

The Dawning of the Day

Mark 13.24-27

Scripture reading: Isaiah 13.6-16; 14.1-2

We are all familiar with D-Day – The Allied invasion that turned the tide in the Second World War.

“On the morning of 5 June 1944, U.S. General Dwight D. Eisenhower, the supreme commander of Allied forces in Europe gave the go-ahead for the largest amphibious military operation in history. On his orders, 6,000 landing craft, ships and other vessels carrying 176,000 troops began to leave England for the trip to France. That night, 822 aircraft filled with parachutists headed for drop zones in Normandy. An additional 13,000 aircraft were mobilized to provide air cover and support for the invasion.

“By dawn on 6 June, 18,000 parachutists were already on the ground; the land invasions began at 6.30am. The British and Canadians overcame light opposition to capture Gold, Juno and Sword beaches; so did the Americans at Utah. The task was much tougher at Omaha beach, however, where 2,000 troops were lost and it was only through the tenacity and quick-wittedness of troops on the ground that the objective was achieved. By day's end, 155,000 Allied troops--Americans, British and Canadians--had successfully stormed Normandy's beaches.”¹

Less than a year later, on 8 May 1945, the Germans surrendered unconditionally. This was VE-Day – but it wouldn't have happened without D-Day.

Now we are going to talk about a day and a victory infinitely more important. It, too, is the pivotal invasion in a war – the real War to end all Wars, also known as the Battle of Armageddon. This is not D-Day. This is The Day – a Day referenced repeatedly in the Old and New Testaments with hopeful, yet also dreadful, anticipation. The Day is the long awaited Day of Justice. The Day is the long awaited Day of Truth. The Day is the long awaited Day of Peace.

The Day is the Day of our Lord and of His Christ. The Lord God Omnipotent reigneth. Hallelujah.

Sermon in a Sentence: **At the dawning of The Day of Christ, all shadows flee away.**

Listen to how Jesus describes the Day of the Lord. It begins in shadowy darkness and ends in brilliant light.

Mark 13:24-27 (NKJV)

²⁴ “But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; ²⁵ the stars of heaven will fall, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. ²⁶ Then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. ²⁷ And then He will send His angels, and gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest part of earth to the farthest part of heaven.

¹ <http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/d-day> accessed on 6 July 2012

In this description, Jesus gives two important details about the Day of the Lord. He identifies when the Day dawns and Who it is that dawns the Day. Unlike D-Day, which caught the Germans by surprise, no-one should be caught sleeping when Jesus invades this dark world on The Day.

1. When the Day Dawns (vv 24-25)

These verses are part of a sermon, commonly called the Olivet Discourse because Jesus preached it on the Mt of Olives overlooking Jerusalem. The sermon began with two questions from four of Jesus' disciples.

Mark 13:4 (NKJV)

⁴ "Tell us, when will these things be? And what *will be* the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?"

Jesus now completes His answer to these questions.

When will these things be? Jesus says, firstly, it will be . . .

a. After the tribulation (v 24)

Earlier in this chapter, we heard Jesus talk about the signs for His coming. There are non-specific signs – earthquakes, famines, wars and persecution, which happen every year (vv 5-13) – and there are also specific signs – signs which only occur at the very end of the world. The specific signs will be the Abomination of Desolation (vv 14-18), the Great Tribulation of God's wrath poured out on the earth (vv 19-20), and the revealing of the Antichrist (vv 21-22).

These three – Abomination, Antichrist and Great tribulation – happen simultaneously and signal that the Day of the Lord has begun, and the final countdown to the return of Christ is nearing its end. The apostasy and suffering in those few years – three and a half years according to the prophet Daniel – will be unprecedented (see v 19).

While no-one will know the exact day or hour of Christ's coming, except the Father in heaven (see v 32), the tribulation itself will give an unmistakable indication that the Day is about to dawn.

As Jesus says in verse 24, His coming will be 'after the tribulation'.

Let me say something about this tribulation. It is revealed in Daniel that it lasts for a total of seven years (Daniel 9.25-27; 12.11), with the first half being relatively peaceful, and the second half being unspeakably horrible. That is why the second half – three and a half years – is called the Great Tribulation.

The horror of the tribulation is described in Revelation in great detail (see chapters 6-18). At first a quarter of all life on earth is wiped out – at today's population figures, that would be 1.75 billion people! Then a third are wiped out – another 1.75 billion people.

Do you see the horrifying scale of this? If we thought the Boxing Day tsunami was bad – with 225,000 people dying, this will be more than 15 000 times worse! Unimaginable.

Now some people object to this. God must be cruel to unleash such suffering, but this is actually a mercy. It is sin that kills. The tribulation is God's extreme call to repentance – and many will see the light, turn to Christ, and be saved before the final Day dawns.

Daniel 12:10 (NKJV)

¹⁰ Many shall be purified, made white, and refined, but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand.

Jesus tells us about these things in advance so that we might not be caught unprepared.

Mark 13:23 (NKJV)

²³ **But take heed; see, I have told you all things beforehand.**

The point is this. Wake up now! Don't play around with sin thinking you have plenty of time to sort it out later. The extreme warning that is the tribulation is escapable if you take action now. By all means, don't leave it too late . . . because when the Day dawns, there will be no more opportunity to be saved.

So, The Day begins with tribulation and ends with the coming of Christ. It is a day that begins in darkness and ends in glorious light. How dark is the darkness?.

b. During absolute darkness

Jesus says that the sun, moon and stars will be extinguished. No light at all. Absolute darkness.

Mark 13:24-25 (NKJV)

²⁴ **“But in those days . . . the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; ²⁵ the stars of heaven will fall, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.**

Some Bible commentators think this is figurative – the horrors of evil (Satan himself and his demonic hordes fallen from heaven) combined with the wrath of God, will so darken the world that not even the light of the sun, moon, and stars will cheer a person. Other commentators take this description to be literal – the sun, moon and stars will actually go dark. Personally, I think it will be both. Either way, we are talking about absolute chaos and terror.

Yet God cannot be blamed. For over 2500 years to date, humanity has been warned – repeatedly.

Isaiah 13:9-13 (NKJV)

⁹ Behold, 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. ¹⁰ For 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.**

¹¹ “I will punish the world for *its* evil, And the wicked for their iniquity; I will halt the arrogance of the proud, And will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible. ¹² **I will make a mortal more rare than fine gold,** A man more than the golden wedge of Ophir. ¹³

Therefore I will shake the heavens, And the earth will move out of her place, **In the wrath of the LORD of hosts And in the day of His fierce anger.**

Ezekiel 32:7-8 (NKJV)

⁷ **When I put out your light**, I will cover the heavens, and make its **stars dark**; I will cover the **sun with a cloud**, And the **moon shall not give her light**. ⁸ All the bright lights of the heavens **I will make dark** over you, And bring darkness upon your land,' Says the Lord GOD.

Joel 2:10 (NKJV)

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

Amos 8:9 (NKJV)

⁹ "And it shall come to pass in that day," says the Lord GOD, "That I will make **the sun go down at noon**, And I will **darken the earth in broad daylight**;

Acts 2:20 (NKJV) quoting Joel 2.31

²⁰ *The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD.*

2 Peter 3:10-12 (NKJV)

¹⁰ But 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**.

¹¹ Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner *of persons* ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, ¹² looking 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?

Revelation 6:12 (NKJV)

¹² I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the **sun became black as sackcloth of hair**, and the **moon became like blood**.

Absolute darkness – the sun, moon and stars extinguished – is significant, because humanity has always tended to look to the sun, moon and stars for truth and direction. Whether by worship – as primitive cultures do – bowing down to the Sun god. Or by evolutionary hypotheses based in a Big Bang (you may have read in the paper this week about the discovery of the tiniest particle, the Higgs boson, thought to have been the most basic building block of the evolved universe²). Or by the superstition of astrology, star signs and the like.

At the coming of Christ, all of this will be destroyed. The heavenly bodies will be thrown into disarray and darkness. Leaving only one light – the Light of the World.

² <http://www.smh.com.au/technology/sci-tech/the-higgs-particle--what-it-is-and-what-it-does-20120704-21gk1.html> accessed on 8 July 2012

Jesus alone deserves our worship. Jesus alone illuminates truth and direction. Seek Jesus – not evolutionary science, not pagan mythology, not new age mysticism (astrology) – before it is too late.

At the dawning of the Day of Christ, all shadows flee away.

Jesus answers the when question by describing the conditions occurring exclusively at His coming – after the tribulation and during absolute darkness.

Now Jesus speaks about the Light – His light, and the reflected light of His saints who come with Him on the Day of invasion and victory.

2. Who Dawns the Day

Jesus chooses an interesting title for Himself in verse 26.

a. The Son of Man

Mark 13:26 (NKJV)

²⁶ Then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory.

The title, Son of Man, emphasises three revolutionary characteristics of Jesus Christ.

- i. **Humanity.** He is the Son of Man – quite literally – being born of the virgin Mary. In His humanity, Jesus was sometimes mistaken as being ordinary – unlike the way He is typically portrayed in paintings (He did not have a halo). As a baby, He was gentle and non-threatening. As a young man, He was known locally as a carpenter. Even during His earthly ministry, many people could not see past His humanity to recognise His divinity.
- ii. **Redeemer.** But it was His humanity that made redemption a reality. The Son of Man came to give His life a ransom for many – and He could only do that by being a substitute for us. As the Son of Man, He died for all the sons of man.
- iii. **Victor.** But now in verse 26, this meaning is superseded by a final connotation. Jesus, the Son of Man, is the perfect man. Powerful. Glorious. Triumphant.

In this capacity, the Son of Man qualifies to reign forever as the fulfilment of God's promise to David – one of your descendants will be King of kings and Lord of lords.

And in this capacity, He judges the whole world. Consider these prophecies:

Mark 8:38 (NKJV)

³⁸ For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."

Daniel 7:13-14 (NKJV)

¹³ "I was watching in the night visions, And behold, *One* like the **Son of Man**,

Coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, And they brought Him near before Him. ¹⁴ Then **to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom**, That **all** peoples, nations, and languages **should serve Him**. His dominion *is* an everlasting dominion, Which shall not pass away, And His kingdom *the one* Which shall not be destroyed.

Revelation 1:7 (NKJV)

⁷ Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And **all the tribes of the earth** will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen.

He comes as the Son of Man. Humanity. Redeemer. Victor.

And with Him come His spoils . . .

b. The elect from every nation

Mark 13:27 (NKJV)

²⁷ **And then He will send His angels, and gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest part of earth to the farthest part of heaven.**

We might wonder who these elect might be. These are the people who have turned to Christ during the tribulation – a great multitude who are hiding out because the Antichrist has been hunting them. Now the angels gather them to ride with Christ in His final battle.

Thus, all believers of all ages are gathered together. The Church – which at this point will have already been in heaven having been raptured before the wrath of God was poured out (see 1 Thes 1.10; 4.13-18). The Old Testament saints, having been raised and gathered. And the Tribulation saints. All the elect from the farthest part of earth and heaven gathered to follow Christ in victory.

Do you want to know what The Day will be like? We don't have to guess. God tells us in . . .

Revelation 19:11-21 (NKJV)

¹¹ Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him *was* called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. ¹² His eyes *were* like a flame of fire, and on His head *were* many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. ¹³ He *was* clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God.

¹⁴ And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. ¹⁵ Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

¹⁶ And He has on *His* robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

¹⁷Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven, "Come and gather together for the supper of the great God, ¹⁸that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all *people*, free and slave, both small and great."

¹⁹And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. ²⁰Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. ²¹And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh.

Now is the time to wake up and be alert. Jesus, the Son of Man, is coming in great power and glory. Will you be coming with Him? I hope you will.

At the dawning of The Day of Christ, all shadows flee away.

We have seen two important details about that Day. When will it happen? After the tribulation and during absolute darkness. Who will bring it? Jesus, the Son of Man, leading His glorified saints.

It will be a brilliant day of light. All shadows will flee away.

The shadow of rebellion.

The shadow of pride.

The shadow of immorality.

The shadow of lies.

The shadow of selfishness.

The shadow of jealousy.

Oh, how horrible it will be if these are exposed in us on the Day of Christ! All that is wicked will be exposed by His Light!

But these are not the only shadows that the breaking of the dawn will chase away. For believers, the Day is hope and peace. For it will end . . .

The shadow of pain.

The shadow of guilt.

The shadow of death.

At the breaking of The Day of Christ, all shadows flee away. If that Day is today, will you be following Christ in victory? Or cowering before Him in defeat. Prepare for the Day while it is still today.