

The Day of the Lord and the Preemptive Strike of the Cross

Key Text

Malachi 4:5-6

→ “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction.”

Big Idea

Because God was unwilling to condemn all mankind for their sin, He delayed the great and awesome Day of the Lord for us, by bringing it in early for His Son at the cross!

(1) The Day of the Lord

The Day of the Lord, in its basic sense, represents a day of God’s intervention whereby the wicked are judged and the righteous are redeemed, and, above all, God’s holy name is vindicated. Sometimes the term is used to refer to certain historical intrusions of divine action, but all of these foreshadow and anticipate what is meant by this Day in its ultimate sense: the final Day that will come at the end of the ages where all that’s wrong will be irreversibly done away with and all that’s right will be irreversibly ushered in.

(2) The Preemptive Strike of the Cross

If the day of the Lord is to be understood as this coming cosmic upheaval and whirlwind of fury, its as if the first thunderbolt from that approaching lightning storm strikes 33 AD, Golgotha, Jesus Christ. That thunderbolt is a part of the end-time storm, it is a part of the great and awesome day of the Lord, but it comes first for Christ! And the world now rests under the ominous shadow of that same black cloud. No one knows when the next bolt is going to strike and the Last Day descend. It will come like a thief in the night for many. But, while this fallen world rests under that cloud, those who have come to Christ have entered with Him into a brand new day! For as He rose from the dead, on the first day of the week, the clouds of God’s judgment and wrath broke and the sun of God’s affection now shines in full force, not just upon Him but upon all who are united to Him by His Spirit through faith.

All aspects of the Day of the Lord converge at the cross of Christ. For there final judgment befell Him for our sin; and there redemption was given to Him in His resurrection as the firstfruits from the dead; and there the Father’s name was preeminently vindicated, for it is only by means of the cross that God can be both “just and the justifier of the [ungodly] one who has faith in Jesus” (Rom 3:26 [; 4:5]). Because of the cross, heaven will not be empty or silent—it will be full of people from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation (Rev 5:9); and its halls will resound with the chorus of our praise, all in adoration of the Lamb!

Critical Action

Receive the Lamb by faith that you might move with Him through judgment into eternal life today!

Reflection Questions

- Why does God have to come and judge the world? What Scriptures come to mind in this regard? How is His judgment bad news for the unbeliever? How is it good news for the believer?
- Will the Day of the Lord “surprise you like a thief” (1 Thess 5:4)? What can you do to ensure that it will not?
- Do you have people in your life that are willing to help you deal with the log in your eye? Do you invite such revelation or despise it? Why is this of grave importance for your soul?
- How does the preemptive strike of the cross influence your assurance of salvation? Your identity and sense of worth? Your labor for the Lord?
- How should we live in light of the approaching Day of the Lord? What texts come to mind (i.e. 1 Thess 5:1-11).