

# THE DAY OF THE LORD

## The main references in the OT to the Day of the Lord

Isaiah	2:12-21, 13:4-16, 24:1-23, 29:1-8, 34:1-7, 63:1-6
Micah	4:11-13
Zephaniah	1:2-3, 14-18, 3:6, 8
Daniel	11:36-45, 12:1, 6-7
Ezekiel	38:7-23, 39:1-6, 9-20
Joel	2:1-11, 30-32, 3:1-3, 9-15
Zechariah	12:1-9, 14:1-3, 12-15
Haggai	2:21-22
Malachi	4:1

## The Day of the Lord - Armageddon

Various references to a day of the Lord in the Bible refer to God's intervention in judgment in Israel's affairs. However, most references to *the* Day of the Lord in the prophets refer to the end of the age when the Messiah returns to resurrect the righteous (Dan 12:1-2) and judge the nations laying siege to Jerusalem at the battle of Armageddon. The prophecies declare that all nations will gather to attack Jerusalem and they will be judged there by God. They will attack each other, and a plague will destroy many. At the same time, there will be worldwide earthquakes, the most severe the world has known, and all the world's cities will collapse. The Mount of Olives will split in two, Jerusalem will be raised, while the rest of the land will become a plain. The ferocity of God's wrath is shocking. There is great slaughter and

retribution against rebellious mankind in the final moments before the Messiah returns to claim victory.

The following OT prophecies refer to that day:

**Ps 2:1-2** Why do the nations conspire, and the peoples plot in vain? *The kings of the Earth rise up and the rulers band together against the Lord and against his anointed saying, "Let us break their chains and throw off their shackles."*

**Isa 2:17-19** *The arrogance of man will be brought low and human pride humbled; the Lord alone will be exalted in that day and the idols will disappear. People will flee to caves in the rocks and to holes in the ground from the fearful presence of the Lord and the splendor of his majesty when he rises to shake the earth.*

**Isa 13:9-13** *See, the Day of the Lord is coming – a cruel day, with wrath and fierce anger – to make the land/Earth desolate and to destroy the sinners within it. The stars of heaven and their constellations will not show their light. The rising sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light. I will punish the world for its evil, the wicked for their sins. I will put an end to the arrogance of the haughty and will humble the pride of the ruthless. I will make people/mankind scarcer than pure gold, more rare than the gold of Ophir. Therefore I will make the heavens tremble, and the Earth will shake from its place at the wrath of the Lord Almighty, in the day of his burning anger*

**Isa 24:19-23** *The Earth is broken up, the Earth and split asunder, the Earth is violently shaken. The Earth reels like a drunkard, it sways like a hut in the wind; so heavy upon it is the guilt of rebellion that it falls - never to rise again. In that day, the Lord will punish the powers in the heavens and the kings on the Earth below. They will be herded together like prisoners bound in a dungeon; they will be shut up in prison and be punished after many days. The moon will be dismayed the sun ashamed; for the Lord Almighty will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and before its elders – with great glory.*

**Isa 29:5-6, 8b** But your many enemies will become like fine dust, the ruthless hordes like blown chaff. *Suddenly, in an instant, the Lord Almighty will come with thunder and earthquake and great noise, with windstorm and tempest and flames of devouring fire. ... So will it be with the hordes of all the nations that fight against Mount Zion.*

**Isa 34:2-4, 8** *The Lord is angry with all nations; his wrath is on all their armies. He will totally them, he will give them over to slaughter. Their slain will be thrown out, their dead bodies will stink; the mountains will be soaked with their blood. All the stars in the sky will be dissolved, and the heavens rolled up like a scroll; all the starry host will fall like withered leaves from the vine, like shriveled figs from the fig tree. For the Lord has a day of vengeance, a year of retribution, to uphold Zion's cause.*

**Joel 2:1-11** *Blow the trumpet in Zion; Sound the alarm on my holy hill. Let all who live in the land tremble, for the Day of the Lord is coming. It is close at hand - a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness. Like dawn spreading across the mountains a large and mighty army comes, such as never was in ancient times nor ever will be in ages to come. Before them fire devours, behind them a flame blazes. Before them the land is like the garden of Eden, behind them a desert waste - nothing escapes them. They have the appearance of horses; they gallop along like cavalry. With a noise like that of chariots they leap over the mountaintops, like a crackling fire that consuming stubble, like a mighty army drawn up for battle. At the sight of them, nations are in anguish; every face turns pale. They charge like warriors; they scale walls like soldiers. They all march in line, not swerving from their course. They do not jostle each other; each marches straight ahead. They plunge through defenses without breaking ranks. They rush upon the city; they run along the wall. They climb into the houses; like thieves they enter through the windows. Before them the earth shakes, the heavens tremble. the sun and moon are darkened, and the stars no longer shine. The Lord thunders at the head of his army; his forces are beyond number, and mighty is the army who obeys his command. The Day of the Lord is great; it is dreadful. Who can endure it?*

**Joel 2:30 – 3:2, 12-16** I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke. *The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful Day of the Lord. And everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved; for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be deliverance, as the Lord has said, even among the survivors whom the Lord calls.* In those days and at that time, *when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, I will gather all nations and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat. There I will put them on trial, for what they did to my inheritance, my people Israel, because they scattered my people among the nations and divided up my land. ...* Let the nations be roused; let them advance into the Valley of Jehoshaphat, for there I will sit to judge all the nations on every side. Swing the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, trample the grapes, for the winepress is full and the vats overflow - so great is their wickedness! Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! The sun and the moon will be darkened, and the stars no longer shine. *The Lord will roar from Zion and thunder from Jerusalem;* the Earth and the heavens will tremble. But the Lord will be a refuge for his people, a stronghold for the people of Israel.

**Zeph 1:14-18** *The great day of the Lord is near – near and coming quickly.* The cry of the Day of the Lord is bitter; the Mighty Warrior shouts his battle cry. That day will be a day of wrath - a day of distress and anguish, a day of trouble and ruin, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness - a day of trumpet and battle cry against the fortified cities and against the corner towers. I will bring such distress on all people that they will grope about like those who are blind, *because they have sinned against the Lord.* Their blood will be poured out like dust and their entrails like dung. Neither their silver nor their gold will be able to save them on the day of the Lord's wrath. *In the fire of his jealousy the whole Earth will be consumed, for he will make a sudden end to all who live on the Earth.*

**Zeph 3:8-9** Therefore wait for me, declares the Lord, for the day I will stand up stands up to testify. I have decided to assemble the nations, to gather *the kingdoms and to pour out my wrath on them -*

*all my fierce anger. The whole Earth will be consumed by the fire of my jealous anger. Then I will purify the lips of the peoples, that all of them may call on the name of the Lord and serve him shoulder to shoulder.*

**Hag 2:6-7** This is what the Lord Almighty says: “In a little while I will once more shake the heavens and the Earth, the sea and the dry land. I will shake *all nations, and what is desired by all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory*” say the Lord Almighty.

**Zech 12:1-9** The Lord, who stretches out the heavens, who lays the foundation of the Earth, and who forms the human spirit within a person, declares: “I am going to make Jerusalem a cup that send all the surrounding peoples reeling. Judah will be besieged as well as Jerusalem. On that day, when all the nations of the Earth are gathered against her, I will make Jerusalem an immovable rock for all nations. All who try to move it will injure themselves. On that day I will strike every horse with panic and its rider with madness” declares the Lord. “I will keep a watchful eye over Judah, but I will blind all the horses of the nations. Then the clans of Judah will say in their hearts, ‘The people of Jerusalem are strong, because the Lord Almighty is their God.

On that day I will make the clans of Judah like a firepot in a woodpile, like a flaming torch among sheaves. *They will consume all the surrounding peoples right and left, but Jerusalem will remain intact in her place.* The Lord will save the dwellings of Judah first, so that the honor of the house of David and of Jerusalem’s inhabitants may not be greater than that of Judah. On that day, the Lord will shield those who live in Jerusalem, so that the feeblest among them will be like David and the house of David will be like God, like the Angel of the Lord going before them. *On that day, I will set out to destroy all the nations that attack Jerusalem.*

**Zech 13:7-9** “Awake, sword, against my Shepherd, against the man who is close to me!” declares the Lord Almighty. “Strike the Shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered, and I will turn my hand against the little ones. In the whole land,” declares the Lord ‘two-

thirds will be struck down and perish; yet one-third will be left in it. This third I will put into the fire; I will refine them like silver and test them like gold. They will call on my name, and I will answer them. I will say, “These are my *people*,” and they will say, “*The Lord is our God.*”

**Zech 14:1-15** A day of the LORD is coming, Jerusalem, when your possessions will be plundered and divided up within your very walls.

I will gather all the nations to Jerusalem to fight against it; the city will be captured, the houses ransacked, and the women raped. Half of the city will go into exile, but the rest of the people will not be taken from the city. Then the LORD will go out and fight against those nations, as he fights on a day of battle. On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south. You will flee by my mountain valley, for it will extend to Azel. You will flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the LORD my God will come, and all the holy ones with him.

On that day there will be neither sunlight nor cold, frosty darkness. It will be a unique day—a day known only to the LORD—with no distinction between day and night. When evening comes, there will be light.

On that day living water will flow out from Jerusalem, half of it East to the Dead Sea and half of it West to the Mediterranean Sea, in summer and in winter.

The LORD will be king over the whole Earth. On that day there will be one LORD, and his name the only name. The whole land, from Geba to Rimmon, south of Jerusalem, will become like the Arabah. But Jerusalem will be raised up high from the Benjamin Gate to the site of the First Gate, to the Corner Gate, and from the Tower of Hananel to the royal winepresses, and will remain in its place. It will be inhabited; never again will it be destroyed. Jerusalem will be secure.

This is the plague with which the LORD will strike all the nations that fought against Jerusalem: Their flesh will rot while they are still standing on their feet, their eyes will rot in their sockets, and their tongues will rot in their mouths. On that day people will be stricken by the LORD with great panic. They will seize each other by the hand and attack one another. Judah too will fight at Jerusalem. The wealth

of all the surrounding nations will be collected—great quantities of gold and silver and clothing. A similar plague will strike the horses and mules, the camels and donkeys, and all the animals in those camps.

## **The Day of the Lord in the OT**

The OT prophets focus on Israel and Jerusalem, places that will be the center of attention on that great Day of the Lord. They also show how future events will affect the nations and the world. It is wonderful and miraculous the way the prophets were given visions and dreams about the end of this age thousands of years into the future. They give us so many clues about the Great Tribulation, the Antichrist, the second coming of the Messiah, the resurrection, judgment on the ungodly nations, the salvation of Israel, and life in the millennium. The prophecies all come in connection with their local contexts, and it takes some real detective work to gather all the information and put it together to form an accurate picture of the future events that God has revealed to us in his word. The final events are often mixed with prophecies of closer events, but phrases like “(great) Day of the Lord”, “in the last or latter days”, or “on that day” are signposts to end-time events. Fragments of truth are scattered among nearly all the prophets, and important contributions come from the Pentateuch and Psalms.

I have attempted to put the prophets I am commenting on in chronological order because each prophet had access to what had been revealed previously, which helped them build their vision of the future. There is a progression in revelation which all comes to a climax in the book of Revelation, the final book of the Bible.

Isaiah said the Lord has a day in store for all the proud and lofty, for all that is exalted, and they will be humbled (Isa 2:12). Forests and mountains and towers are metaphors for such people. He will put an end to the pomp and arrogance of the rich and ruthless. “The eyes of the arrogant will be humbled and human pride brought low; the Lord alone will be exalted in that day” (Isa 2:11). In the last days there will be great destruction, so that in the regeneration of creation and nature, everything will be made new. All of man’s magnificent structures will be brought low so that the Lord alone will be exalted on that day.

Humanity will throw away their idols and will seek refuge from the Lord's majesty in caves when he rises to terrify the earth.

The wrath of God is being stored up, but God is being patient, allowing as many as possible to be saved. Eventually, justice must be done, and God's wrath will be poured out on mankind. There will be a terrible slaughter of mankind and destruction of the cities that are the center of ungodliness as described in Revelation 18. Their sins are piled as high as heaven (Rev 18:5), and God's people are advised to leave the cities, as they were before Jerusalem came under judgment (Jer 51:45).

The punishment meted out on the ungodly cities will happen in a single day (Rev 18:8), because on that day, when the nations are gathered against Jerusalem, the tectonic plates will move, resulting in worldwide earthquakes, volcanoes and tsunamis. It will be a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness (Joel 2:2, Zeph 1:15).

The Day of the Lord is the day that the Messiah returns. It is a day of wrath and judgment on the ungodly, but first of all, it will be a day of salvation for the righteous; they will be resurrected and raptured. God has not destined them for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thess 5:9). Those who serve the living and true God are waiting for his Son from heaven, Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come (1 Thess 1:9-10). He will not deliver them from the seven years of tribulation resulting from warfare and persecution, but he will deliver them from the Day of the Lord, from the earthquakes, the destruction of the cities, the terrifying darkness and gloom.

A good question to ask ourselves is this: The return of Jesus Christ to the Earth, is it for the benefit of Israel or the Church? Some say that God has only one people, the Church, which includes believing Jews. But these people ignore or spiritualize the teachings of the OT prophets. God has two peoples, Israel and the Church. For 2000 years his people were descendants of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob, then for the last 2000 years, it has been the church. For the next thousand years, God will have two peoples, Israel on Earth and the resurrected Church in the New Jerusalem. Finally, at the last judgment, all God's people will be united as one. According to the OT prophecies, the Messiah is coming to deliver their nation from the armies of the nations at the battle of Armageddon. All Israel will be



saved at that time, and they as a nation will be glorified as Messiah's nation at the center of the world during the Messianic reign. They will be the guardians of the Holy City and the temple, to where all the nations will come to worship. The Jewish Messiah will be King of kings and Lord of lords. In the OT, the Messiah is presented as returning to Earth for the salvation of his people Israel.

The book of Revelation climaxes with Jesus' return to Earth, followed by his thousand-year reign. What does it say about the purpose of Jesus' return? "Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all peoples on earth will wail because of him" (Rev 1:7). I have to disagree with translations that suggest that all the peoples on Earth will mourn on account of Jesus. There are no Scriptures that suggest that unbelievers will mourn for Jesus at his coming. To the contrary: "The rest of mankind who were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands; they did not stop worshiping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone, and wood – idols that cannot see or hear or walk. Nor did they repent of their murders, their magic arts, their sexual immorality or their thefts" (Rev 9:20-21). Their reaction was to curse God (Rev 16:11).

John's words in Revelation 1:7 are an allusion to Zechariah 12:10, 12a: "And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son. ... The land will mourn, each clan by itself."

The Messiah will return at the breaking of the sixth seal, at the blowing of the seventh trumpet, and before the seventh bowl is poured out. It is all the same day. At the blowing of the seventh trumpet, loud voices in heaven declare: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign forever and ever" (Rev 11:15). In Revelation 19 the Messiah is seen arriving on a white horse. From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. The Beast and the kings of the earth together with their armies are defeated. The OT tells us that this battle occurs in Israel, but Revelation is written to the churches, and Israel's role in end-times events is ignored. To get

the full picture, the allusions to the OT in Revelation have to be taken into account, and there are hundreds of them.

## The Day of the Lord in the NT

The Day of the Lord is the Day of the Lord's visitation; the day when the Messiah, Jesus, returns physically and visibly to the Earth to mark the end of this age. The phrase "Day of the Lord" occurs seven times in the NT, but there are an additional fifty references to "that day." The significance of that day is threefold:

### What Jesus taught

**Matt 24:36-38** "But about *that day or hour* no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage." They were carrying on as usual unaware of what was about to happen. In Noah's day the Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the Earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time and the Lord regretted that he had made human beings on the Earth and he said: "I will wipe from the face of the Earth the human race that I have created."

**Matt 24:40-41** "Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken, and the other one left." Those that are taken are raptured and meet the Lord in the air. He will put them in charge of all his possessions. Those who are left will be cut into pieces and assigned a place with the hypocrites.

**Matt 26:29** "I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on *until that day* when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

**Luke 17:24** "For the Son of Man *in his day* will be like the lightning, which flashes and lights up the sky from one end to the other."

**Luke 21:34-36** “Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and *that day* will close on you suddenly like a trap. For *it will come on all those who live on the face of the whole earth*. Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man.”

**John 6:40** “For my Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at *the last day*.”

In Matthew 24:3-31 Jesus answers his disciples’ question as to the sign of his coming and the end of this age. Jesus warns them about false prophets and says there will be wars, famines, and earthquakes, but these things are only the beginning of the birth pains. There will be much greater distress and tribulation at the time of his coming.

The first real sign he gave is the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel. That will be a sign for those living in Judea to flee. Jesus is speaking to Jewish people and his answer relates to them. If God didn’t cut those days short, no human being would be saved, a situation that suggests nuclear warfare.

Because of worldwide warfare, the sun and moon will be darkened by the smoke. Darkness is a literal and fearful feature of the last days. The stars will fall from heaven and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Instead of the phrase “the stars will fall from heaven”, Isaiah 13:10 gives a more scientific description, “the stars of the heavens and their constellations will not give their light.” When compared with parallel passages in Isaiah 34 and Revelation 6, one sees that this describes God’s judgment on the nations, a time characterized by warfare and earthquakes.

“Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven.” As Jesus is becoming visible to people on Earth, it is better to translate sky rather than heaven. The sign is what is seen first, high in the sky before the Lord can be seen. When Ezekiel had his vision of the Lord returning to the temple in Jerusalem, he saw the glory of the God of Israel coming from the East. The sound of his coming was like the sound of many waters, and the Earth shone with his glory (Ezek 43:2). In his first vision of the glory of the Lord, Ezekiel saw a massive cloud, with

fire flashing back and forth, surrounded by bright light (Ezek 1:4). He also saw God resembling the figure of a man, suggesting that the vision was of the Messiah. Any vision or appearance of God on earth is of the Son rather than the Father, whether appearances of the Angel of the Lord, or visions seen by Moses, Jacob, Elijah, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, the disciples, Paul, or John.

Everyone will see this bright light and hear the loud noise, but the tribes of the land who will mourn are the people of Israel because the only response from the nations at this time is to curse God for the calamities coming upon them (Rev 16:9, 11, 21). Zechariah said it will be the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem who will look on the Lord, the one whom their ancestors had pierced, and they would mourn for him family by family (Zech 12:11-12).

Jesus' first act on returning to earth will be to send out his angels with a loud trumpet call to gather the elect from all over the earth. The righteous dead will be resurrected and the living will be caught up with them to meet the Lord in the air before he descends to the Mount of Olives (Zech 14:4).

## **What Peter taught**

**Acts 2:20** “The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of *the great and glorious Day of the Lord*. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

**2 Pet 3:7, 10-13** “By the same word the present heavens and Earth are reserved for fire, being kept for *the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly*. But *the Day of the Lord* will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to *the day of God* and speed its coming. *That day* will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.”

## What Paul taught

**Rom 2:5-6** “But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for *the day of God’s wrath*, when his righteous judgment will be revealed. God will repay each person according to what they have done. To those (the righteous) who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger.”

**1 Thess 5:2, 4** “You know very well that *the Day of the Lord* will come like a thief in the night. ... But you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness so that *this day* should surprise them like a thief.”

**2 Thess 2:3-4** “Don’t let anyone deceive you in any way, for *that day* will not come until the rebellion occurs and the Man of Lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God’s temple, proclaiming himself to be God.” The Lord’s coming is not imminent. Three events must happen before the coming of the Lord and our being gathered to him (the rapture): the building of a third temple in Jerusalem, the rise of the Antichrist, and the rebellion against God. Daniel spoke of the little horn’s rebellion that causes desolation at the temple (Dan 8:13, 9:27).

## What John taught

After the Messiah returns to earth in a powerful and glorious display, and the righteous have been resurrected to meet him in the air, he will descend to Earth to take vengeance on the nations who have rebelled against God and joined the Antichrist in his effort to destroy Israel and capture Jerusalem. This is not the end of the world, nor is it the final judgment day for all mankind, where each person will be judged according to what he has done. That remains until after the millennium.

**Rev 6:15-17** “Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and everyone else, both slave and free, hid in

caves and among the rocks of the mountains. They called to the mountains and the rocks, They called to the mountains and the rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For *the great day of their wrath* has come, and who can withstand it?”

**Rev 16:13-14** “Then I saw three impure spiritsy are demonic spirits that looked like frogs; they came out of the mouth of the Dragon, out of the mouth of the Beast, and out of the mouth of the False Prophet. They are demonic spirits that perform signs, and they go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for battle *on the great day of God Almighty.*”

**Rev 19:11-16** I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and wages war. His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. Coming out of his mouth is a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. “He will rule them with an iron scepter.” He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written:

KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.