

## THE DAY OF YAHWEH AND THE SPIRIT OF YAHWEH

(Danny Hays)

### The Day of Yahweh (the LORD)

The English phrase "day of the LORD" is a translation of the Hebrew "day of Yahweh." The prophets use this phrase to refer to a time in the future (either near or far) when Yahweh will intervene into human history in a dramatic and decisive way to bring about his plan, including both judgment and blessing/salvation. Thus the "day of Yahweh" will be a time of future judgment on Israel and Judah because of their covenant disobedience (Isa. 3:18-4:1; Amos 5:18-20), but it also includes a time of judgment on the foreign nations that have oppressed or harmed Israel or Judah (Isa. 13:1-22; Obad. 15). Likewise, the prophets will describe the time of future restoration and blessing, both for Israel/Judah and for the nations, as part of the "day of Yahweh" (Isa. 11:10-12; Joel 3:14-18). While "day of Yahweh" is the major terminology for this concept, the prophets also use several synonyms such as "that day," or "the day" in reference to the "day of Yahweh." The "day of Yahweh" is an important theme running throughout most of the prophetic material. Used frequently in Isaiah, it is also quite prominent in the Book of the Twelve, playing a central thematic role in several key passages (Joel 2:28-3:21; Zeph. 1-3). As mentioned earlier, several scholars have even suggested that the "day of Yahweh" is a central unifying theme for the Book of the Twelve. The New Testament appropriates this term as well, likewise using a range of terms such as "that day," "those days," or "the great day" synonymously with "the day of the Lord." Joel's prophecy in 2:28-31 described the outpouring of Yahweh's Spirit on the "day of Yahweh." Luke identifies the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost as the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy (Acts 2:17-21), thus indicating that certain aspects of the "day of Yahweh" began to be fulfilled at the time of Christ's first coming. Usually, however, the New Testament writers use the term "day of the Lord" and its synonyms to refer to the time of Christ's return (Mark 13:24; 1 Cor. 5:5; 1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Thess. 2:2; 2 Peter 3:10, 12).

### The Spirit of YAHWEH

The Spirit of Yahweh plays a major theological and prophetic role in Isaiah, Ezekiel, Joel, Micah, and Zechariah. In these prophetic books, as well as in other texts in the Old Testament, the Spirit of Yahweh is integrally associated with three central interrelated characteristics of Yahweh:

*his presence, his power, and his revelation.* Unlike New Testament believers, followers of Yahweh in the Old Testament do not regularly or routinely receive the Spirit. Yahweh sends his Spirit upon special people at special times for specific purposes. The Spirit of Yahweh is closely related to Yahweh's presence, and thus when the Spirit comes upon an individual, it brings special divine power and enablement. Often that power and enablement is in regard to revelation and wisdom or understanding, thus leading to oracles and prophecy.

One of the characteristics that Isaiah attributes to the great coming Davidic king (the Messiah) is that he will be empowered by the Spirit of Yahweh. For example, in Isaiah 11, the prophet proclaims, "The Spirit of



Yahweh will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of Yahweh" (Isa. 11:2). In Isaiah 42:1 the Spirit empowers the Servant to carry out justice, a connection also repeated and expanded in Isaiah 61:1-3. In Joel and Ezekiel, however, Yahweh proclaims a radically new concept regarding his Spirit and the coming messianic era (Joel 2:28-29; Ezek. 36:27; perhaps faintly foreshadowed in Isa. 32:15). In these verses Yahweh reveals that in the coming messianic era he will pour out his Spirit on every one of his people. As part of the new covenant, Yahweh promised that he would write his law in the hearts and minds of his people and enable them all to know him (Jer. 31:33-34). In Jeremiah, Yahweh does not reveal how this will happen. In Joel 2 and Ezekiel 36, however, the prophecy becomes clear. Yahweh promises to put his Spirit within people, empowering them to know him, to be obedient to him, and to speak prophetically of him. At the very beginning of his public ministry, Jesus identifies himself as the coming one empowered by the Spirit that Isaiah spoke of. In Luke 4:18 Jesus quotes directly from Isaiah 61:1, "The Spirit of the Lord is on me". Throughout the Gospels the Spirit is active in Jesus' life, evidence that he is indeed the Spirit-empowered Davidic king/ deliverer that Isaiah had promised (Isa. 1:1 -4).

Yet, as in the Old Testament prophets, the New Testament also underscores the important event in which God pours out his Spirit to dwell within each of his followers. Jesus explains and expounds on much of this in John 13-17. Then, as mentioned above, at Pentecost the Spirit actually comes and fills each follower of Christ (Acts 2). Peter makes the obvious connection, citing Joel 2:28- 23 to explain what has happened. The role of the Spirit in the book of Acts, both as the indwelling presence of God and as the empowering force for the early expanding church, is evidence that the prophecies of Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Joel are being fulfilled and that the messianic age has indeed dawned.

