

THE ASSEMBLY MESSENGER

Proclaiming the Timeless Truth of the Church to a New Generation of Believers

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Dear Reader

There is great confusion as to the “days” of Scripture, some of which are literal 24 hour days or when it was light as opposed to when it was dark, and others are much longer. It doesn’t help that popular translations have used the wrong terms in a few but important instances. We trust the following interesting article by Leslie M. Grant will help clear up some of the confusion. He begins with the term “Sabbath Day.”

This is our last *Assembly Messenger* on prophetic matters. Why have we included prophecy in our studies of the Church? Well, they seem to go together. The understanding of prophecy is needed to see the wonderful future the Church has with Christ in the *Tribulation* when she “makes herself ready” (Rev.19:7) at the Judgment Seat of Christ; when she is “married” to Christ (19:7-9) and then comes out of heaven with Him (19:11-16) to reign with Him during the Millennium (Rev.20:4); and finally as His eternal bride (Rev.21:1-4). When God recovered so much of the truth concerning His Church or Assembly in the 1800’s, He at the same time opened up prophetic events which also had been hidden or lost for about 1500 years. People for the first time, virtually since the days of the apostles, clearly saw their heavenly future instead of an uncertain, vague earthly future which had been promised to Israel in the Old Testament. Brother Leslie

IMPORTANT “DAYS” OF SCRIPTURE

The Sabbath Day

The seventh literal 24 hour day of each week was set aside from the other days of the week and given to *Israel* as a special observance. It was never given to Gentiles, but Exodus 31:12-18 insists that *Israel* was to keep this day holy. For the Lord says, “It is a sign between Me and Israel forever” (v.17).

Though in *Christendom* [professed Christianity; Christ’s “kingdom”] there has been an effort to designate the first day of the week as the Christian’s Sabbath, this is not true, for the Sabbath is the seventh day, and the responsibilities of keeping it are confined to the nation of Israel. The one message in the New Testament epistles concerning the Sabbath tells believers plainly, “Let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or Sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ” (Col.2:16-17). Thus the Sabbath was a shadow of that which is far better than itself, that is, God’s eternal rest.

Some so emphasize the Sabbath that they call themselves *Seventh Day Adventists*. They strongly insist that Christians should keep the Law and especially the Sabbath. They seek to judge those who insist believers are not under the Law, but under grace, denouncing all who do not observe the Sabbath. They are right in recognizing the last day of the week as the Sabbath, but are wrong in pressing the Sabbath on Christians! The Lord’s Day, the first day of the week, was when Christians gathered together to break bread (Acts 20:7). No law demands we keep it, for Christians are under grace (Rom.6:14), and the grace of the Lord Jesus draws Christians to specially honor the Lord on that resurrection-day.

The Lord’s Day

This term is found only in Revelation 1:10 where John said, “I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day.” Certainly this was not a protracted period of time, so we must consider it a literal day. Since it is emphatically the “Lord’s Day,” then it is not the Sabbath, but the first day of the week, the day on which the Lord is specially honored, for it celebrates His resurrection.

It is significant that on the Sabbath day He was in the grave. His own people Israel had rejected and crucified Him, so on their holy day their true Messiah was buried out of sight! Of course they should have welcomed Him, but their Sabbath day bore witness to their cruel refusal of the One who had come in grace with the object of blessing them. But God raised Him from the dead – not on the Sabbath day, but on the first day of the week. How beautifully significant is this *new beginning*! The first day of the week, which could also be referred to as the eighth day, was the beginning of a new era, and eight is the number in Scripture of new beginning. See John 20:26.

The Law *required* the observance of the Sabbath (Ex.20:8-11), but no law requires the observance of the first day of the week. Why? Because in the present age of grace, we are not under law, but under grace (Rom.6:14). Grace however leads us to deeply desire to be pleasing to the Lord, and He indicated what was His pleasure by appearing to His disciples on the first day of the week, when they were glad to see the Lord (Jn.20:20). That day is later called “the Lord’s Day” (Rev.1:10), and on that day, the first day of the week, we read of the disciples being gathered together to break bread (Acts 20:7). This surely indicates that it had become their custom to break bread on that day, not because it was a law, but because it was pleasing to the Lord.

How good it is to have such a day in which the Lord's interests are paramount, and to seek wholeheartedly to please Him! It is not a day of rest – a Sabbath – but a day of activity for Him.

It may be questioned whether “the Lord's Day” can be shown decisively to be the first day of the week. John was in the Spirit on that day (Rev.1:1) and we've seen it certainly was not for a long period of time as “day” sometimes indicates, but it must have been a literal day when John was specially laid hold of by the Spirit of God for a particular purpose. If then a literal day, must we not consider it to be the day when the Lord is honored, when His death is remembered, the day He rose from the dead! I believe the three expressions are intended by the Lord to be wonderfully connected – “the Lord's death” (1 Cor.11:26), “the Lord's Supper” (1 Cor.11:20) and “the Lord's Day” (Rev.1:1). These expressions are associated with “the first day of the week.”

The Day of Christ

This is an expression used just once in Scripture (Phil.1:10), “that you may approve things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ.” This does not speak of the *Lord's Day* which occurs each week, or of the *Day of the Lord* which is the future day of His great manifestation. Rather, it evidently refers to the end of the Christian dispensation when Christ (His title as raised and glorified) will bring believers into His own presence in glory at the Rapture. Wonderful day indeed! In view of it, may we truly seek by grace to be sincere and without offense. Bob Costen adds similar references in 1 Corinthians 1:8, 2 Corinthians 1:14 and Philippians 1:6; 2:16, using slightly different wording.

Your Day

The Lord Jesus, when on earth, used this expression once when entering the city of Jerusalem just before His arrest and crucifixion, saying when weeping over Jerusalem, “If you had known, especially in this *your day*, the things that make for your peace, but now they are hidden from your eyes” (Lk.19:42). The coming of the Lord Jesus to the nation of Israel was a marvelous day for them, their day of opportunity. But they were willingly ignorant. “His own received Him not.” At Jerusalem He was led outside the city and crucified! Well might the Lord of glory weep (Lk.19:41). He was not weeping for Himself, but for Jerusalem.

The Day of the Lord

The Day of the Lord is spoken of various times in Scripture, both in the Old and New Testaments (Isa.2:12; 13:6;

Joel 1:15; 2:1,11; Zech.14:1; Mal.4:5; 1 Thes.5:2; 2 Thes.2:2; 2 Pet.3:10).

This day is still future and embraces a considerable length of time. It looks forward beyond the Rapture to the time when the Lord Jesus will at long last take His rightful place of prominence and authority over both Israel and the entire world. It is a most striking answer to what Paul calls “*man's day*” in 1 Corinthians 4:3 (JND): “But for me it is the very smallest matter that I be examined of you or of man's day.” God has allowed man his day for many centuries, so man has had fullest opportunity to show what are the results of his domination. Who could even think of being satisfied with such results? One is voted in with great expectations and voted out again with great disgust! Another takes his place with the same eventual consequences. Meanwhile the condition of the whole world becomes worse and worse morally and spiritually.

But “the Day of the LORD,” often simply called “that Day,” will not be introduced by popular vote. In fact, God will intervene suddenly and decidedly in a way that will not be welcomed by earthly rulers. This is made clear the first time the Day of the LORD is mentioned in Scripture: “For the day of the LORD of hosts shall come upon everything proud and lofty, upon everything lifted up – And it shall be brought low The loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of man shall be brought low; The LORD alone will be exalted in that day” (Isa.2:12-17).

When will that day come? 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4 settles this. Speaking of “the day of the Lord” (the proper translation of verse 2, not “the day of Christ” as in the KJV and NKJV), we are told, “that day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who 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.” So these things have to occur *before* the Day of the Lord begins.

This man of sin is the antichrist and false prophet. After the Rapture, he will rise in Israel, at first appearing to be an orthodox worshiper of God, as we read in Psalm 55:12-14, “For it is not an enemy who reproaches me; then I could bear it. Nor is it one who hates me who has exalted himself against me; then I could hide from him. But it was you, a man my equal, my companion and my acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked to the house of God in the throng.”

Thus he will not be revealed for the evil person he really is until near the middle of Daniel's seventieth week (the seven-year Tribulation Period) when he will turn against the remnant with whom he had consorted at first, and welcome the political Beast of the revived Roman Empire as

his friend and partner in crime. At that time he will erect an image in honor of the Roman Beast in the temple area of Jerusalem, with orders that those who would not worship the image should be killed (Rev.13:11-15). The Lord Jesus calls this image “the abomination of desolation ... standing in the holy place” (Mt.24:15), and warns Israelites then to flee from the city, for it is then that, because of the bold challenge of the [Roman] Beast and the false prophet, the Lord will intervene by sending the King of the North against Israel, as Joel 2:1-11 describes. This is the beginning of the Day of the Lord.”

At this time people will be so greatly deluded by the alliance of the Beast and the antichrist that they will think no one can make war with the Beast, so that now, at long last they have brought peace and safety to a troubled world! But, “when they shall say ‘peace and safety,’ then *sudden destruction* shall come upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape” (1 Thes.5:3). The Lord intervenes, according to Joel 2:11, calling it the Day of the Lord, by sending “His army” against Israel. From Daniel 11:40-45 we see this army is the King of the North (an army from the area of Iran, Iraq and Syria) which sweeps through Israel into Egypt, only to come back to Jerusalem as news from the east and north troubles him.

This sending of “His army” at the time of the end (Dan.11:40) will begin “the day of the Lord.” For this is the time when these two haters of God will have publicly and boldly challenged the God of heaven and earth, and the Lord puts an end to it. They have their day for practically a few moments, and then the day of the Lord comes on them suddenly and terribly. “They shall not escape.” In fact, being caught red-handed in rebellion against God, these two will not even require a trial, but will be thrown into the Lake of Fire, the first occupants of that fearful eternal prison called “hell” (Rev.19:20). “The LORD alone will be exalted in that Day” (Isa.2:17).

Some may believe the day of the Lord begins when the Lord’s feet stand on the Mount of Olives and He personally, physically, intervenes on earth. I have shown you why I believe it begins some length of time before that great event of His “appearing.”

How Long Does the Day of the Lord Last?

2 Peter 3:10 answers this question for us: “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.” Beginning after the middle of Daniel’s seventieth week, the day of the Lord will continue throughout the Millennium, to the judgment of the Great White throne and the remaking of the heavens and earth. Thus it will last more than 1000 years. “With the

Lord, one day is as a thousand years ...” (2 Pet.3:8). William Kelly puts it this way: “God takes the world under His *direct* government, first for putting down evil, then for the maintenance and spread of that which is good.” The Lord takes His place of absolute authority, and when He brings all creation into fullest subjection, then He will deliver the kingdom to His Father, that *God* (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) may be all in all (1 Cor.15:24-28).

The Day of God

Peter speaks of this day, “Looking for and hastening the coming of the *day of God*” (2 Pet.3:12). He refers also to what he had said in verse 10, but adds, “Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for a new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells” (2 Pet.3:13). Thus it appears that the Day of God refers to the eternal rest of God which will no longer require the enforcing of authority, as the Day of the Lord does. In the Millennium, a King will *reign* in righteousness, but in eternity, righteousness will *dwell* (2 Pet.3:13).

Thus, the believer is not only to look forward to the Rapture, nor only to the day of the Lord’s manifestation in glorious power, but to look for and *hasten* the coming of the day of God. How can we do this? Certainly it will come only in God’s time, and our wishes cannot hasten its actual accomplishment. In fact, the Greek word *spewdo* has the thought of “with haste, earnestly desiring, eagerly awaiting, urge on.” Evidently the thought here is “earnestly desiring” or “eagerly awaiting.” Ought we not always have the attitude of longing to welcome the coming of that wonderful day? For nothing short of this will ever satisfy us completely. Then, too, God will rest in His love and joy over us with singing (Zeph.3:17).

Leslie M. Grant

Bob Costen suggests the following summary:

The Lord’s Day – the first day of the week to remember the Lord in the breaking of bread (Acts 20:7). Also the birthday of the Assembly.

The Day of Christ – The coming of the Lord (Rapture) for His own.

The Day of the Lord – Begins after the middle of the Tribulation and goes through the Millennium; a terrible day of judgment, called the day of Jacob’s trouble (Joel 2:2,11,31; Mal.4:1) and then a day of great blessing.

The Day of God (2 Pet.3:12) – Righteousness dwells; God rests in His love; new heavens and a new earth.

The Day of Grace or the Holy Spirit’s Day – The present time, the Church being called out, with a Man in the glory and the Holy Spirit on earth, indwelling believers.

Bob also mentions The Day of the Spirit and the Day of Grace (Jn.14:20 and 16:23,26).

We've seen in brother Leslie's article that the word *day* is used for the length of time of a 24-hour day to over 1000 years. The word *day* occurs hundreds of times in the Word of God, and it *usually* means all or part of a 24 hour day. Its first occurrences are in Genesis 1 concerning the six days of God's work to *remake* the earth. It would seem by the reading, "the evening and the morning" were "the first day," "the second day," etc., that literal 24 hour days are meant. Brother Leslie takes this view. On the seventh day God rested, and it is not said then "evening and morning" was the seventh day. The view for many years of many fundamentalist Christians is that these literal days are symbolical of six actual dispensations of God, and the seventh day pictures God's eternal rest, eternity, which is without limit, therefore without evening and morning as such. In discussing this with brother Leslie, he stated, "If the days here refer to longer periods than a 24 hour day, then when did God introduce literal days? Surely the result of God's speaking was immediate."

In Genesis 2:4-5, "day" (Hebrew *yom*) is used evidently for all creation from Genesis 1:1 through the creation of man. "These are the histories [generations] of the heavens and the earth, when they were created, in the *day* that Jehovah Elohim made earth and heavens, and every herb of the field before it grew..." (JND translation). Here "day" evidently covers a considerable length of time. But even here, there is controversy among committed Christians, for many today take the 6 days as not a *refitting* of the earth, but *inclusive* of Genesis 1:1. Even with *that* view, "day" in Genesis 2:4-5 is at least 6 "24-hour days" long.

There is no interpretation of Scripture that disagrees more completely with the scientific community than either of the above views of Genesis chapters 1 and 2. If it simply was the evolutionary community that disagreed, we could easily dismiss it as an attempt to provide "time" for evolution to have taken place. But many true scientists who are solid Christians, who absolutely believe in creation, not evolution, say that *creation* occurred in the *order* given in Genesis 1-2, but over much longer geological time periods than 24 hour days. They would also tell us that the material earth is in the range of 4-5 billion years old, with the so-called "big bang" occurring some 14 billion years ago, give or take a couple billion years.

Is there any possibility that our interpretation of the inspired Hebrew words of Genesis 1-2 is too narrow, or is the scientific community *that* wrong? Very possibly it is that wrong! Both certainly can't be right, and we accept the *Scriptures* as being right, in the original language and as God meant the words. But our *interpretations* of what is meant *could* be in error, for the words are few that we base our interpretation on. Brother Leslie suggests that even believing scientists may be hard pressed to accept certain scientific beliefs even if the evidence is non-conclusive.

As to the apparent old age of the earth and the universe, brother Leslie says that Genesis 1:1 "stands alone in all its grandeur" for "we certainly have no idea as to when [the original] creation took place, nor what action took place to bring the earth to a state of 'without form and void.' It was only after the earth became [or, was] void, with darkness on the face of the depth, that God began His new work by the introduction of light. If therefore the earth is billions or trillions of years old, only God knows."

I (not brother Leslie) recognize the *remote possibility* of the six "days" being longer than 24 hours, for the Hebrew words translated "evening" (Hebrew *ereb*) and "morning" (Hebrew *boger*) *can* mean simply the beginning and ending of whatever time period "day" represented. They evidently don't *have* to be literally when it begins to get dark and when it begins to get light, as we (and Scripture) normally use the words. For example, in Job 11:17 *boger* (morning) is used as the "dawn of prosperity" (Gesenius' Hebrew Lexicon). And we've seen in brother Leslie's article that "day" often means a time period longer than 24 hours. But if this is how God used the Hebrew words in Genesis 1, wouldn't He have given us a clue somewhere in Scripture?

The 24 hour day is the firm belief of the so-called "young earth creationists." Many books are available to support this theory from authors such as Henry M. Morris and Dr. John C. Whitcomb. A very interesting book by an evangelical Christian astronomer is "Creation and Time" by Dr. Hugh Ross. He supports the theory of longer than 24 hour "days" in Genesis 1, while strongly supporting creation and utterly denying evolution. But the fact is, we cannot settle this argument until the Lord gives us the details in a day to come. Those details will support the words of Genesis 1.

I have included this long discussion of literal days because it has created so much "heat" in the Christian community and so little "light." The fact is, no matter how strongly we may feel about the so called "creation week," there are some things we cannot absolutely prove. And things we can't prove are unimportant to living our lives pleasing to our Lord! My recommendation is to be convinced of God's *creation* of the material universe and of life, including human life (which is plainly stated without the possibility of misinterpretation), and thoroughly reject the theory of evolution or any other theory that leaves God out of any creation. But the *timing* of these creation events really is unimportant. There are so many more-spiritually-profitable studies for us to devote our limited time to! Spend your physical, mental and emotional energy *there*!

RPD