Lord's coming. In 1 Corinthians 15:51-53 we read, *"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: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality."* Our knowledge shall be complete as well because we read in 1 Corinthians 13:12, *"For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as I am known."*

Furthermore, we read the following in Philippians 1:9-11: *"And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God."*

In Philippians 1:9-11 the Apostle lists some of the things that God is producing in the lives of believers here on earth. Although they were marked by love, he desired that they would love abundantly. Love is the "Badge of Discipleship" (see John 13:35). Paul wanted their knowledge of the things of God to increase more and more (Philippians 1:9). Of course, part of that knowledge relates to God's Son. We are told by Peter *"to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ"* (2 Peter 3:18). The more we know Him, the more our lives will mirror His. The more we know Him, the more we can judge (or, "discern") as He does. This immediately relates to what follows. Believers should be able to prove those things which are of greater value to God. These are spiritual things. Their lives should be sincere. The Greek word has the force of being tested by sunlight. Their motives would be so tested by the light of God. They were also to be without offence or faultless in order that their righteous lives would bring glory to God. So the Apostle shows us that in the day of Christ the work will be completed and we shall be knowledgeable, pure, loving, righteous and discerning in a full way. In other words, we shall be like our Lord Jesus Christ. His beauty will rest upon us.

In Philippians 2:14-16, the Apostle Paul writes: *"Do all things without murmurings and disputings: that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain."*

Here, the Spirit of God is emphasising that the practical conduct of believers should be blameless and straight forward. They were to shine as lights in the world (Philippians 2:15). Jesus was the light of the world while on earth (John 8:12, 9:5). As such, He revealed and glorified God. In His absence His followers are to do so. They are also to be faithful witnesses. Paul looks on to the time of reward when we shall stand before the judgment seat of Christ (see 2 Corinthians 5:10). Paul will be able to rejoice because these believers, for whom he so cared, will have lived lives to the glory of God. Hence, his work among them had not been in vain. From these things we see that we will be lights in a more perfect way in a coming day - lights ever in the presence of Christ, the true light (see John 1:9). Paul sees the presence of these saints in glory as his reward; but also realises that they also will be rewarded for their faithfulness. Oh, how we all wish to hear the Lord speak to each one of us saying, *"Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord"* (Matthew 25:21).

The subject of reward is indicated in 2 Timothy 1:16-18 where Paul writes: *"The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain: but, when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and found me. The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day: and in how many things he ministered unto me at Ephesus, thou knowest very well."* Paul expects that the support given to him by Onesiphorus will have its reward. The Lord Jesus Himself said, *"For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward"* (Mark 9:41). In Matthew 25:37-40 the Lord Jesus outlines actions that receive rewards. We read, *"Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."*

Paul also speaks of reward for himself in 2 Timothy 4:6-8: *"For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."* Anticipating this crown of righteousness was a blessed assurance to Paul as he reached the end of his earthly life and his service for the Lord Jesus.

It is at the judgment seat of Christ that the believers' works are assessed (see 2 Corinthians 5:10). As a youngster you will have taken an exercise book to a teacher. The teacher may have torn the page of work from your book saying it had not been done as instructed. Alternatively, the teacher might reward the work with a star or positive comment because it had been done to the best of your ability and in accordance with his/her instructions. So Christians will receive rewards for the service they have done in the will of the Lord and, hence, for the right motives.

In 1 Corinthians 1:4-8, the Apostle says: *"I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; that in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: so that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

Here Paul uses the word "end" to describe the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is the end of them being made steadfast in Christ. It is the goal to which the Christian aims. The Corinthian believers had been blessed in word, knowledge, conduct and gift. The Lord constantly worked in them to bring these things to perfection while on earth until that day when they shall go to be with Christ in the resurrection day. Then they will be perfectly fitted out in every way appropriate to the service of the Lord from then onwards.

The verses of 1 Corinthians 5:3-5 are very solemn indeed. They make reference to a man who was practising a gross form of immorality. The believers there had not judged his sinful actions. In 1 Corinthians 5:3-5, Paul indicates the action that they should take. He states: *"For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus."*

This sinful "brother" was to be surrendered to the adversary. How was this done? He was judicially put out of the assembly at Corinth until he had repented. The phrase "for the destruction of the flesh" means that he would suffer physically that he might be brought to a sense of his sin, to repentance for it and to judge it. God allowed such treatment with Job in the Old Testament. Satan was allowed by God to act upon Job in order to see if he would deny God. God said, *"Behold, he is in thine hand"* (Job 2:6). Hence, Job suffered; but Satan failed to achieve his end. God didn't fail! Job was brought to repentance (see Job 42:1-6), recognising that he had been self-righteous. He was restored and blessed (Job 42:10-16). God was glorified!

The restoration of the Corinthian brother (noted in 2 Corinthians 2:1-11) showed he was a true believer whose spirit, indeed, would be saved in the day of Jesus Christ when it will united with a new body.

In 2 Corinthians 1:13-14 the Apostle shows that the day of the Lord Jesus is one of rejoicing. We read: *"For we write none other things unto you, than what ye read or acknowledge; and I trust ye shall acknowledge even to the end; as also ye have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing, even as ye also are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus."* Here on earth, the Corinthians in part, could rejoice in the Apostle Paul and the team that had worked with him. In that day when believers are with Christ, the Apostle will rejoice that they, some of the fruit of his labour, will be there also. This same attitude was shown by Paul to the Thessalonian believers in 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20: *"For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy."*

Furthermore, in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-2 we read: *"Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand."* It is difficult to know whether the day of "Christ" or the day of the "Lord" is meant here as translations vary. We'll take it to be the day of Christ (as in the Authorised Version of the Bible).

We do know that there were false teachings circulating among the Christians at Thessalonica, claiming that the day had already occurred. These teachings caused anxiety among the Christians and brought in doubts concerning the subject of resurrection. Paul instructed them that the day of Christ would not occur unless two conditions are fulfilled. First, there had to be a falling away from the faith and, second, the man of sin (the antichrist) had to be revealed (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4).

At the moment, the presence of the Holy Spirit in the true church is holding back the tide of apostasy. When the church departs along with the Spirit of God, then wickedness will come to a head on earth and the revealed truth of God will be forsaken.

It may be worth stating (at this point) that the day of Christ is a time of blessing and concerns Christ and His saints, while the day of the Lord is a time of judgment concerning Christ and the unbelieving world. The first begins at the coming of Christ for His saints when Christ will be glorified in His saints and admired in all those who believe (2 Thessalonians 1:10). The second begins when the Lamb opens the seven seals of judgment to come upon the world (Revelation 5:5). Both, more or less, cover the same time period as it passes upon earth, although the day of Christ might well flow on into eternity itself.

### **The Marriage of the Lamb**

We have considered briefly the coming of Christ for His own, the redemption of our bodies in the day of resurrection, and the judgment seat of Christ; but what comes next? Why, it's the marriage of the Lamb. In Revelation 19:7 we read, *"Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready."* The voices speaking are not identified but the scene is. It is in heaven. Like a normal Jewish bridegroom, the Lord Jesus had gone to the place of the bride; paid the price for her; returned to His Father to prepare a place for her (see John 14:3); returned to bring her back to the Father's house; and there the marriage takes place. We're speaking of Christ and His bride, the church! She is clothed in good works for we read, *"And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints"* (Revelation 19:8).

### **The Marriage Supper**

Following the marriage is the marriage supper. This could easily last for seven days in the Jewish culture. It is not, however, the time that we wish to emphasise; it is, rather, the joy because we again read in the middle of Revelation 19:9, *"Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb."* The bride and the Groom will have full joy, but so will the guests. We believe these will be Old Testament saints who had been raised at the same time as the church. Among them will be John the Baptist who is, of course, the friend of the Bridegroom (John 3:29).

### **The Return of the Lord Jesus**

After the marriage supper, the Lord Jesus returns to this world with great power to deliver the faithful of Israel from their enemies and to set up His kingdom on earth. Satan is bound. There is no time to enter into the details of all this, but the Lord Jesus will leave a prince on earth to oversee his rule (Ezekiel 34:24), The Lord Jesus and His bride will reign over the earth for a thousand years. The word "over" here suggests a reign from heaven rather than the range of the dominion itself. During that time, the bride, the Lamb's wife is represented by the holy city of Revelation 21:10.

That reign will be marked by:

- The knowledge and worship of the true God;
- Idolatry ceasing;
- Peace enduring;
- People dwelling safely;
- Justice administered righteously;
- Creation blossoming;
- All creatures being tamed;
- Agriculture being the main way of life;
- Longevity of life increasing; and
- Joy and rejoicing in the Lord.

There will, however, be those who only feign obedience to the Lord. When Satan is released for a season near the end of the millennium, then many shall rise up against the Lord and His anointed. They are destroyed by fire from heaven (Revelation 20:9). The earth, then completely purged is given by the Son to God that He might be all in all (1 Corinthians 15:28). Wonderfully, there will then be a new heaven and a new earth and the heavenly bride will be the object of the love of Jesus for eternity!

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