

Key Concepts for Understanding Prophecy

The Day of the Lord

The “day of the LORD” is a key idea in much of the prophetic writings. It is mentioned repeatedly by most of the prophets.

- What “day” do these scriptures refer to?
- What is the common vocal response called for by both Isaiah and Ezekiel?
- What common characteristics of that day do both prophets mention?

The “day of the LORD” is a term used by the Old Testament prophets to signify a time in the history of mankind when God directly intervenes to bring salvation to His people and punishment to the rebellious. By it God restores His righteous order in the Earth. The terms “that Day” and simply “the Day” are sometimes used as synonyms for the fuller expression “the day of the LORD.”

The fulfillment of the Day may be seen in four different ways: 1) In the times of the prophets it was revealed by such events as the invasion of Israel by foreign powers (Amos), the awesome plagues of locusts (Joel), and the return of Israelite exiles from captivity (Ezra-Neh.). 2) In that prophetic insight had the quality of merging periods of eschatology so that even the prophets themselves could not always distinguish the various times of the fulfillment of their prophecies, that Day developed into a broad biblical concept. Prophetic fulfillments closest to the prophets’ own day were mingled with those reaching as far as the final culmination of all things. Hence, the First Coming of Christ and the church age began another phase of the Day of the Lord. As participants in this aspect of the Day, the living church—believers like us—can call on the risen Christ to cast down forces that hinder God’s work in this present world and to bring about innumerable blessings. This is clear in comparing Isaiah 61:1, 2 with Luke 4:18, 19 and Joel 2:28-32 with Acts 2:16-21. 3) The Second Coming of Christ will inaugurate the third aspect of the Day of the Lord, during which Christ’s righteousness and universal rule will restore God’s order to the Earth (Amos 9:13; Is. 11:6-). 4) The ultimate fulfillment of the Day of the Lord awaits the full arrival of the world to come, with its new heaven and new earth. Compare Ezekiel 47:1-12 with Revelation 22:1-5.

Isaiah 13

⁶Wail, for the day of the LORD is at hand! It will come as destruction from the Almighty.

⁷Therefore all hands will be limp, Every man’s heart will melt,

⁸And they will be afraid. Pangs and sorrows will take hold of *them*; They will be in pain as a woman in childbirth; They will be amazed at one another; Their faces *will be like flames*.

⁹Behold, the day of the LORD comes, Cruel, with both wrath and fierce anger, To lay the land desolate; And He will destroy its sinners from it.

¹⁰For the stars of heaven and their constellations Will not give their light; The sun will be darkened in its going forth, And the moon will not cause its light to shine.

Ezekiel 30

¹The word of the LORD came to me again, saying,

²“Son of man, prophesy and say, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD: “Wail, ‘Woe to the day!’”

³For the day *is* near, Even the day of the LORD *is* near; It will be a day of clouds, the time of the Gentiles.

⁴The sword shall come upon Egypt, And great anguish shall be in Ethiopia, When the slain fall in Egypt, And they take away her wealth, And her foundations are broken down.

Amos 5

¹⁸Woe to you who desire the day of the LORD! For what good *is* the day of the LORD to you? It *will be* darkness, and not light.

¹⁹It *will be* as though a man fled from a lion, And a bear met him! Or *as though* he went into the house, Leaned his hand on the wall, And a serpent bit him!

²⁰*Is not* the day of the LORD darkness, and not light? *Is it not* very dark, with no brightness in it?

Key Concepts for Understanding Prophecy

Obadiah

¹⁵“For the day of the LORD upon all the nations *is* near; As you have done, it shall be done to you; Your reprisal shall return upon your own head.

¹⁶For as you drank on my holy mountain, So shall all the nations drink continually; Yes, they shall drink, and swallow, And they shall be as though they had never been.

¹⁷“But on Mount Zion there shall be deliverance, And there shall be holiness; The house of Jacob shall possess their possessions.

¹⁸The house of Jacob shall be a fire, And the house of Joseph a flame; But the house of Esau *shall be* stubble; They shall kindle them and devour them, And no survivor shall *remain* of the house of Esau,” For the LORD has spoken.

Joel 2

¹Blow the trumpet in Zion, And sound an alarm in My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; For the day of the LORD is coming, For it is at hand:

²A day of darkness and gloominess, A day of clouds and thick darkness, Like the morning *clouds* spread over the mountains. A people *come*, great and strong, The like of whom has never been; Nor will there ever be any *such* after them, Even for many successive generations.

³A fire devours before them, And behind them a flame burns; The land *is* like the Garden of Eden before them, And behind them a desolate wilderness; Surely nothing shall escape them.

⁴Their appearance is like the appearance of horses; And like swift steeds, so they run.

⁵With a noise like chariots Over mountaintops they leap, Like the noise of a flaming fire that devours the stubble, Like a strong people set in battle array.

⁶Before them the people writhe in pain; All faces are drained of color.

⁷They run like mighty men, They climb the wall like men of war; Every one marches in formation, And they do not break ranks.

⁸They do not push one another; Every one marches in his own column. Though they lunge between the weapons, They are not cut down.

⁹They run to and fro in the city, They run on the wall; They climb into the houses, They enter at the windows like a thief.

¹⁰The earth quakes before them, The heavens tremble; The sun and moon grow dark, And the stars diminish their brightness.

¹¹The LORD gives voice before His army, For His camp is very great; For strong *is the One* who executes His word. For the day of the LORD *is* great and very terrible; Who can endure it?

¹²“Now, therefore,” says the LORD, “Turn to Me with all your heart, With fasting, with weeping, and with mourning.”

¹³So rend your heart, and not your garments; Return to the LORD your God, For He *is* gracious and merciful, Slow to anger, and of great kindness; And He relents from doing harm.

¹⁴Who knows *if* He will turn and relent, And leave a blessing behind Him—A grain offering and a drink offering For the LORD your God?

Key Concepts for Understanding Prophecy

Zephaniah 1

⁷Be silent in the presence of the Lord GOD; For the day of the LORD *is* at hand, For the LORD has prepared a sacrifice; He has invited His guests.

⁸“And it shall be, In the day of the LORD’s sacrifice, That I will punish the princes and the king’s children, And all such as are clothed with foreign apparel.

⁹In the same day I will punish All those who leap over the threshold, Who fill their masters’ houses with violence and deceit.

¹⁰“And there shall be on that day,” says the LORD, “The sound of a mournful cry from the Fish Gate, A wailing from the Second Quarter, And a loud crashing from the hills.

¹¹Wail, you inhabitants of Maktesh! For all the merchant people are cut down; All those who handle money are cut off.

¹²“And it shall come to pass at that time *That* I will search Jerusalem with lamps, And punish the men Who are settled in complacency, Who say in their heart, ‘The LORD will not do good, Nor will He do evil.’

¹³Therefore their goods shall become booty, And their houses a desolation; They shall build houses, but not inhabit *them*; They shall plant vineyards, but not drink their wine.”

¹⁴The great day of the LORD *is* near; *It is* near and hastens quickly. The noise of the day of the LORD is bitter; There the mighty men shall cry out.

¹⁵That day *is* a day of wrath, A day of trouble and distress, A day of devastation and desolation, A day of darkness and gloominess, A day of clouds and thick darkness,

¹⁶A day of trumpet and alarm Against the fortified cities And against the high towers.

¹⁷“I will bring distress upon men, And they shall walk like blind men, Because they have sinned against the LORD; Their blood shall be poured out like dust, And their flesh like refuse.”

¹⁸Neither their silver nor their gold Shall be able to deliver them In the day of the LORD’s wrath; But the whole land shall be devoured By the fire of His jealousy, For He will make speedy riddance Of all those who dwell in the land.

Zephaniah 2

¹Gather yourselves together, yes, gather together, O undesirable nation,

²Before the decree is issued, *Or* the day passes like chaff,

Before the LORD’s fierce anger comes upon you, Before the day of the LORD’s anger comes upon you!

³Seek the LORD, all you meek of the earth, Who have upheld His justice.

Seek righteousness, seek humility. It may be that you will be hidden In the day of the LORD’s anger.

Zephaniah 3

⁸“Therefore wait for Me,” says the LORD, “Until the day I rise up for plunder; My determination *is* to gather the nations To My assembly of kingdoms, To pour on them My indignation, All my fierce anger; All the earth shall be devoured With the fire of My jealousy.

⁹“For then I will restore to the peoples a pure language, That they all may call on the name of the LORD, To serve Him with one accord.

¹⁰From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia My worshipers, The daughter of My dispersed ones, Shall bring My offering.

¹¹In that day you shall not be shamed for any of your deeds In which you transgress against Me; For then I will take away from your midst Those who rejoice in your pride, And you shall no longer be haughty In My holy mountain.

¹²I will leave in your midst A meek and humble people, And they shall trust in the name of the LORD.

¹³The remnant of Israel shall do no unrighteousness And speak no lies, Nor shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth; For they shall feed *their* flocks and lie down, And no one shall make *them* afraid.”

Key Concepts for Understanding Prophecy

Isaiah 63

³"I have trodden the winepress alone, And from the peoples no one *was* with Me. For I have trodden them in My anger, And trampled them in My fury; Their blood is sprinkled upon My garments, And I have stained all My robes.

⁴For the day of vengeance *is* in My heart, And the year of My redeemed has come.⁵I looked, but *there was* no one to help, And I wondered That *there was* no one to uphold; Therefore My own arm brought salvation for Me; And My own fury, it sustained Me.

⁶I have trodden down the peoples in My anger, Made them drunk in My fury, And brought down their strength to the earth."

Hosea 9

⁵What will you do in the appointed day, And in the day of the feast of the LORD?

⁶For indeed they are gone because of destruction. Egypt shall gather them up; Memphis shall bury them. Nettles shall possess their valuables of silver; Thorns *shall be* in their tents.

⁷The days of punishment have come; The days of recompense have come. Israel knows! The prophet *is* a fool, The spiritual man *is* insane, Because of the greatness of your iniquity and great enmity.

Joel 2

³¹The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD.

³²And it shall come to pass *That* whoever calls on the name of the LORD Shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance, As the LORD has said, Among the remnant whom the LORD calls.

Malachi 4

¹"For behold, the day is coming, Burning like an oven, And all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up," Says the LORD of hosts, "That will leave them neither root nor branch.

²But to you who fear My name The Sun of Righteousness shall arise With healing in His wings; And you shall go out And grow fat like stall-fed calves.

³You shall trample the wicked, For they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet On the day that I do *this*," Says the LORD of hosts.

⁴"Remember the Law of Moses, My servant, Which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel, *With the* statutes and judgments.

⁵Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.

⁶And he will turn The hearts of the fathers to the children, And the hearts of the children to their fathers, Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse."

Key Concepts for Understanding Prophecy

1Thessalonians 5

¹But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. ²For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. ³For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. ⁴But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. ⁵You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. ⁶Therefore let us not sleep, as others *do*, but let us watch and be sober. ⁷For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. ⁸But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation. ⁹For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁰who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. ¹¹Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.

2 Thessalonians 1

³We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other, ⁴so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure, ⁵*which is* manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer; ⁶since *it is* a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, ⁷and to *give* you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, ⁸in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, ¹⁰when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed. ¹¹Therefore we also pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of *this* calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of *His* goodness and the work of faith with power, ¹²that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Thessalonians 2

¹Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, ²not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. ³Let no one deceive you by any means; for *that Day will not come* unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, ⁴who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. ⁵Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? ⁶And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. ⁷For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains *will do so* until He is taken out of the way. ⁸And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. ⁹The coming of the *lawless one* is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, ¹⁰and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. ¹¹And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, ¹²that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

Key Concepts for Understanding Prophecy

2 Peter 3

¹⁰But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. ¹¹Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner *of persons* ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, ¹²looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? ¹³Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

¹⁴Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless; ¹⁵and consider *that* the longsuffering of our Lord *is* salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, ¹⁶as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable *people* twist to their own destruction, as *they do* also the rest of the Scriptures. ¹⁷You therefore, beloved, since you know *this* beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; ¹⁸but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him *be* the glory both now and forever. Amen.

Hebrews 9

²³Therefore *it was* necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. ²⁴For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, *which are* copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; ²⁵not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another— ²⁶He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. ²⁷And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, ²⁸so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.

Hebrews 12

¹⁸For you have not come to the mountain that may be touched and that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness and tempest, ¹⁹and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words, so that those who heard *it* begged that the word should not be spoken to them anymore. ²⁰(For they could not endure what was commanded: “And if so much as a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned or shot with an arrow.” ²¹And so terrifying was the sight *that* Moses said, “I am exceedingly afraid and trembling.”) ²²But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, ²³to the general assembly and church of the firstborn *who are* registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, ²⁴to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than *that of* Abel.

²⁵See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more *shall we not escape* if we turn away from Him who *speaks* from heaven, ²⁶whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, “Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven.” ²⁷Now this, “Yet once more,” indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain. ²⁸Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. ²⁹For our God *is* a consuming fire.

Revelation 6

¹⁵And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, ¹⁶and said to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!” ¹⁷“For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?”

Key Concepts for Understanding Prophecy

The "OTHER" Side of the Day of the LORD

In all of the above texts we see the prophets speaking of a coming day of judgment: this is the "day of the LORD." It is a day wherein God directly intervenes in human history and brings judgment to the world. But there is another side of the "day of the LORD." Look at the following verses and note what is proclaimed besides judgment.

So the Day of the Lord contains not only judgment, but salvation and comfort for the righteous as well. The prophets recognized that the Lord would irrupt into history, and that this event would have profound consequences for both the wicked and the righteous. However, the prophetic vision frequently could not differentiate between proximate and more distant events. They sometimes did not see great gaps in time, as we learned in our previous lesson. Thus they saw both impending judgment and other future events as manifestations of the Day of the Lord.

Joel 3

¹⁴Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD *is* near in the valley of decision.

¹⁵The sun and moon will grow dark, And the stars will diminish their brightness.

¹⁶The LORD also will roar from Zion, And utter His voice from Jerusalem; The heavens and earth will shake; But the LORD will be a shelter for His people, And the strength of the children of Israel.

¹⁷"So you shall know that I *am* the LORD your God, Dwelling in Zion My holy mountain. Then Jerusalem shall be holy, And no aliens shall ever pass through her again."

¹⁸And it will come to pass in that day *That* the mountains shall drip with new wine, The hills shall flow with milk, And all the brooks of Judah shall be flooded with water; A fountain shall flow from the house of the LORD And water the Valley of Acacias.

¹⁹"Egypt shall be a desolation, And Edom a desolate wilderness, Because of violence *against* the people of Judah, For they have shed innocent blood in their land.

²⁰But Judah shall abide forever, And Jerusalem from generation to generation.

²¹"For I will acquit them of the guilt of bloodshed, whom I had not acquitted; For the LORD dwells in Zion."

Amos 9

⁸"Behold, the eyes of the Lord GOD *are* on the sinful kingdom, And I will destroy it from the face of the earth; Yet I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob," Says the LORD.

⁹"For surely I will command, And will sift the house of Israel among all nations, As *grain* is sifted in a sieve; Yet not the smallest grain shall fall to the ground.

¹⁰All the sinners of My people shall die by the sword, Who say, 'The calamity shall not overtake nor confront us.'

¹¹"On that day I will raise up The tabernacle of David, which has fallen down, And repair its damages; I will raise up its ruins, And rebuild it as in the days of old;

¹²That they may possess the remnant of Edom, And all the Gentiles who are called by My name," Says the LORD who does this thing.

Malachi 4

¹"For behold, the day is coming, Burning like an oven, And all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up," Says the LORD of hosts, "That will leave them neither root nor branch.

²But to you who fear My name The Sun of Righteousness shall arise With healing in His wings; And you shall go out And grow fat like stall-fed calves.

³You shall trample the wicked, For they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet On the day that I do *this*," Says the LORD of hosts

Key Concepts for Understanding Prophecy

Zephaniah 3

⁸"Therefore wait for Me," says the LORD, "Until the day I rise up for plunder; My determination *is* to gather the nations To My assembly of kingdoms, To pour on them My indignation, All my fierce anger; All the earth shall be devoured With the fire of My jealousy.

⁹"For then I will restore to the peoples a pure language, That they all may call on the name of the LORD, To serve Him with one accord.

¹⁰From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia My worshipers, The daughter of My dispersed ones, Shall bring My offering.

¹¹In that day you shall not be shamed for any of your deeds In which you transgress against Me; For then I will take away from your midst Those who rejoice in your pride, And you shall no longer be haughty In My holy mountain.

¹²I will leave in your midst A meek and humble people, And they shall trust in the name of the LORD.

¹³The remnant of Israel shall do no unrighteousness And speak no lies, Nor shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth; For they shall feed *their* flocks and lie down, And no one shall make *them* afraid."

The Concept of Judgment

- 1) Punishment of the wicked
- 2) Deliverance of the righteous

A second concept that will enable us to correlate different prophecies is the Hebrew concept of judgment. Generally, when we think of judgment, particularly the judgment of God, we think of wrath or punishment. This was not entirely true of ancient Hebrew thought. To the Hebrews judgment always contained two sides: there was the aspect of punishment that was visited upon the wicked, but equally present in the idea was the deliverance of the righteous. This concept may be more easily understood if we liken it to a civil suit in one of our courts.

In a civil case a decision will be handed down; that is the judgment. Contained in the judgment are two things—the injured party receives recompense for the injury he has received. The guilty party is penalized—they are required to pay the compensation. Thus we see that the Hebrew concept is not really that foreign to our own experience.

Psalm 52

To the Chief Musician. A Contemplation of David when Doeg the Edomite went and told Saul, and said to him, "David has gone to the house of Ahimelech."

¹Why do you boast in evil, O mighty man? The goodness of God *endures* continually.

²Your tongue devises destruction, Like a sharp razor, working deceitfully

³You love evil more than good, Lying rather than speaking righteousness.

Selah

⁴You love all devouring words, *You* deceitful tongue.

⁵God shall likewise destroy you forever; He shall take you away, and pluck you out of *your* dwelling place, And uproot you from the land of the living.

Selah

⁶The righteous also shall see and fear, And shall laugh at him, *saying*,

⁷"Here is the man *who* did not make God his strength, But trusted in the abundance of his riches, *And* strengthened himself in his wickedness."

⁸But I *am* like a green olive tree in the house of God; I trust in the mercy of God forever and ever.

⁹I will praise You forever, Because You have done *it*; And in the presence of Your saints I will wait on Your name, for *it is* good.

This Age vs The Age to Come

Another concept that is closely related to, and flows out of, the Jewish understanding of the Day of the Lord and Old Testament prophecy is the idea of time being divided into two segments: this age and the age to come. This idea flows naturally out of the doctrine of the Day of the Lord. The prophets taught that the Lord would break into human affairs at the "day of the LORD" and He would set up His kingdom. After that the Lord would rule "with a rod of iron"—by His absolute power He would rule all the nations. His rule would be in absolute righteousness; therefore, the age to come would be a time of righteousness. In contrast to that, "this present evil age" (Gal. 1:4) is dominated by wickedness and rebellion against God. This view of history was common in the first century A.D. and was shared by the early Christians and Jews. Let us examine some passages which show this view.

Luke 20

³⁴And Jesus answered and said to them, "The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage. ³⁵But those who are counted worthy to attain that age, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; ³⁶nor can they die anymore, for they are equal to the angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection.

- Who is speaking in this text?
- Those who attain "that age" also attain what? (v. 35)
- What does verse 36 tell us about those who attain "that age"?
- Keep in mind that the things spoken of "that age" are spoken of in contrast to what is true of "this age."

This Age:

- An age of faith
- Voluntary love is developed
- Obedience to God is not enforced

Matthew 12

³¹Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy *against* the Spirit will not be forgiven men. ³²Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the *age to come*.

- Can this sin against the Holy Spirit (essentially, to reject His testimony of Jesus as Son and Savior) ever be forgiven?
- What does this imply about the duration of "the *age to come*"?
- These texts show that Jesus used this point of view in His teaching. We now turn to the epistles to see this idea in the apostolic writings.

1 Corinthians 2

⁶However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. ⁷But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden *wisdom* which God ordained before the ages for our glory, ⁸which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. ⁹But as it is written:

"Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him."

Key Concepts for Understanding Prophecy

Ephesians 2

¹And you *He made alive*, who were dead in trespasses and sins, ²in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, ³among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others

Ephesians 6

¹⁰Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. ¹¹Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. ¹²For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*. ¹³Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

- Who are the “rulers of this age”? (Compare Eph. 2:1, 2 and 6:12.)
- What is the end of those rulers? (v. 6)
- When did God ordain the mystery of redemption? (v. 7)
- Why is “ages” plural in verse 7?

1 Corinthians 10

¹Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, ²all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, ³all ate the same spiritual food, ⁴and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. ⁵But with most of them God was not well pleased, for *their bodies* were scattered in the wilderness. ⁶Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. ⁷And do not become idolaters as *were* some of them. As it is written, “The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.” ⁸Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; ⁹nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; ¹⁰nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer. ¹¹Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. ¹²Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. ¹³No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God *is* faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear *it*.

- What five things were true of “all our fathers” in verses 1–4?
- What five things are we warned against by their example? (vv. 6–10)
- Why were “these things” written? (v. 11)
- For whom were these things written? (v. 11)

Galatians 1

⁴who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, ⁵to whom *be* glory forever and ever. Amen.

Ephesians 1

²⁰which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly *places*, ²¹far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. ²²And He put all *things* under His feet, and gave Him *to be* head over all *things* to the church, ²³which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

- Where is Christ seated?
- Note the end of verse 21. What does this tell us about Christ’s position?

Key Concepts for Understanding Prophecy

Ephesians 2

⁴But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶and raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus, ⁷that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in *His* kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

- Where are we seated in Christ? (Compare previous reference.)
- When will God reveal the full riches of the grace He has given us?

Hebrews 9

²³Therefore *it was* necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. ²⁴For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, *which are* copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; ²⁵not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another— ²⁶He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. ²⁷And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, ²⁸so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.

- **When did Christ appear to present the sacrifice of Himself?**
- **Compare this reference with 1 Corinthians 10:1–13 above. According to both writers, what period were they living in?**

Key Concepts for Understanding Prophecy

The Kingdom of God

Our final theme for this lesson will be the “kingdom of God.” This familiar phrase is so abundantly present, especially in the New Testament, yet the meaning is often misapplied or misunderstood. It can be confusing for two reasons: 1) the terminology is used in various ways in Scripture, and 2) as we saw in the word “judgment,” many people have a characteristic way of thinking about “kingdom” that is not in line with the Bible’s use of that term.

Many people tend to think of a place when they think of a kingdom. Therefore, when some think of the kingdom of God, they think of heaven. Now heaven is undeniably one expression of the kingdom of God, but Jesus also said, “the kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:21). So is the kingdom merely an expression for salvation? No, for Jesus also said that His miracles (specifically the casting out of demons) were a sign that “the kingdom of God has come upon you” (Matt. 12:28).

To discover what the Bible is talking about when it refers to “kingdom,” we need to understand the meaning of the Hebrew and Greek words.

The *primary* meaning of both the Hebrew word *malkuth* in the Old Testament and of the Greek word *basileia* in the New Testament is the rank, authority and sovereignty exercised by a king. A *basileia* may indeed be a realm over which a sovereign exercises his authority; and it may be the people who belong to that realm and over whom authority is exercised; but these are secondary and derived meanings. First of all, a kingdom is the authority to rule, the sovereignty of the king.

Thus the idea behind “kingdom of God” is “the authority of God’s rule.” This rulership of God is manifest as both a present reality and a future potentiality. Let us see how this helps us understand references to the kingdom.

Matthew 16:28–17:8

²⁸“Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.”

¹Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; ²and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. ³And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. ⁴Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” ⁵While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!” ⁶And when the disciples heard *it*, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid. ⁷But Jesus came and touched them and said, “**Arise, and do not be afraid.**” ⁸When they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only. ⁹Now as they came down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, “**Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead.**”

- Given the context of Jesus’ remarks in 16:28, who did “not taste death” before seeing a manifestation of Jesus in His kingdom?
- What was the manifestation of the kingdom they witnessed?
- How does understanding the meaning of “kingdom” as “the authority or sovereignty of the king” help us to better understand Jesus’ saying?

Key Concepts for Understanding Prophecy

Luke 13:18–21

¹⁸Then He said, "What is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I compare it? ¹⁹"It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and put in his garden; and it grew and became a large tree, and the birds of the air nested in its branches."

²⁰And again He said, "To what shall I liken the kingdom of God? ²¹"It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened

- In the first parable to what does Jesus liken the kingdom of God?
- In the second parable what represents the kingdom of God?
- If we understood "kingdom" geographically, how would we be forced to interpret these parables?
- Understanding the kingdom as Christ's ruling authority, what do you understand these parables to say?

The Parables of the Mustard Seed and the Leaven. These two parables have been the source of two radically different interpretations. One interpretation sees the birds in the first parable and the leaven in the second parable as representing sin or Satan. According to this interpretation of the mustard seed parable, the kingdom of God grows and matures, but then Satan comes in and finds a place to dwell within the church (kingdom of God). This view interprets the leaven in the second parable as sin that gets into the church (kingdom of God) and works its way throughout it.

The other interpretation, which seems more supportable, sees these parables as statements of the unstoppable growth of God's authority wherever it is received. The mustard seed parable shows the kingdom of God becoming a tree large enough to be a shelter for those who would dwell within it. In the second parable leaven represents the kingdom of God, not sin. (Jesus Himself says, "It [the kingdom of God] is like leaven...") Just as the leaven will work its way through the whole lump of dough, God's ruling authority will continue its work to completion. His promise to complete His work applies to us personally (Phil. 1:6) and to the world as a whole (Rev. 11:15).

Matthew 6

³⁰"Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, *will He* not much more *clothe* you, O you of little faith? ³¹"Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³²"For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. ³³"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. ³⁴"Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day *is* its own trouble.

- What three things do the Gentiles seek after?
- What two things are we to seek?
- Does understanding the "kingdom of God" as "God's authority to rule" change your perspective on this passage? How?

Since Jesus came to begin to open up the "kingdom of God," that is, the possibility of God's rule within us and within our sphere of influence, we can experience His resources for us, for our marriages, for our families, for our jobs, and for every area of our lives. But we must learn to seek His rulership, which means we submit to His ways: "Your kingdom come. Your will be done."

Key Concepts for Understanding Prophecy

Hebrews 1:8

⁸But to the Son *He* says: "Your throne, O God, *is* forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness *is* the scepter of Your Kingdom.

- What words are used to signify the rulership or authority of the Son?

1 Corinthians 4:20

²⁰For the kingdom of God *is* not in word but in power. ²¹What do you want? Shall I come to you with a rod, or in love and a spirit of gentleness?

- How does understanding the kingdom of God in terms of rulership and authority help clarify this verse?

Matthew 12

²⁸But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you.

Mark 14

²⁴And He said to them, "This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many. ²⁵Assuredly, I say to you, I will no longer drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God." ²⁶And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Luke 9

⁸Whatever city you enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you. ⁹And heal the sick there, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' ¹⁰But whatever city you enter, and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say, ¹¹'The very dust of your city which clings to us we wipe off against you. Nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God has come near you.' ¹²But I say to you that it will be more tolerable in that Day for Sodom than for that city.

Luke 19

¹¹Now as they heard these things, He spoke another parable, because He was near Jerusalem and because they thought the kingdom of God would appear immediately. ¹²Therefore He said: "A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. ¹³So he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas, and said to them, 'Do business till I come.' ¹⁴But his citizens hated him, and sent a delegation after him, saying, 'We will not have this *man* to reign over us.' ¹⁵And so it was that when he returned, having received the kingdom, he then commanded these servants, to whom he had given the money, to be called to him, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. ¹⁶Then came the first, saying, 'Master, your mina has earned ten minas.' ¹⁷And he said to him, 'Well *done*, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities.' ¹⁸And the second came, saying, 'Master, your mina has earned five minas.' ¹⁹Likewise he said to him, 'You also be over five cities.' ²⁰Then another came, saying, 'Master, here is your mina, which I have kept put away in a handkerchief. ²¹For I feared you, because you are an austere man. You collect what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow.' ²²And he said to him, 'Out of your own mouth I will judge you, *you* wicked servant. You knew that I was an austere man, collecting what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow. ²³Why then did you not put my money in the bank, that at my coming I might have collected it with interest?' ²⁴And he said to those who stood by, 'Take the mina from him, and give *it* to him who has ten minas.' ²⁵("But they said to him, 'Master, he has ten minas.') ²⁶For I say to you, that to everyone who has will be given; and from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. ²⁷But bring here those enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, and slay *them* before me.' "

Key Concepts for Understanding Prophecy

Luke 17

²⁰Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, "The kingdom of God does not come with observation; ²¹"nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you." ²²Then He said to the disciples, "The days will come when you will desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it. ²³"And they will say to you, 'Look here!' or 'Look there!' Do not go after *them* or follow *them*. ²⁴"For as the lightning that flashes out of one *part* under heaven shines to the other *part* under heaven, so also the Son of Man will be in His day. ²⁵"But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation. ²⁶"And as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: ²⁷"They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. ²⁸"Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; ²⁹"but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed *them* all. ³⁰"Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed. ³¹"In that day, he who is on the housetop, and his goods *are* in the house, let him not come down to take them away. And likewise the one who is in the field, let him not turn back. ³²"Remember Lot's wife. ³³"Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it. ³⁴"I tell you, in that night there will be two *men* in one bed: the one will be taken and the other will be left. ³⁵"Two *women* will be grinding together: the one will be taken and the other left. ³⁶"Two *men* will be in the field: the one will be taken and the other left." ³⁷And they answered and said to Him, "Where, Lord?" So He said to them, "Wherever the body is, there the eagles will be gathered together."

Luke 21

²⁹Then He spoke to them a parable: "Look at the fig tree, and all the trees. ³⁰"When they are already budding, you see and know for yourselves that summer is now near. ³¹"So you also, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near. ³²"Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all things take place. ³³"Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.

These four themes we have studied are entwined throughout prophecy.

- The *Day of the Lord* is seen as His irruption into history to bring *judgment*. This judgment has the dual aspects of punishment of the wicked and deliverance for the righteous.
- That Day brings "this present evil age" to a close and ushers in the *age to come* when the *kingdom of God* is established on earth.
- At the present time we see that some aspects of the Day of the Lord have already been fulfilled, and God's kingdom authority is already active in His church.
- But we look forward to that Day when Christ returns to finalize the work of redeeming the world, which He has begun.
- Seeing that the Day is near, "what manner *of persons* ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness"? (2 Pet. 3:11). How would you answer that inquiry?