

THE TRANSITION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT DAY
OF THE LORD
INTO THE NEW TESTAMENT DAY
OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

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Introduction

The question to be considered

Much attention has been given in this century to the study of biblical eschatology in both testaments, especially the eschatological framework of the New Testament's history of revelation.¹ One dimension of Old Testament eschatology concerns the "Day of the LORD" (יִום יְהוָה). A similar idiom in the New Testament is variously designated the "day of the Lord," the "day of the Lord Jesus Christ," or the "day of Christ." What one observes is that a day associated with YHWH and his sovereign activity comes to be identified with the Messiah Jesus.

The question may be posed as to whether the Old Testament itself, to the extent that it anticipates the coming of a messianic figure, connects in any way that coming messiah with the Day of YHWH in the Old Testament. Glasson states it thus:

The importance of the Old Testament theophanies in relation to New Testament conception of the End has never been sufficiently realized. Again and again the prophets and psalmist spoke not merely of the Day of the Lord but they spelled this out in terms of a divine coming.²

¹The available literature is too numerous to mention exhaustively. Some representative works, however, are *The Pauline Eschatology* (1949), by G. Vos; *Christ and Time* (1951), by O. Cullmann; *Promise and Its Development* (1966), by C.H. Dodd; *Paul: an Outline of His Theology* (1977), by H.N. Ridderbos; *The Centrality of the Resurrection* (1978), by R.B. Gaffin, Jr.; etc.

²T.F. Glasson, "Theophany and Parousia," *New Testament Studies* 34/2 (April, 1988): 259. Cf. Mic. 1:3; Ps. 96:13.

If there is no explicit relationship between the Messiah and the day of YHWH as described in the Old Testament revelation, what is it then that allows the New Testament writers to make such a direct association of the Messiah Jesus with the Day of the LORD?

This is the question to be explored in this article. The answer that will be offered and defended is that there is a twofold reason that prompts the New Testament writers to make the connection of Jesus Christ with the Day of the LORD in the New Testament. The twofold reason has to do with both the *words* and the *works* of Jesus Christ Himself. In other words, there is sufficient evidence from the New Testament to say that Jesus' own ministry of teaching, coupled with His passion, death and resurrection, give warrant for the conclusion that Christ draws onto Himself not only the Old Testament messianic prophecies, but also all that is associated with the Old Testament Day of YHWH. "The background of this language of the coming of Christ in glory is the Old Testament language of theophany."³ The New Testament parousia of Jesus Christ is thus rooted in the Old Testament theophanies of YHWH.⁴

Presuppositions and methodology

Tracing the development of the Old Testament Day of the LORD into its New Testament counterpart is an exercise in the history of revelation. For the purpose of this article, the canonical text of the Scriptures will be the primary data of investigation. We proceed under conviction that the Scriptures are inspired by God the Holy Spirit, since this is what the Scriptures claim for themselves (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:20-21).

Although a study of the vast body of intertestamental literature is valuable, its contribution to the subject area will not be dealt with in any extensive way, since this investigation is in the area of the history of special revelation. The perspective that is followed here is along the lines articulated by Geerhardus Vos, in which he describes the correlation between act-revelation and word-revelation.⁵ The word from God

³G.E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 557.

⁴In the New Testament this divine theophany is fulfilled in the coming of Christ; and the glorious return of the Lord is necessary to bring salvation to his people (1 Thess. 5:8-9) and judgment upon the wicked (2 Thess. 1:7-8) and to establish the Kingdom, which is now his, in the world (2 Tim. 4:1)* (Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 557).

⁵G. Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), 14ff.

interprets the act of God. Redemption moves along in history organically but also epochally. This article investigates how the canonical Scriptures as special revelation depict the development of the Day of the LORD from its Old Testament setting to the New Testament setting.

Furthermore, since this article will also be dealing with the four Gospel records, the whole matter of the "synoptic problem" arises, along with questions of redactional activity on the part of the evangelists.⁶ "It is well known that the large majority of critics regard Mark as our oldest Gospel and as a source employed by the authors of the first and third Gospels."⁷ The origin and order of the Gospel records is not of immediate bearing upon the question under discussion, and therefore it will not be addressed. What is of greater concern is the faithfulness of their witness to what Jesus taught as well as to what He experienced in His passion and resurrection. The approach adopted here may be called the "historicist" approach as described by R.T. France.⁸ This article will proceed assuming the "essential reliability" of the Gospel records "unless there are good reasons for questioning it."⁹ To approach the New Testament data with a basic skepticism makes Jesus' own claims utterly eccentric and the early church's witness to him utterly unfaithful.¹⁰ This is not to argue that the four Gospels have recorded the *ipsissima verba Jesu*. It does, however, maintain that the biblical text represents authentically, in substance if not verbally in every instance, what Jesus said in the hearing of his disciples.¹¹ Of course, it is recognized that each Gospel writer presents divine revelation from his own God-inspired perspective and angle of view.¹² But the text itself claims that it is an accurate and true witness to Jesus' own words and works (cf. Luke 1:1-4; John 19:35; 21:24).

In answering the question being posed, this article first surveys the Old Testament description of the Day of the LORD as well as the Old Testament elements that lie at the heart of messianic expectations. It will be noted how there is little, if any, direct connection of the Old

⁶Cf. H.N. Ridderbos, *Matthew's Witness to Jesus Christ* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1958), 10.

⁷A.S. Peake, *The Messiah and the Son of Man* (Manchester: University Press, 1924), 4.

⁸R.T. France, *Jesus and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1971), 22ff.

⁹France, *Jesus and the Old Testament*, 22.

¹⁰France, *Jesus and the Old Testament*, 20f.

¹¹Cf. Glasson, "Theophany and Parousia," 267.

¹²Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 196.

Testament Day of the LORD to the Old Testament's anticipation of the Messiah. Following this the article will survey how the New Testament describes the Day of the LORD (Jesus Christ). Finally, there will be an examination of the reason for the development: the ministry of Jesus Christ in terms of His words and works makes the New Testament Day of the LORD to be what the New Testament reveals it to be.

*The Old Testament Day of the LORD
Eighth and seventh-century B.C. prophets*

The phrase יום יהוה occurs in the Old Testament books of Amos, Isaiah, Zephaniah, Jeremiah, Obadiah, Joel, Ezekiel, Zechariah and Malachi in either its standard form or in a variant form (e.g., יום חֲשֵׁךְ, יום אֶף יהוה, יום בָּא לַיהוה, etc.). Because the phrase is used by the earliest writing prophet as well as by the last writing prophet, the phrase takes on importance as something of a *terminus technicus* in the Old Testament history of revelation.

Amos 5:81ff. and 8:9-14 make mention of the יום יהוה.¹³ We note that Amos uses the phrase without a hint of explanation. Verhoef says that the "dag van die HERE begrip is ouer as die tyd van die *professie* moes gewees het, omdat die dag van die HERE nêrens bewustelik geïntroduseer is nie, maar deurgaans as bekend veronderstel word."¹⁴ Amos corrects the people's perceptions of what the Day is to be: it will be darkness and gloom, spiritual famine with no light, brightness, or gladness. Yet in Amos 9:11 יְהוָה says that "in that day" He will "raise up the fallen booth of David." But this is said to be YHWH's work, not the work of a messianic figure.

In Isaiah 2 YHWH is a judge "in the latter days" (the equivalent of the יום יהוה¹⁵). Warfare is depicted here. The Day of the LORD in Isaiah 13 is near and results in cosmic destruction (13:6), trembling and faltering in the ranks of YHWH's enemies (13:7-8), and darkness (13:10). "Isaiah 13:6,9 is therefore similar to other passages . . . which portray the DOL in one context as both a near historical and a far eschatolog-

¹³R.L. Mayhue, "The Prophet's Watchword: Day of the Lord," *Grace Theological Journal* 6/2 (Fall, 1985): 238.

¹⁴P.A. Verhoef, *Die Dag van die Here* (Den Haag: Uitgeverij van Keulen N.V., 1956), 82.

¹⁵G. Delling, ἡμέρα, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. II, edited by G. Kittel, translated by G.W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 946.

ical happening.¹⁶ Whatever may be the origin of the imagery, no messianic figure is involved here. See also Isaiah 22, 32 and 34 for *יום רמיהוה* motifs.

Zephaniah presents one of the most developed descriptions of the *יום יהוה*. His language reveals a universal (1:1-3), a national (1:4-13) and again a universal (1:14-18) scope to the Day.¹⁷ It is a day of punishment and of trumpet blast, but it is also a day of survival for those who have clung to righteousness (2:1-3). Zephaniah sees the Day of YHWH as a day with double features,¹⁸ namely punishment and deliverance, but clearly this is the work of YHWH Himself and not of any messianic figure.

Exilic and post-exilic prophets

Jeremiah 46:3-12 recalls the imagery of the bloody sword/sacrifice (cf. Isa. 34). YHWH here takes action against His foes and the Day is wholly the time of His action.

Ezekiel 7 describes a day of tumult, wrath and trumpet. The Day is marked by disease, famine, fear and desolation. But the Day is one in which the action is YHWH's and not of any Messiah.

Zechariah 14 vividly describes Jerusalem under siege. YHWH is fighting against the nations. The cosmic elements as well as humans and animals are all affected, but in the end all things in Jerusalem will be declared holy (14:20-21).

Malachi 3:19-24 (MT; 4:1-6, ET) still anticipates the Day of YHWH to come. The last Old Testament prophet describes it as a great and terrible Day, one in which the wicked will be consumed. But those who worship YHWH will join in the destruction of the wicked (3:21 [4:3]), which is one of the rare hints in the Old Testament that there is human participation in a Day that belongs to YHWH. Furthermore, Malachi exhorts the people to keep the covenant stipulations of Moses given at Horeb (3:22 [4:4]; cf. frequent exhortations in Deuteronomy). Malachi

¹⁶Mayhue, "The Prophet's Watchword: Day of the Lord," 240. Mayhue uses the abbreviation DOL to stand for the Day of the Lord.

¹⁷Cf. Mayhue, "The Prophet's Watchword: Day of the Lord," 240.

¹⁸Mayhue says that the "prominent theme of every DOL prophecy is God's judgment of sin. The blessings of God's reign are subsequent to and a result of the DOL, but they are not a part of it" ("The Prophet's Watchword: Day of the Lord," 240). We do not agree with this statement because it appears too one-sided. It does not take into account hints of blessing "on that day" (e.g., Amos 9:11f.; Isa. 2:1ff.).

also mentions the coming of Elijah the prophet before the great Day of YHWH comes. He does not speak of any branch of Jesse nor of a revived Davidic dynasty.

Joel and Obadiah

Because the dating of these two prophets is uncertain,¹⁹ we will give them a separate survey. They should not be neglected because they say a great deal about the **יְהוָה יוֹם**. Joel 1:15 and 2:1, 11 employ language similar to that of Amos. The Day is near, a time of destruction and joylessness. The earth will shake. The scenery depicted in these Joel passages reminds one of the Sinai theophany (cf. Exodus 19, 24, 33; Deuteronomy 5).

Joel 3 (MT; 2:28-32, ET) also addresses what YHWH will do "in those days" (3:2) when He again has pity on His people. He will pour out His Spirit on all flesh without distinction to age, sex or social stature. The celestial bodies will undergo great change before the Day of YHWH comes (3:4), while deliverance will come for all who call on His name (3:5). Furthermore, Joel portrays the Day of the LORD as a time of judgment for all nations (4:1ff.), while Zion, the covenant people, will experience the blessings of "sweet wine" and flowing water (4:18-21).

Similarly, the book of Obadiah concerns itself solely with the Day of YHWH as it manifests itself against Edom and all nations (15).²⁰ At the same time the people of YHWH receive his blessing on Mt. Zion (1, 21).

Conclusions

We have noted in this brief survey of the Day of YHWH in the Old Testament prophets that the Day has something of a dual character, with the clear emphasis being on judgment — sometimes on Israel, sometimes on the nations. Thus it is a day of darkness, mourning, desolation, fear, cosmic shaking and plague. It can also issue in a time when the covenant people are blessed and raised high before the other nations. For the purpose of this article, it should be clearly noted that the Day of YHWH is one in which YHWH is seen as the sole Actor. He

¹⁹R.K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), 876-879, 899ff.

²⁰Cf. Mayhue, "The Prophet's Watchword: Day of the Lord," 233-235.

comes down to conquer and punish all His and His peoples' enemies. As to the timing of the Day's arrival, the prophetic idiom is that it is coming, "it is near" (e.g., Joel 2:1).²¹ There is no human figure, no king, no prophet, nor no priest that takes over the prerogatives of YHWH's work.

Messianic expectations in the Old Testament

The son of David

In this section we will explore those aspects in the Old Testament history of revelation that give warrant for an expectation of a coming messianic figure. The term "messiah" is derived from the Hebrew term מָשִׁיחַ (root מָשַׁח), meaning "anointed one."²² Anointing indicated divine favor (Ps. 45:8).²³ Although there is evidence that priests (Exod. 29:7) and prophets (1 Kings 19:16) were anointed in the Old Testament, anointing came to be associated primarily with the Old Testament kings.

The anointed king in Israel is something of "YHWH's lieutenant."²⁴ Although Saul is called the LORD's anointed (1 Sam. 9-10), yet it is with David that YHWH makes a special covenant of promise (2 Sam. 7:4-17). 2 Sam. 7:16 says, "and your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever." Every descendant of David who ruled as king was an "actual 'Messiah' by whom God wished to fulfill His plan with regard to His people."²⁵ Such a ruling son of David would be "adopted" as YHWH's son (2 Sam. 7:14; Ps. 2:7).

²¹France says, "The 'eschatology' of the Old Testament prophets is not concerned with the end of the world, but with that decisive act of God which will bring to an end the existing order of things in the world and inaugurate a new era of blessing, of a totally different order." It is "an end followed by a new beginning" (*Jesus and the Old Testament*, 84). Thus Ladd is on better ground when he speaks of a "foreshortened view of the future," in which the Day of the Lord can have both an immediate historical reference as well as depicting a future, eschatological (cluster of) event(s) (*A Theology of the New Testament*, 198, 554).

²²P.E. Bonnard and P. Grelot, "Messiah," *Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, edited by X. Léon-Dufour, 2nd ed. (New York: Seabury Press, 1973), 354; R.E. Clements, "Messiah," *A Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation*, edited by R.J. Coggins and J.L. Houlden (London: SCM Press, 1990), 441.

²³Bonnard and Grelot, "Messiah," 355.

²⁴Bonnard and Grelot, "Messiah," 354.

²⁵Bonnard and Grelot, "Messiah," 355; Clements, "Messiah," 441.

The fall of Jerusalem in 587 B.C. and the exile of Judah meant the loss of the Davidic house's rule. Nevertheless, royal messianism began to grow after the exile.²⁶ Clements²⁷ says that there were three types of scriptural passages which encouraged this royal messianism in the exilic period. First, we have already mentioned the promises made regarding the Davidic dynasty through covenant (2 Sam. 7:3-17). The "prophecy of Nathan is seen as the Magna Charta of the Davidic monarchy, fixed and effectual since the days of David, impressively documenting its monopoly of legitimacy."²⁸

Second, there are the royal psalms (e.g., Pss. 2, 18, 20, 21, 45, 72, 89, 100 and 132) which focus on the person of the king and his victories. Thus, even if the monarchy itself could not be re-established, there was the "divine assurance that a messianic ruler would eventually be given to Israel."²⁹

Finally, there are prophetic texts which undoubtedly rest upon the first two types of passages. These passages include Isa. 7:10-16; 8:23-9:6 (MT); 11:6-9; 32:1-2; Mic. 5:1-6. Clements concludes that

by the close of the Old Testament age, a broadly based expectation that the promise of a coming messiah among the house of David formed an influential, although by no means dominant, element of the many themes that contributed to Jewish eschatological hopes.³⁰

But one searches in vain for any hint in the Old Testament history of revelation that the son of David would be the one responsible for the Day of YHWH.

The Son of Man

The Hebrew phrase בן אדם and the Aramaic phrase בר אמש both mean "son of man" or "human being" (see Ps. 8:4; 80:18, MT). But the text which is of interest to us in terms of the Old Testament foreshadowing of a messianic figure is Dan. 7:13f. In Daniel's night vision he sees "one like a Son of Man" coming to the Ancient of Days. This Son

²⁶Bonnard and Grelot, "Messiah," 355. But cf. J. Becker, *Messianic Expectation in the Old Testament*, trans. by D.E. Green (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 79ff.

²⁷Clements, "Messiah," 442-443.

²⁸Becker, *Messianic Expectation in the Old Testament*, 25.

²⁹Clements, "Messiah," 443.

³⁰Clements, "Messiah," 443.

of Man (a human being, at the least) receives dominion, glory and an everlasting kingdom after having approached God himself.

Peake argues that the Son of Man in Daniel 7 is a collective reference and not a personal one, basing his argument on Dan. 7:18, 22, 27 (compare the four beasts which equal four kings).³¹ But this is not the case. The four kings are a synecdochal reference: each king is part of an empire of people while not being the empire in its entirety. So too, the Son of Man remains an individual who acts on behalf of his people/empire, the "saints of the Most High." Ladd says that in Daniel 7, "while the Son of Man comes first to the Father to receive his kingdom, this kingdom is then given to the saints on earth and this clearly implies that their representative, the Son of Man, brings it to them."³² Delorme agrees when he writes the following:

In the interpretation which follows the vision, the royalty falls to the 'people of the saints of the most high' (7:18, 22, 27); it is, therefore, apparently He whom the Son of Man represents, certainly not in His persecuted condition (7:25), but in His final glory. . . . the attributions of the Son of Man go beyond those of the Messiah, the son of David: the entire context places Him in relation with the divine world and accentuates His transcendence.³³

Here we seem to have the clearest reference in the Old Testament to a human figure that moves in the heavenly realms on behalf of God's people, but Daniel does not connect the content of his vision with any explicit reference to the Day of YHWH.³⁴

³¹A.S. Peake, *The Messiah and the Son of Man* (Manchester: University Press, 1924), 20-21.

³²Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 204.

³³J. Delorme, "Son of Man, *Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, 2nd ed., edited by X. Léon-Dufour (New York: Seabury Press, 1973), 564; cf. France, *Jesus and the Old Testament*, 143.

³⁴Delorme notes that Jewish apocalyptic develops the Son of Man symbolism in such a way that he has "some of the features of the royal Messiah and of the Servant of Yahweh . . . but there is no question of his suffering and he has not an earthly origin" ("Son of Man," 564). Furthermore, Glasson maintains that there is no evidence in Jewish apocalyptic of the messianic son of David descending from heaven with clouds of glory (despite the claims of J. Weiss, A. Schweitzer and R. Bultmann; see "Theophany and Parousia," 262f.).

The Servant of YHWH

The servant of YHWH is mentioned in four so-called songs in the latter half of Isaiah (42:1-9; 49:1-7; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12). The "servant songs" move between a corporate reference (e.g., Isa. 49:3) and a personal reference (e.g., Isa. 53:6). Nevertheless, because of the aspect of suffering which is the lot of this servant of YHWH, intertestamental Judaism did not identify him with any messianic figure.³⁵ Ladd says that pre-Christian Judaism "did not expect a suffering and dying Messiah."³⁶ Or, to be more precise, the "sufferings" which the messiah of Judaism experiences is no atonement in the Christian sense.³⁷ Furthermore, the servant of YHWH is not explicitly associated with the coming Day of YHWH.

Conclusions

The above sections have briefly surveyed the Old Testament revelation regarding its expectations of a coming redeeming figure. There is the hope that a son of David may come to Israel, but he remains very much an earthly figure, one of human origins (even when empowered by the Spirit of God). There is also the rather mysterious Son of Man figure who moves toward the Ancient of Days, but he is not identified in the Old Testament with the son of David. Finally, the suffering servant of YHWH could not be the Messiah according to Jewish expectations since, in Jewish thought, there was no expectation of a dying (and then rising) messiah.³⁸

None of these Old Testament figures are associated with the Day of YHWH. Therefore, at this point in the Old Testament history of revelation it seems that there are two streams of thought. First of all, YHWH will act in some future time in a most decisive way to punish his enemies while the righteous remnant of Israel will benefit from YHWH's actions. Second, a human figure will arise as a member of David's dynasty, and he will once again lead God's people Israel. These two streams of thought are not necessarily antithetical to each other, but

³⁵Cf. Becker, *Messianic Expectation in the Old Testament*, 12.

³⁶Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 330; cf. S. Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, trans. by G.W. Anderson (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1956), 327, 329.

³⁷Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, 328-329.

³⁸B. Lindars, *New Testament Apologetic: the Doctrinal Significance of the Old Testament Quotations* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1961), 41,75f.

neither are they directly tied to one another as the period of the Old Testament's history of revelation comes to a close.

*The Day of the LORD in the New Testament
The Gospels and Acts*

The phrase 'Day of the LORD' does not occur as *terminus technicus* in the Gospel records. Nevertheless, if we are correct in considering the Day of the LORD as that moment in time when God Himself is specially present for judgment (and blessing), then the Gospel records clearly reveal that Jesus' life, ministry, words and works, have very much to do with the Day of the LORD in the epoch of the new covenant. That this is the case is strongly suggested by phraseology used by Jesus Christ Himself, especially when he speaks of the "day of the Son of Man" (see Luke 17:22-30) and "my day" (John 8:56).

With the last writing prophet of the Old Testament era there was revealed that a messenger would precede the coming of YHWH (Mal. 3:1). Malachi also prophesied that Elijah would come before the great and awesome day of the LORD (Mal. 3:23, MT). Since this is the Scriptural framework of expectation, it is very significant that the Gospel of Mark begins with a quotation from Mal. 3:1 and Isa. 40:3 (cf. Matt. 3:1ff.; Luke 3:2ff.). All four Gospel records introduce us to John the Baptizer, the one in the wilderness who is sent to prepare the way for the Coming One, (YHWH) Jesus Christ. The coming of Jesus in the incarnation means a great fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies. For example, Jesus is baptized (Mark 1:9-11; Matt. 3:13-17; Luke 3:21-22) and receives the Holy Spirit, thus fulfilling Isa. 42:1 (cf. Isa. 11:2). Isa. 42:6 says that this Servant is made to be a "covenant to the people, a light to the nations." This is an indication that Jesus must be the One who actualizes the blessing to all the families of the earth, recalling the promise made to Abram (Gen. 12:1-3).

Since Elijah the prophet had not died but had been taken to heaven in a chariot of fire (2 Kings 2:11), there had developed the expectation among the Jews that Elijah would physically reappear before the coming of the Messiah.³⁹ Some Jews thought that John the Baptizer was this Elijah (John 1:21,25). Others believed that Jesus was Elijah returned

³⁹J. Jeremias, Ἡλ(ε)ίας, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. II, edited by G. Kittel, trans. by G.W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 931ff.

(Mark 6:15; 8:28; Matt. 16:14; Luke 9:8,19). But John denies that he is the Elijah of Jewish expectations (John 1:21,25).

It is in the context of John's hesitation regarding Jesus that Jesus Himself gives clarity concerning the coming of Elijah. John the Baptizer had expected the covenant LORD to execute immediately the covenant curses of destruction against the wicked (cf. Matt. 3:7-12). When Jesus does not act in this way, John wavers and asks whether or not Jesus indeed is the one (Matt. 11:2-3; Luke 7:18-20). In Jesus' response He directs John and his audience to understand that more than the elements of judgment are coming to fulfillment. All prophecy comes to fulfillment in Jesus and that includes the elements of healing and blessing (cf. Isa. 35:5f.; 61:1; Mal. 3:20 [MT]).⁴⁰ Thus Jesus can proclaim that the kingdom of heaven/God has now come near on earth (Mark 1:15; Matt. 4:17; cf. Luke 4:43).

Moreover, Jesus' comments regarding the role of John the Baptizer serve to establish the redemptive framework in which Jesus Himself understood his work to be. Although John was not Elijah the Tishbite returned to Palestine, yet he is Elijah since he ministers in the spirit and strength of that prophet. This is clearly what Jesus affirms when he says that John is Elijah (Mark 9:11-13; Matt. 11:14; 17:10-13; cf. Luke 1:17; 7:27).⁴¹ Jesus expresses the judgment that

the Malachi prophecy regarding the return of Elijah has been fulfilled in John the Baptist. The ~~el ελεγε δεξωρα~~ of Mt. 11:14 seems to be designed to indicate that this interpretation of the figure of the Baptist is new and the fulfillment of the Elijah prophecy does not take place in the form of a reincarnation. If the sayings mentioned are genuine . . . they are significant because they show how Jesus places Himself under Scripture. No promise of Scripture will fail, and this includes Mal. 4:5f.⁴²

The Scriptural pattern becomes clear: Elijah will come before the great Day of the LORD; John is that "Elijah" and he serves as the messenger who precedes the coming of the covenant LORD and prepares his way (Isa. 40:1ff.). Therefore, it can be said that with the coming of Jesus, there is the coming of the LORD to his temple (cf. Mal. 3:1) and the day of the LORD, in some sense, has begun. France says that "in the

⁴⁰Cf. Ridderbos, *Matthew's Witness to Jesus Christ*, 41ff.

⁴¹France, *Jesus and the Old Testament*, 91-92.

⁴²Jeremias, *Ἡλ(ε)ίας*, 937.

ministry of Jesus . . . the day of Yahweh has come," but even "more is implied: Jesus is thus set in the very place of Yahweh."⁴³

And yet a future eschatological judgment remains, which is why the Gospel records shy away from using the idiom "day of the LORD" with the incarnation and ministry of Jesus. The Day of the LORD orientates us to the future, without negating the fact that the Age to Come has intruded itself into present time. Ladd says that this is the New Testament's basic eschatological structure,

in which the two ages are no longer exclusively divided by the parousia but have through the incarnation so overlapped that the eschatological experiences associated with the Age to Come have reached back into their present age and have taken place in the essence of their spiritual reality.⁴⁴

"All four of the Christian Gospel writers express their conviction that Jesus was the messiah expected by the Jews."⁴⁵ In Jesus the Christ, the "time is fulfilled" (Mark 1:15).

In the book of Acts we have further confirmation of this understanding of the basic eschatological structure introduced by the work of Jesus Christ. At Pentecost (Acts 2:1ff.) Jesus sends His Holy Spirit into the church. Peter says that this outpouring was what Joel foretold should happen "in the last days" (Acts 2:17). Peter quotes all of Joel 3 (MT), a prophecy of spiritual outpouring, a time of cosmic convulsions and of rescue for all who call on the name of YHWH. Christ has fulfilled the curse aspects of the Day of the LORD for His own people (Gal. 3:13; Col. 1:20; 2:14) even as cosmic wonders were occurring around Him (see below). Yet Christ has not yet exhausted all the aspects of the Day of the LORD. He can (and will) come back in judgment.

The sermons recorded in Acts proclaim the Jesus who was crucified, to be both LORD and Messiah through His resurrection from the dead (Acts 2:36; 3:13ff.; 4:10, 27-30; 5:30-32; 10:36-43; 13:29ff.).⁴⁶ In the sermon to the Athenians on Mars' Hill (Acts 17:22-31), Paul tells the audience that a *day* for judgment is coming in which the Judge will be

⁴³France, *Jesus and the Old Testament*, 92.

⁴⁴Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 308.

⁴⁵Clements, "Messiah," 444; Peake, *The Messiah and the Son of Man*, 6.

⁴⁶Cf. H.J. Cadbury, "Acts and Eschatology," *The Background of the New Testament and Its Eschatology*, edited by W.D. Davies and D. Daube (Cambridge: University Press, 1964), 311, 314.

the One already raised from the dead. The world will be judged with justice (recalling Ps. 96:13; 98:9), thus requiring that all people must now repent (Acts 17:30). Thus in the witness of both the four Gospels as well as the preaching recorded in Acts, it is clear that Jesus is both LORD (YHWH) and Messiah (son of David, crucified and resurrected), and that the particulars of the Day of the LORD revolve around this same Jesus.⁴⁷

The Pauline epistles

If the resurrection and ascension have made Jesus both LORD and Messiah, then it was fitting for the early church to proclaim Jesus Christ as the one around whom the Day of YHWH was centered. In the Pauline epistles, a variety of expressions can thus be used:⁴⁸

Rom. 2:5	"in the day of wrath" (context of judgment)
Rom. 2:16	"in the day" (context of judgment)
1 Cor. 1:8	"in the day of our Lord Jesus (Christ)" (context of the end)
1 Cor. 3:13	"for the day" (context again of judgment, when the Lord comes with fire to his church; cf. the Shekinah in the temple)
1 Cor. 5:5	"in the day of the Lord (Jesus [Christ])" (context is the discipline of a church member; Paul seeks his salvation now)
2 Cor. 1:14	"in the day of our Lord Jesus (Christ)" (Paul wants to "boast" on the day of final evaluation)
2 Cor. 6:2	"day of salvation" (a quote from Isa. 49:8 to show that now is salvation present)
Eph. 4:30	"in the day of redemption" (salvation future)
Phil. 1:6	"until the day of Christ Jesus" (context of future complete sanctification)
Phil. 1:10	"in the day of Christ Jesus" (the goal point toward which God is working in us)
Phil. 2:16	"in the day of Christ" (cf. 2 Cor. 1:14)
1 Thess. 5:2,4,5,8	"the day of the Lord . . . that day . . . sons of the day . . . we are of the day" (Paul describes at some

⁴⁷Cf. Delling, *ἡ μέρα*, 951.

⁴⁸Several of these references have manuscript variations, most of which are of no great consequence.

- length how we belong to the Day, while realizing that the Day is yet to come; i.e., there is both a presence and a future to the Day)⁴⁹
- 2 Thess. 1:10 "in that day" (context is that of promise of rescue for the troubled church when Christ returns in blazing fire with His holy ones)
- 2 Thess. 2:2 (cf. 1:6-10) "the day of the Lord" (certain things must happen before the Day of the Lord occurs: apostasy, the lawless one appears)
- 2 Tim. 1:12,18 "in that day" (twice; context implies a day of judgment issuing in rewards)
- 2 Tim. 4:8 "in that day" (context is of judgment [4:1] when Paul expects his reward [cf. 2 Tim. 1:12])

Whereas the Gospels are reticent in their use of the Day of the LORD idiom, Paul uses it throughout the vast majority of his correspondence to the churches, beginning in the earliest epistles (the Thessalonian letters) and continuing to his last epistle (2 Timothy). There is no explicit discussion in the Pauline epistles of Jesus' life and death as being a fulfillment of the Day of the LORD. But this is understandable because it was to the Messiah's return and His presence (parousia) at that time that the church turned its attention, even as Christ now lives in the church through His Spirit (1 Cor. 12:4ff.; 2 Cor. 1:24; etc.). The Day of YHWH was the visit of God to His people, and thus Jesus' first coming had begun an era in which His imminent return was inextricably a necessary part.⁵⁰ Ridderbos correctly observes:

⁴⁹Some of the imagery that Paul uses here may very well be an extension of the ideas native to that of the *day*. *Day* is contrasted here with *night*. These two temporal components to our experience of succession of periods in any twenty-four hour period are used as an analogy to contrast how the Christian's union with Christ allows him to see light, to walk with understanding of God's purposes, including those that pertain to the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. Those outside of Christ do not see; they still walk in the dark.

⁵⁰The future appearance of Christ was not regarded by the author as a hollow echo of the past event. Rather, it was seen as a decisive event of divine initiative, loaded with the promise of the fulfillment of blessing and judgment (2 Tim. 2:11ff.)" (P.H. Towner, "The Present Age in the Eschatology of the Pastoral Epistles," *New Testament Studies* 32/3 [July, 1986]: 443; cf. B.J. Malina, "Christ and Time: Swiss or Mediterranean?" *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 51/1 [Jan., 1989]: 15).

What is so remarkable about Paul's eschatology is that although he avails himself of all kinds of traditional terms and ideas, yet it is distinguished from all forms of the contemporaneous Jewish eschatological expectation and bears a completely independent character. . . . Paul's eschatology is not determined by any traditional eschatological schema, but by the actual acting of God in Christ.⁵¹

In other words, careful reflection on Paul's teaching shows that his message is one of redemptive history controlled by God's act in His Son Jesus Christ and not one controlled by the eschatological schemas of intertestamental Judaism. "The revelation of Jesus Christ as the Messiah promised by God to Israel determines and creates Paul's historical consciousness and eschatological thought and not the reverse."⁵²

In the Pauline epistles, therefore, we have the Christ clearly connected with the Day of the LORD. Indeed, it is His Day. Says Pinnock, "Both streams of post-biblical Jewish eschatology, centering on an earthly Davidic king, and on a heavenly Son of Man, flow from the Old Testament. Paul's task was to show how prophetic expectations were to be understood in the light of the church age."⁵³ Adds Howard, "Pentecost may thus be viewed as the opening event of the full manifestation of the kingdom of God, separated from the ultimate *eschaton* only by the 'interim.'"⁵⁴

*The catholic epistles*⁵⁵

From what evidence we have already noted from the Gospels, Acts and the Pauline corpus, there seems to be a consensus in which the Day of the LORD taken up from the Old Testament has clearly been

⁵¹H.N. Ridderbos, *Paul: an Outline of His Theology*, translated by J.R. de Witt (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 51-52.

⁵²Ridderbos, *Paul*, 53; cf. R.N. Longenecker, "The Nature of Paul's Early Eschatology," *New Testament Studies* 31/1 (Jan., 1985): 94.

⁵³C.H. Pinnock, "The Structure of Pauline Eschatology," *The Evangelical Quarterly* 37/1 (Jan.-March, 1965): 11.

⁵⁴J.K. Howard, "Our Lord's Teaching Concerning His Parousia: a Study in the Gospel of Mark," *The Evangelical Quarterly* 38/2 (Apr.-June, 1966): 73.

⁵⁵The book of Revelation contains some of the most frequent references and allusions to Old Testament prophetic material and revelation. Examination of the book of Revelation in relation to the question under consideration is worthy of a separate treatment, and so it will not be examined or surveyed in this article.

transferred over to Jesus the Messiah so that in the New Testament it can be designated the Day of the Lord Jesus Christ. That same pattern exists in the so-called "catholic" epistles. We note some of the passages:

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| Heb. 10:25 | "as you see the Day approaching" (a warning to encourage faithfulness in the church's assembling together) |
| (cf. James 5:8) | "for the coming of the Lord is at hand" |
| 1 Pet. 2:12 | "in the day of visitation" (God will come and pagans can glorify him if our good lives are evident to them) |
| 2 Pet. 1:19 | "the day" (future salvation, when the Day will dawn; the word now causes a shining in the present time) |
| 2 Pet. 2:9 | "in the day of judgment" (against false teachers and destructive heresies) |
| 2 Pet. 3:7 | "in the day of judgment" (fiery destruction for scoffers against the Lord) |
| 2 Pet. 3:10,12 | "the day of the Lord . . . the coming of the Day of God" (the cosmic order will be changed after the final judgment) |
| (cf. 1 John 2:28) | "when he appears" [abide in him!] |
| 1 John 4:17 | "in the day of judgment" (love will give us confidence on the last day) |
| Jude 6 | "in the judgment of the great day" |

These references in the catholic epistles have much more the tone and texture of the Old Testament in its emphasis on the judgment against God's enemies. Yet the New Testament Christological emphasis has not been lost, in that the One to come back is the Lamb, the Son of God, who will judge all. Heb. 9:28 says, "So Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him."⁵⁶ Auvray and Léon-Dufour are correct to state, "As the New Testament

⁵⁶Cf. C.K. Barrett, "The Eschatology of the Epistle to the Hebrews," *The Background of the New Testament and its Eschatology*, edited by W.D. Davies and D. Daube (Cambridge: University Press, 1964), 364f.

vocabulary shows, the Day of the LORD is from now on the Day of Christ."⁵⁷

Conclusions

In this section we have seen how it was the understanding of the early church, as witnessed in the preaching of Paul and others, that Jesus was the Messiah and that He would come again to judge the world in righteousness. The one stream of the Old Testament regarding the יהוה ים has merged with the other Old Testament stream concerning a messianic figure. The Day of the LORD has now come to be associated with Jesus the Christ. But if this understanding cannot be directly traced to any intertestamental scheme, how did such a framework of thought develop?

The testimony of Jesus' ministry: Jesus' ministry in his teaching

Jesus once asked His disciples at a strategic point in His ministry, "Who do people say that I am?" (Mark 8:29).⁵⁸ Says Peake, "But for us it is far more important to discover what Jesus believed and claimed Himself to be. The ultimate question, indeed, is what He really was."⁵⁹ By this point in time, Jesus' ministry in both words and works had both taught certain things about Himself and elicited certain responses concerning his identity. Of course, as we indicated in the section on "Presuppositions and Methodology," we are reading about Jesus through the Spirit-inspired perspective of the separate Evangelists. We are thus hearing some of the *kerygma* of the early church. Still, this is, as we also indicated above, a faithful witness to the ministry of Jesus Christ, without it being a stenographic record of His words and actions.

What did Jesus Himself say concerning Himself that would indicate his relationship to the various aspects of the Day of the LORD as well as His fulfillment of the various messianic figures of the Old Testament? It should be noted that Jesus' own frequent designation of Himself is "the Son of Man" (e.g., Mark 2:28; Matt. 12:8; Luke 6:5). (The reference "Son of Man" is used regarding Jesus over eighty times.)

⁵⁷P. Auvray and X. Léon-Dufour, "Day of the Lord," *Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, 2nd edition, edited by X. Léon-Dufour (New York: Seabury Press, 1973), 112.

⁵⁸Matthew 16:13 records the question as "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" In Luke 9:18 the question is, "Who do the multitudes say that I am?"

⁵⁹Peake, *The Messiah and the Son of Man*, 3.

Regarding the significance of such, Delorme says, "In the gospels, Jesus habitually designates Himself by the title of Son of Man, an enigmatic expression which, while veiling the most transcendent aspect of His person, at the same time suggested it."⁶⁰ The phrase veiled His identity in that it is an idiom meaning "human being," but it also suggests His transcendent nature because the phrase is used in Dan. 7:13 (and Jewish apocalyptic).⁶¹

But the question remains as to what relationship the Son of Man has to the Day of the LORD. The Day of the LORD, as we have noted above, is the moment of divine visitation to bring judgment upon God's enemies (as well as blessing to God's faithful remnant). Jesus says in Luke 9:26, "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when He comes in His glory, and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels." The switch between the first person and the third person seems to both conceal and allude to His identification with the Son of Man who comes to bring judgment (cf. Mark 8:38; Matt. 16:27).

Again in Luke 12:35f. (cf. Matt. 24:45ff.) Jesus strongly encourages a watchful attitude for the "Son of Man is coming at an hour that you do not expect." Putting that into the Old Testament idiom, "The Day of the Lord is near." Although Jesus' immediate audience may have been unclear about all that He meant by the expression, it is clear to the Evangelists' audiences. This returning Master is Jesus, the Son of Man, and He will evaluate and judge the performance of His servants.

Although there is something of a veiling of Jesus' identity during His ministry, at His trial before the Jewish leaders Jesus becomes more explicit when confronted directly with a question regarding His identity. The high priest asks Him directly, "Are you the Christ (i.e., Messiah), the Son of the Blessed *One*?" In His response Jesus clearly identifies Himself with the figures of Ps. 110:1 and Dan. 7:13. He will be seated at the right hand of power and coming with the clouds of heaven (Mark 14:61-62; cf. Matt. 26:63ff.; Luke 22:67-70), thus making Himself to be both the Messiah and the Son of Man, but only as He Himself understands these figures of Old Testament revelation.⁶² He insists on His own interpretation of who He is.

⁶⁰Delorme, "Son of Man," 563.

⁶¹Cf. Delorme, "Son of Man," 564; France, *Jesus and the Old Testament*, 186ff.

⁶²France, *Jesus and the Old Testament*, 103.

It is noted by New Testament scholars that Jesus never gives Himself the title of Messiah. Bonnard and Grelot say that "Jesus adopted an attitude of reserve."⁶³ He never denies the title when called "son of David" (e.g., Matt. 21:9), but He tells His disciples, those whom He healed, even demons that He cast out, that they are not to proclaim Him as such. The reason is not difficult to find: Jesus will not accept their framework of understanding, since a political savior was what many zealous Jews understood the Messiah to be. Taylor suggests that "Messiahship as He understood it was not a title, nor primarily an office, but fundamentally a destiny. Messiahship was what He would do by dying and rising again."⁶⁴

In the resurrection and ascension Jesus is fully vindicated (Rom. 1:4),⁶⁵ and in this way (and no other [Luke 24:7, 26, 44]) He forms the basis for what the church proclaims in the gospel (see 1 Cor. 1:18ff.; 2 Tim. 2:8). When Jesus is called Messiah, He then begins to speak in terms of the Son of Man who must suffer, die, but then rise again (Mark 9:31; Matt. 16:21).

Finally, it should be pointed out that Jesus spoke of the judgment of Jerusalem and of the Jews as a nation (Mark 13; Matt. 24-25; Luke 13:34-35; 17:22-37; 19:41-44; 21:20-28). Such judgment against an unbelieving people (and of the world at the end) was a prerogative of YHWH in the Day of the LORD. Jesus, who had consistently referred to Himself as the Son of Man, says that such a judgment will occur when the Son of Man comes "in a cloud with power and great glory" (Luke 21:27). As He left the earth in a cloud (the Shekinah?), so He would return in the same manner (Acts 1:11; cf. 2 Thess. 1:7ff.). In other words, because of Jesus' faithfulness in his divine mission, all the prerogatives of the Day of the LORD devolve upon Him.

Jesus' ministry in the crucifixion

F.C. Fensham notes how some Old Testament ideas were kept alive through the Qumran community which kept a list of curses for those who broke their covenant.⁶⁶ Keeping this in mind, it then becomes

⁶³Bonnard and Grelot, "Messiah," 356. But cf. John 4:25f.

⁶⁴V. Taylor, *New Testament Essays* (London: Epworth Press, 1970), 41.

⁶⁵France, *Jesus and the Old Testament*, 140-148.

⁶⁶F.C. Fensham, "The Curse of the Cross and the Renewal of the Covenant," *Biblical Essays: Proceedings of the Ninth Meeting of Die Ou-Testamentiese Werkgemeenskap*

significant to note how Christ Himself in His words and works proceeds during His own "day." He does not usher in a new Jewish-national kingdom, but He dies in humiliation instead.

In the crucifixion there is a manifestation of the Day of YHWH with the judgments being visited on Jesus and within the cosmos around Him. "Although the suffering on the cross is nowhere expressly called a curse or curses, the description shows that it should be regarded as such in light of the fact that the same kind of suffering is prescribed as a curse in the prophets."⁶⁷ Early covenant curses prescribe a violent death, and the first century crucifixion had come to be the worst possible way to carry out executions. Jer. 19:7-8 mentions the mockery of the people as a curse (cf. Mark 15:29-35). The ruin, desolation, and forsakenness of a city was judged a curse (Isa. 5:6), and thus Christ as the Righteous Sufferer cried out on the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mark 15:34; cf. Ps. 22:1). Drought and thirst were curses, and Christ said, "I thirst" (John 19:28). Darkness was a curse, and thus the whole land was enveloped in darkness for three hours as Christ hung on the cross, bearing the judgment of God's wrath (Luke 23:45).

Earthquakes were also part of the maledictions mentioned against covenant violators (Matt. 27:51; cf. Isa. 13:13). It is also interesting to note that when the earth quakes at the time of Christ's death, there is also a reflex of blessing in that some rise from the dead (Matt. 27:51-53).⁶⁸ Fensham rightly concludes:

It seems, thus, that this large number of calamities . . . are not grouped together without reason. It is logical to accept that Christ was regarded as the one who breaks the covenant *par excellence* and that as result of this all the curses which accompany the covenant contract were exacted on him. These curses were meant for the transgressors, but Jesus came in their stead and saved them by being cursed.⁶⁹

In effect, at the crucifixion we see Jesus experiencing a fulfillment of Joel 2:30-31, a passage clearly associated with the coming Day of the LORD.

in Suid-Afrika, edited by A.H. van Zyl (Potchefstroom: Pro Rege-Pers, 1966), 221-222.

⁶⁷Fensham, "The Curse of the Cross and the Renewal of the Covenant," 223.

⁶⁸N.B. the double aspect of the day of YHWH in terms of cursing, but also blessing.

⁶⁹Fensham, "The Curse of the Cross and the Renewal of the Covenant," 224.

Concluding observations

What we have tried to demonstrate is how the New Testament church came to the conclusion that the Old Testament Day of YHWH was now, in these the last days (cf. Heb. 1:1ff.), to be associated with the Messiah Jesus. The Old Testament epoch of redemptive history revealed a number of streams, namely, the Day of the LORD along with the figures of another son of David, a mysterious Son of Man, and a Servant of YHWH who would suffer for the sake of God's people. The Old Testament does not clearly bring these various streams together. For this reason, we can be somewhat understanding of the fact that messianic conceptions ventured in a number of directions in the intertestamental period. Therefore, a messiah *suffering* on a cross was unheard of in Jewish messianic ideology.

In light of this understanding, we are then led to wonder how the New Testament writers could so easily identify the Day of the LORD with Jesus. In fact, some of the earliest literary evidence of the New Testament (e.g., the Thessalonian letters) shows "detailed descriptions" of the Parousia, and "takes us back directly to the OT prophecies of the coming of the Lord."⁷⁰ Glasson also maintains that intertestamental Jewish literature knows nothing of a son of David-type of messiah descending from the heavens.⁷¹ We must conclude either that the New Testament writers arrived at this idea on their own, or that there is clear evidence in all that Jesus taught and in all that He did and experienced (which associates Him with the Day of the LORD), and that there will be a coming moment that will mark the end of this present redemptive-historical epoch. Our examination of the biblical revelation leads us to conclude the latter. Bonnard and Grelot rightly conclude that

the scriptural promises equally announce the setting up of the kingdom of God. They present the artisan of salvation under the features of the Servant of Yahweh and of the Son of Man. The coordination of all this data with the expectation of the Messiah (or Messiahs) is not easily or clearly realized. Only the coming

⁷⁰Glasson, "Theophany and Parousia," 266.

⁷¹Glasson, "Theophany and Parousia," 262ff.

of Jesus will dissipate the ambiguities of the prophets on this point.⁷²

Therefore, the New Testament writers, and thus what they reveal, are not controlled by the various understandings of intertestamental Judaism (even though some of the New Testament language may be borrowed from such a milieu). The New Testament revelation is controlled by the event of Jesus' incarnation, ministry, death, and glorification at the right hand of the Father. It is true that the "end of the ages" has come upon the New Testament church, says Paul (1 Cor. 10:11). This is because of who Christ is (ontologically) and what He did (functionally).

This gives the message in the Pauline (and, indeed, all the New Testament) writings⁷³ an eschatological character that is "entirely defined and explained by the advent and the revelation of Jesus Christ."⁷⁴ Moreover, all that Jesus said and did was "according to the Scriptures."⁷⁵ Thus the transition from the Old Testament Day of the LORD to the New Testament Day of the Lord Jesus Christ is made by Jesus Himself. He maintains complete control in regard to all revelation concerning Himself.

⁷²Bonnard and Grelot, "Messiah," 356. Cf. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 331, and Ridderbos, *Matthew's Witness to Jesus Christ*, 13.

⁷³See W.D. Davies and D. Daube, editors, *The Background of the New Testament and its Eschatology* (1964) for an examination of the eschatology of various New Testament books.

⁷⁴Ridderbos, *Paul*, 49.

⁷⁵Luke 24:25,27,44; John 5:46; 1 Cor. 15:3-4; cf. Ridderbos, *Paul*, 51-52.