

The Day of the Lord in the Prophets

Part 1

A Day of Judgement upon the People of God

It was dark, a darkness so thick that it could be felt. So dark that they had to grope about with their hands out in front of them so that they might not trip or stumble. Even in familiar surroundings it must have been hard. The fear and anxiety must have been intense within the minds of the Egyptian people because of this unnatural darkness.

Yahweh had declared to His servant Moses, "Stretch out your hand toward the sky, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt. So Moses stretched out his hand and there was thick darkness in all the land of Egypt for three days. They did not see one another, nor did anyone rise from his place for three days, but all the sons of Israel had light in their dwellings (cf. Ex. 10:21-23)."

From generation to generation this story of the triumph of the covenant God of Israel had been passed down. How the Lord of redemption had fulfilled His promise to deliver them from the hands of bondage to an Egyptian tyrant, and had formed a nation that He desired to dwell among.

They had been instructed to teach it diligently to their sons, that each successive generation might know the deliverance of their Sovereign God. The newly formed nation was to enter a land "full of great and splendid cities" which they did not build, and "houses full of good things" which they did not fill. There would be cisterns they did not dig, and vineyards and olive trees, which they did not plant, and they were to eat and be satisfied. Yet this promise came with the solemn warning, "then watch yourselves, lest you forget the Lord who brought you from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall fear only the Lord your God; and you shall worship Him, and swear by His name. You shall not follow other gods, any of the gods of the peoples who surround you, for the Lord your God in the midst of you is a jealous God; otherwise the anger of the Lord your God will be kindled against you, and He will wipe you off the face of the earth (cf. Deut. 6:4-15)."

The years passed and Israel had gone through cycle after cycle of sin, rebellion, and repentance. They had reveled in their pleasures and had followed after all the gods of the land of Canaan. Yet it was common among the people to declare that there would be a day coming. This would be a day of joy when God would finally deliver them from the hand of all their enemies. This day they referred to as the "Day of the LORD." They looked to this day as a day of light, when justice would be brought to them. Yet there was such a dearth concerning the knowledge of the Lord that the people of God didn't even understand their depravity.

Yes there had been times of revival in Israel; Jacob had destroyed his family's household idols and had built an altar to the Lord in Genesis 35:1-7. The prophet Samuel, after the ark had returned to Israel, urged the people to turn from their foreign gods and to obey the Lord in 1 Sam 7:3-6. King Asa had torn down idols and removed

cult practices in Judah. Later encouraged by the prophet Azariah, Asa commanded the people to renew their covenant vows to the Lord in 2 Chron. 14-15. King Hezekiah reopened the Temple, restored sacrifices, and re-instituted the Passover feast as seen in 2 Chron. 29-31. King Josiah removed idol worship throughout Judah and publicly proclaimed God's word in the presence of Judah's leaders, shown in 2 Chron. 34.¹ Yet because of the influence of the surrounding Pagan religions, due to the fact that Israel had never completed the purge of the Promised Land, the reforms did not have a lasting effect upon the hearts of God's people.

The land was divided between north and south, kingdom against kingdom and king against king. The leaders were corrupt, and the people of the land were daily doing violence to the covenant. By the time of the prophet Amos in 760 BC, the people were still speaking of a day to come when the promised seed, the Messiah, would appear to take the kingdom, and God would bring judgement upon Israel's and Judah's enemies. The echo went throughout the land, "the Day of the LORD is coming," from father to son, and brother to brother. Yet to the people, the prophet Amos spoke the word of the Lord.

Alas, you who are longing for the day of the Lord, for what purpose will the day of the Lord be to you? It will be darkness and not light; as when a man flees from a lion and a bear meets him, or goes home, leans his hand against the wall, and a snake bites him. Will not the day of the Lord be darkness instead of light, even gloom with no brightness in it (NASB Amos 5:18-20)?

The people envisioned the day of the LORD to be as in the time of Moses when God would divide the light from the darkness and good from evil. They wanted vindication, not judgement. They were living by their stories rather than by the tenets of the covenant. But the prophet declared that there would be no way to escape what was coming. If they would elude one tragedy another would overtake them. God would have His day and His righteousness would prevail.

In the Bible light represents the knowledge of the LORD. The Word of God gives us direction and makes us accountable, as we see in Psalm 119:105.

Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path (NASB)

Conversely, then, darkness represents a lack of understanding, which was what the people of Amos' time were walking in. Certainly darkness can only be known when compared to light, as evil can only be known when compared to good. If there is only evil in a society, and one has nothing to compare it to but more evil, then evil would seem the right course of action. It is the same with darkness. The people of Amos' generation had evil to compare to evil, and dark to dark. The principle is, if we learn what is right or wrong based on what society dictates we have no absolute morality. If society changes its mind, we feel we can change ours as well without accountability. But the dictates of God are absolute. He had made it perfectly clear to His people what He demanded and the people had agreed to uphold their side of the covenant, stating, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do (Ex. 19:8)." Yet the time was so dark that darkness seemed right, and for the majority of the people evil seemed good. This is because they based their opinions on those around them rather than the Word of God.

In Jeremiah, chapter twenty-three we see the Lord's declaration against a corrupt leadership.

Woe to the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of My pasture!" declares the LORD. Therefore thus says the LORD God of Israel concerning the shepherds who are tending My people: You have scattered My flock and driven them away, and have not attended to them; behold, I am about to attend to you for the evil of your deeds, declares the LORD (Jer 23:1-2 NASU).

Continuing in the same chapter judgement is also spoken against the false prophets and the priesthood.

As for the prophets: my heart is broken within me, all my bones tremble; I have become like a drunken man, even like a man overcome with wine, because of the LORD and because of His holy words. For the land is full of adulterers; for the land mourns because of the curse. The pastures of the wilderness have dried up. Their course also is evil and their might is not right. For both prophet and priest are polluted; even in My house I have found their wickedness, declares the LORD (Jer 23:9-11, cf. vs. 12-40; Ezek 13:1-7; NASU).

This is why God called prophets to declare in their hour, that the people might have a watershed. It was the word of God, spoken through the Prophet of God, that divided the light from the darkness, and the evil from good. This is what brought the people accountability. It was the grace of God that caused Him to give the people the opportunity to repent, and also it allowed God to remain just in His decision to bring judgement, if the people did not respond.

Speaking of Amos 5:18, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* explains that the people, "regarded their election as the guarantee of the Lord's favor. But their moral vision was blurred. They failed to see the Day of the Lord as the time when God will judge all sin—even theirs. They named Yahweh but did not obey His precepts. For these people, Amos said, that coming day will be one of darkness."²

The Word of the Lord, through Amos, brought the people into accountability. Scholars believe that this is the first time that the phrase, "The Day of the LORD" is used in scripture. The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible puts it this way.

The Expression was evidently current in the time of Amos in the 8th century BC, indicating the time when Yahweh would avenge His people on their enemies. Amos turns it back on those who use it, for the day will bring judgement upon sinful Israel as well (Amos 5:18-20; 6:3; 8:9; chs. 1 and 2). Already Amos' vision of the day oscillates between battles, natural disasters and supernatural calamities, but he ends on a note of hope. The day will usher in a new age (9:11f, which is interpreted christologically in Acts 15:16f.).³

The Interpretation Commentary puts it this way:

The prophets put a new twist on the message. Beginning with Amos, they announced that on the Day of the Lord, God would turn His warfare not only against Israel's enemies but also against Israel herself as punishment for her sin. This is seen in Zeph 1; Amos 5:18-20; Isa 2:6-22; Ezek 7:5-27; Joel 1:15; 2:1-11; Mal 4:5; cf. Lam 2:1, 21-22; Ezek 34:12.⁴

As we see the first use of the phrase is an indictment on God's own people. They had broken the covenant in numerous ways, and had chosen selfishness over mercy. From oppressing the poor to seeking after other gods, and from theft to bribery, they had become self-indulgent and irresponsible before God.

Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from My sight. Cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, reprove the ruthless, defend the orphan, plead for the widow (Isa 1:16-17 NASU).

Compare the above with the following verses.

How the faithful city has become a harlot, she who was full of justice! Righteousness once lodged in her, but now murderers. Your silver has become dross, your drink diluted with water. Your rulers are rebels and companions of thieves; everyone loves a bribe and chases after rewards. They do not defend the orphan, nor does the widow's plea come before them (Isa 1:21-23 NASU).

In the New Testament we see this concept carried forward in 1 Peter 4:17 where the Apostle states:

For it is time for judgement to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God (NASB)?

A Day of Punishment upon the Nations

What of the nations, will they continue with impunity? Will a righteous God, who holds His people accountable, also take the surrounding nations to task? Are they not also an affront to a Holy God? Don't the scriptures declare, "He shall judge among the heathen (marg. Nations or Gentiles), He shall fill the places with the dead bodies; He shall wound the heads over many countries (KJV Psm 10:6)."

The Prophet Jeremiah received the word of Yahweh in his time, directly addressing the judgement on the nations as well as upon the children of God.

Then the Lord said to me, "Now tell them, The Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Drink from this cup of My anger. Get drunk and vomit, and you will fall to rise no more, for I am sending terrible wars against you." And if they refuse to accept the cup, tell them, "The Lord Almighty says: You must drink from it. You cannot escape! I have begun to punish Jerusalem, the city where My own name is honored. Now should I let you go unpunished? No, you will not escape disaster. I will call for war against all the nations of the earth. I, the Lord Almighty, have spoken (Jer 25:27-29 NLT)."

About twenty years after Amos spoke his oracle to the Northern Kingdom of Israel the Prophet Isaiah appeared at approximately 740 BC. Chapters thirteen through twenty-three contain his oracles against the nations.

Wail, for the day of the LORD is near! It will come as destruction from the Almighty. Therefore all hands will fall limp, and every man's heart will melt. They will be terrified, pains and anguish will take hold of them; they will writhe like a woman in labor, they will look at one another in astonishment, their faces aflame. Behold, the day of the LORD is coming, cruel, with fury and burning anger, to make the land a desolation; and He will exterminate its sinners from it. For the stars of heaven and their constellations will not flash forth their light; the sun will be dark when it rises and the moon will not shed its light. Thus I will punish the world for its evil and the wicked for their iniquity; I will also put an end to the arrogance of the proud, and abase the haughtiness of the ruthless (Isa 13:6-11 NASU; cf. "The Judgment on the Nations" in Amos 1:2-2:5).

The prophet Obadiah lived in the time of the divided kingdom as well, from 841-825 BC, about one hundred years before the time of Isaiah. His oracle speaks of the LORD'S judgement upon the land of Edom. The prophecy primarily speaks of two interrelated themes: the destruction of Edom, and the vindication of Judah.⁵ Still we see in verse fifteen of this small book a declaration of judgement against all nations.

For the day of the LORD draws near on all the nations. As you have done, it will be done to you. Your dealings will return on your own head (NASB)

The Pulpit Commentary says of this verse, "This is not primarily the final day of judgment, but the time when Jehovah reveals His majesty and omnipotence in a glorious manner, to overthrow all ungodly powers, and to complete His kingdom" (Keil)⁶

For the day is near, even the day of the LORD is near;
It will be a day of clouds, a time of doom for the nations (Ezek 30:3 NASU).

On the above verse *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* states, "There is a tendency to take the phrase "the day of the LORD" and make it a technical theological phrase with a single meaning. This idiom and the phrase "a day of clouds" often refer to the Day of the Lord at history's end, when God will execute final judgement and blessing on Israel and the nations. However, the day of the Lord" may be any specific time period when God is doing a special work. Such appears the case in this passage. The context demonstrates that this "day of the Lord" relates specifically to God's judgment on Egypt through the instrumentality of Babylonia. The specific geographical terminology from Ezekiel's day was used, and Nebuchadnezzar was declared to be the agent of judgment. In addition the event is called a "day of Egypt" (v9), limiting the judgment to Egypt and her satellites alone. It does occur during the "time of doom for the nation" (v.3), when Babylonia would bring God's wrath on those nations that had in some manner "cursed" Israel (cf. Gen 12:3; Ezek 25:32; Jer 25, 27, 45-48)." ⁷

God must bring the nations under His authority at "that day" if He is to prove Himself the Sovereign God of all creation. Yet the people of the covenant must first be held responsible, for He had revealed Himself to them in a personal way, so also must He finally be seen as the Lord of all the earth.

In *Baker's Dictionary of Theology's* article on Eschatology it is stated: "The psalmists and prophets recognized that, while Yahweh's kingship was already exercised in so many ways, the reality fell far short of what they knew to be the ideal. Yahweh's sovereignty

did not receive due acknowledgment even in Israel, not to speak of those nations which had never known him. This disparity between the actual and the ideal would not endure forever; on the day of Yahweh His righteous kingship would be universally acknowledged, and the earth would be filled with “the knowledge of the Lord (Isa 11:9; cf. Hab 2:14).” On that day, said a later prophet, “the Lord will become king over all the earth; on that day the Lord will be one and His name one (Zech 14:9).”⁸

The terms “The Day of the LORD,” and “In that day,” “the day of the wrath of Yahweh,” can indicate a time contemporary to the prophet delivering the message, where the people or the nations will be visited by God’s holiness for correction, discipline, or destruction, in the immediate future. The prophecy can also have, not only a literal fulfillment shortly after the time spoken, but can telescope into a distant manifestation, either a century away, or even at the consummation of the ages, where Christ will be declared “King of kings and Lord of lords.”

Part 2

Holy War

We have seen that the day of the Lord had implications towards Israel, as well as towards the pagan nations of the earth, and that Yahweh would show Himself strong by displaying His sovereign righteousness to the people of His creation. Now let’s take a look at our subject more thoroughly.

The following is taken from the *Interpretation Commentary*.

The day of the LORD has its roots in the ancient theology of Israel’s holy wars which were conducted in the period of the tribal league 1220-1020 BC, and up through the time of Saul, 1020-1000 BC. According to fixed or sacred rules the Lord was the “Divine Warrior” in such battles, leading the hosts of Israel, in fact winning the battles for them with weapons of cosmic thunder (1 Sam 7:10), falling stones (Josh 10:11), darkness (Ex 14:20; Josh 24:7), water and earthquake (Jud 5:4-5). Most important, the Lord inspired terror and panic among the enemy (Ex 15:14-16, 23:27; Josh 2:9, 24; 5:1; 7:5), leading them to bring about their own destruction. See Deuteronomy for the rules of war (Deut Chapter 20). Divine warfare forms the background of Amos’ entire message, most of Jeremiah’s and Zephaniah 1:2-3:8.⁹

God is pictured as the **Divine Warrior**, particularly in Zephaniah, as well as in several other passages. The principle is seen in Deuteronomy where Israel is taught the rules of war.

He shall say to them, "Hear, O Israel, you are approaching the battle against your enemies today. Do not be fainthearted. Do not be afraid, or panic, or tremble before them, for the LORD your God is the one who goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you (Deut 20:3-4 NASU).

Because of the evoking of the “Covenant Curse,” against the people of Israel the Divine warrior will justly declare war upon them. They had agreed to the stipulations and yet had never been faithful to it other than for only short periods of time.

It will come about at that time that I will search Jerusalem with lamps, and I will punish the men who are stagnant in spirit, who say in their hearts, 'The LORD will not do good or evil!' Moreover, their wealth will become plunder and their houses desolate; yes, they will build houses but not inhabit them, and plant vineyards but not drink their wine (Zeph 1:12-13 NASU).”

The phrase “stagnant in spirit” is literally “thickening on their lees (cf. Jer 48:11).” If the wine is not poured into another vessel it becomes thick and syrupy on the lees; too sweet and subject to mold. We see the meaning in their saying, “the Lord will not do good or evil,” they believed God was no longer concerned about this world (Ezek 8:12, 9:9). Therefore there were no consequences to be paid.¹⁰ And so the covenant curse was spoken over the land. “They will build houses but not inhabit them, and plant vineyards but not drink their wine (Zeph 1:13).”

The covenant curse is seen in the following scriptures.

You shall betroth a wife, but another man will violate her; you shall build a house, but you will not live in it; you shall plant a vineyard, but you will not use its fruit (Deut 28:30 NASU).

You shall plant and cultivate vineyards, but you will neither drink of the wine nor gather the grapes, for the worm will devour them. You shall have olive trees throughout your territory but you will not anoint yourself with the oil, for your olives will drop off (Deut 28:39-40 NASU; cf. Amos 5:11; Mic 6:15).

As we continue in Zephaniah the Lord now declares the beginning of His “holy war” against His people starting with the “battle cry of the Lord (cf. Isa 42:13; Jer 25:28-31).”

Near is the great day of the LORD, near and coming very quickly; listen, the day of the LORD! In it the warrior cries out bitterly. A day of wrath is that day, a day of trouble and distress, a day of destruction and desolation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of trumpet and battle cry, against the fortified cities and the high corner towers (Zeph 1:14 NASU).”

The following are more verses showing the principle of the “Divine Warrior.”

The LORD your God is in your midst, a victorious warrior.
He will exult over you with joy; He will be quiet in His love,
He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy (Zeph 3:17 NASU).

But the LORD is with me like a dread champion; therefore my persecutors will stumble and not prevail. They will be utterly ashamed, because they have failed, with an everlasting disgrace that will not be forgotten (Jer 20:11 NASU).

Yes, truth is lacking; and he who turns aside from evil makes himself a prey.
Now the LORD saw, and it was displeasing in His sight that there was no justice.

And He saw that there was no man, and was astonished that there was no one to intercede; then His own arm brought salvation to Him, and His righteousness upheld Him. He put on righteousness like a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on His head;

and He put on garments of vengeance for clothing and wrapped Himself with zeal as a mantle. According to their deeds, so He will repay, wrath to His adversaries, recompense to His enemies; to the coastlands He will make recompense (Isa 59:15-18 NASU)

(cf. Isa 63:1-6, 66:15-16; Zech 14:3; Joel 2:11; cf. Eph 6:10-17).

Before the Lord declares war on His people the Prophet Zephaniah cries out,

Be silent before the Lord God! For the day of the LORD is near, For the LORD has prepared a sacrifice, He has consecrated His guests. Then it will come about on the day of the LORD'S sacrifice, that I will punish the princes, the king's sons, and all who clothe themselves with foreign garments (Zeph 1:7-8 NASB).

The Interpretation Commentary notes, "This was the priests cry before sacrifice. The day of the LORD comes from the tradition of a holy war, where the sacrifice came at the end of the battle (cf. Deut 30:16-18; 25:17-19; 1 Sam 15:3; Jer 46:10, 50:26-27; Isa 34:5-7), but the battle had not begun in Zephaniah. The sacrifice in 1:7, therefore, is that which always proceeded "the holy war (cf. 1 Sam 13:9; 2 Sam 15:12), when soldiers were consecrated for battle (Zeph 1:7; Isa 13:3; cf. "prepare for war" in Jer 6:4, 22:7, 51:27)."

¹¹ After the sacrifice the war cry was heard, and the battle would commence, just as now the covenant God was about to begin a battle against His people, and the nations.

Part 3

Nuts and Bolts

As the title of this section implies, I thought it pertinent to take a more detailed look at one of the words in the phrase "The Day of the LORD."

The word "Day" in the Hebrew is yom (yome); from an unused root meaning to be hot; a day (as the warm hours), whether literal (from sunrise to sunset, or from one sunset to the next), or figurative (a space of time defined by an associated term), [often used adverb]. The following shows the different way it is translated in the King James Bible according to the Strongs concordance.

KJV-age, + always, + chronicals, continually (-ance), daily, ([birth-], each, to) day, (now a, two) days (agone), + elder, X end, + evening, + (for) ever (-lasting, -more), X full, life, as (so) long as (... live), (even) now, + old, + outlived, + perpetually, presently, + remaineth, X required, season, X since, space, then, (process of) time, + as at other times, + in trouble, weather, (as) when, (a, the, within a) while (that), X whole (+age), (full) year (-ly), + younger. ¹²

In *The Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* we can see that the above mentioned word can have far reaching implications: "Another much debated phrase is the "day of the LORD." It can be used eschatologically or noneschatologically. It is a day

of judgement and/or blessing (Isa 2). Hence, the eschatological meaning embraced by this idea entails all of prophetic eschatology (George A. Gay, "Day", Baker Dictionary of Theology).¹³

The Hebrew word under consideration is also described in *Wilson's Old Testament Word Studies*.

A day; it is frequently put for time in general, or for a long time; a whole period under consideration, as, in the day signifieth, in the time when; in that day, at that time. Day is also put for a particular season or time when any extraordinary event happens, whether it be prosperous and joyful, or adverse and calamitous; which day is denominated either from the Lord who appoints it, or from those who suffer in it (Job 28:20; Psa 137:7; Ezek 21:25). "Day of the LORD," a day of visitation or of judgment. Hosea 6:2, "two days," two seasons of calamity. All the day, all the day long, is the same as always, continually. Days are put for years, (Lev 25:29; 1 Sam 27:7; 1 Kings 17:15).¹⁴

Now let's look at how George A Gay puts it in *Baker's Dictionary of Theology* which was already referred to above.

"Day" 2. Theological Meanings.

A. General.

The antithesis of day and night in the literal sphere is seen in the description of believers as children of the day and unbelievers as children of the night (1 Thess 5:5-8). The Lord Jesus indicates that the day is the time of opportunity for service which will end with the coming night (John 9:4). Paul, however, teaches that the period up to the time of eschatological salvation is the night and this will issue in the glorious day of Christ (Rom 13:11-13).

B. Eschatological.

In the records of man's earliest history the word day came to be associated with special days set aside as belonging to Jehovah (Gen 2:3; Ex 20:8-11, 12:14, 16; Lev 16:29-31). In the total Old Testament concept they were designed for judgment of sin in nations or individuals (Isa 2:12, 13:9,11; Ezek 7:6-8; Zeph 1:14-18; Obah 15), but they also had the purpose of salvation, vindication, or restoration of God's chosen ones (Gen 7:10-13, 23; Mic 2:12; Isa 4:3-6). The local days of Jehovah visited on Israel and Judah (Ezek 7:4-8) or upon pagan nations (Isa 13:9) were just a foretaste of one climactic day to come upon the whole world (Joel 2:31; Mal 4:5; Isa 2:12; Jer 25:15). Immediately following this supernatural intervention on the plane of history God would set up His eternal kingdom (Dan 2:28, 44) in which He alone would be sovereign and exalted (Isa 2:11).¹⁵

To sum up this section, *The Interpretation Commentary* states: The title "Day" designates not a definite extent of time, but a definite event in time, whose nature is to be determined entirely by the Lord, and thus the phrases "at that day," or "at that time," or "on that day" indicate not fixed periods but particular events whose nature is spelled out by the prophets.

Part Four

Consummation of the Ages

We have spoken of the judgment of Yahweh typified by the “darkness” that is to come. But then, we might ask, is there no hope? If the Day of the LORD is to come and bring only judgement then not only were the people of the time of the prophets doomed, but also we then, if we hold to a future view of “that day.”

For that matter, if the Day of the LORD were an end for the people of Israel and the Nations, then we would most likely not exist at all. The fact is that there was a remnant; a people that would carry on the covenant promise to future generations. Not only this, but also Yahweh had a plan for the nations. There is a “future and a hope,” not only for the natural Jew, but also for those who would make up “Spiritual Israel.”

For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery -- so that you will not be wise in your own estimation -- that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written,

“THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION, HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB.” “THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM, WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS (Rom 11:25-27 NASU; cf. Gal 6:16; Rom 2:28-29; 9:6-8).”

For Yahweh will be exalted in His holiness, and His righteous name will be vindicated among the nations and among the people. Judgment will come, and yet He will remain faithful to His covenant promise. If the God of all creation is not able to bring forth what He has spoken then He is not God. There is no other way to look at it.

For just as certain as the truth that He will bring Judgment, is the reality that He will also bring the complete redemption of His chosen ones, and the curse will be lifted off the earth, in the consummation of the ages.

Yahweh had declared “Holy War” on His people because of their violation of the covenant. But He did promise that in a future “Day” He would reverse the covenant curse; as seen in the following passage.

They will build houses and inhabit them; they will also plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They will not build and another inhabit, they will not plant and another eat (Isa 65:21 NASU; cf. Amos 5:11; Mic 6:15; Zeph 1:13).

They will live in it securely; and they will build houses, plant vineyards and live securely when I execute judgments upon all who scorn them round about them. Then they will know that I am the LORD their God (Ezek 28:26 NASU).

This is exactly the opposite of what we have seen in Zephaniah 2:13. The Pulpit Commentary says on this verse in Isaiah 65:21, “The curse pronounced on apostasy in Deut 28:30 shall no more rest on God’s people. They shall have the fruition of their labors. No enemy shall be able to deprive them of their crops and houses.”¹⁶

The Prophet Isaiah takes this understanding a step further. Not only will Yahweh be faithful to restore the covenant people to the land, but the word of the Lord telescopes into the future where we see the restoration of all things.

For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former things will not be remembered or come to mind (Isa 65:17 NASU).

For just as the new heavens and the new earth which I make will endure before Me, declares the LORD, so your offspring and your name will endure. (Isa 66:22 NASU)

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them, and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away." (Rev 21:1-4)

How could the prophets have envisioned such a time; they struggled through hardship and suffering without seeing the fulfillment of the promise. They had natures like ours (cf. James 5:17-18), they fought with sin, were cold and hungry, and argued with God; yet were found worthy.

And what more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets, who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received back their dead by resurrection; and others were tortured, not accepting their release, so that they might obtain a better resurrection; and others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated (men of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground. And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised, because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect. (Heb 11:32-40 NASU)

All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. (Heb 11:13 NASU)

The prophets spoke the word of the Lord to their time and generation. We can't really know if within their spirits burned a true sense of what was to come. I'm sure many of the things they received from their covenant God must have seemed confusing, maybe even absurd, yet they continued.

God is in the process of bringing the oracles spoken by the prophets to a fulfillment. Surely He will bring a completion to His declared word. The people have been, and will be, judged. The nations have been, and will be, judged. Yet God will have a people who will be refined as silver, and smelted as gold in a furnace. As the prophets had prophesied darkness and doom, judgment and correction, so they also spoke of hope, for there would be “new heavens” and a “new earth” where righteousness dwells.

Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you. For behold, darkness will cover the earth and deep darkness the peoples; but the LORD will rise upon you and His glory will appear upon you. Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising. (Isa 60:1-3 NASU)

And I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. In the daytime (for there will be no night there) its gates will never be closed; and they will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it; and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life. (Rev 21:22-27 NASU)

The Mighty Warrior will go forth into battle. Sin and unrighteousness will be judged, and in fact was judged at the cross; so human pride will be dealt with. Nothing will stand before the Divine King, and yet many willing will worship Him in the beauty of His holiness. He will rise with healing in His wings, to sit on the throne whose foundation is right and just. And from there He will establish His kingdom and the light of His glory will illumine the city of the Great King.

Addendum

The Day of the Lord

Taken from *the Interpretation Commentary*

1. **It is near:** Zeph 1:7, 14; Amos 6:3; Ezek 7:7; Joel 1:15, 2:1; (cf. Isa 13:6; Ezek 30:3; Obah 15; Joel 3:14)
2. **It is a day of God's wrath and anger against the wicked:** Zeph 1:15, 18; 2:2, 3; Jer 4:8, 12:13; Ezek 7:3, 8, 12f, 14, 19; Lam 2:1, 21-22; (cf. Isa 13:9, 13:9, 13)
3. **It is a day of darkness and gloom:** Zeph 1:15; Amos 5:18, 8:9; Joel 2:2, or clouds of thick darkness: Zeph 1:15; Ezek 34:12; Joel 2:2, (cf. Ezek 30:3)
4. **The heavenly bodies are darkened:** Amos 8:9; Joel 2:10, (cf. Joel 2:31, 3:15; Isa 13:10)
5. **God is pictured as a warrior:** Zeph 1:14, 3:17; Jer 20:11; Isa 59:15-18, 63:1-6; Isa 66:15-16; Zech 14:3; Joel 2:11
6. **It is a day of battle, of trumpet blast and battle cry:** Zeph 1:16, (cf. Ezek 7:14; Jer 4:5, 19, 21, 6:1; Isa 13:2-22, 22:5-8; Ezek 30:4-5; Obah 8-9; Zech 14:2-3) **of sword:** Zeph 2:12, (cf. Ezek 7:15; Jer 4:10, 12:12, 46:10; Isa 13:15)
7. **The enemies are dismayed and rendered impotent:** Ezek 7:17, 27, (Jer 4:9; Jer 6:24; Isa 13:7-8; Ezek 30:9; Ezek 14:13)
8. **God searches out His enemies to destroy them:** Zeph 1:12; Amos 9:2-4, (Isa 13:14-15)
9. **The wealth of the enemies cannot save them and becomes useless:** Zeph 1:18; Isa 2:20; Isa 2:20; Ezek 7:11, 19, (cf. Isa 13:17)
10. **Human pride is destroyed:** Zeph 3:11-12; Isa 2:11-17, (Ezek 7:10, 24; Isa 13:11; Obah 3-4)
11. **It may be that some are hidden in the day or saved as a remnant:** Zeph 2:3, 7, 9; Amos 5:14-15, (cf. Joel 2:18-32; Jer 4:14; Obah) ¹⁷

End Notes

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¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

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