

1 Corinthians 3:13 in the Navajo Bible

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Éí t'áá'á'í jínítínígo hanaanish béédahodoozijił, háálá **Christ beiníłkáadi** kó' bee bídahodínóotahgo béédahodoozijił. T'áá'á'í jínítínígo hanaanish daazłí'ii kó' bee bídahodínóotah. (1 Corinthians 3:13) ¹

[H]is work will be shown for what it is, because **the Day** will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. (1 Corinthians 3:13) ²

Introduction

In the Old Testament "the day of the Lord" was always associated with a time of final reckoning. It was considered a frightful time. In the New Testament it finally becomes clear what that final reckoning is. It's the second coming of Jesus. And that puts the topic in a different light.

Table 1
References to the "Day of the Lord"

Old Testament
Isaiah 13:6, 9; Ezekiel 13:5; 30:3; Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14; Amos 5:18, 20; Obadiah 1:15; Zephaniah 1:7, 14; Zechariah 14:1; Malachi 4:5;
New Testament
Acts 2:20; 1 Corinthians 5:5; 2 Corinthians 1:14; 1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:2; 2 Peter 3:10

The Day of the Lord Jesus

In Table 1 I give a list of passages that contain the words "day of the Lord." Notice 2 Corinthians 1:14 in particular.

as you have understood us in part, you will come to understand fully that you can boast of us just as we will boast of you in **the day of the Lord Jesus**. (2 Corinthians 1:14)

In this verse "the day of the Lord" does not stand alone. Notice that a word has been added to it. Thus, the "day of the Lord Jesus." So here the term is longer than we might have expected. In the passage before us the term is shorter, but the meaning is

¹ Navajo Bible quotations are from *Diyin God Bizaad. The Holy Bible in Navajo*. Revised edition. New York: American Bible Society, 2000.

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the same. When Paul says "the Day" in 1 Corinthians 3:13 (above), that is a short way to say "the day of the Lord."

I say this example is shorter. It's shorter in NIV, but not in Navajo. The Navajo translators add the word "Christ." Thus, *Christ beinítkâqadi* ("Christ's day"). Although a word has been added to the text, it's the right addition, as I hope to show below. The Navajo gives exactly what the phrase means. Paul is referring in 1 Corinthians 3:13 to the second coming of Christ.

Two other passages that could be mentioned here are Philippians 1:6 ("being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until **the day of Christ Jesus**") and 10 ("so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until **the day of Christ**"). Here also the reference is to the second coming.

What Happens on "that Day"?

There is another shortened reference, and it is one that makes an important contribution to our understanding of this term. Consider Paul's words at the end of his life.

Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on **that day**- and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing. (2 Timothy 4:8)

When Paul says "that day" in 2 Timothy 4:8, he's talking about the same event that he called "the Day" in 1 Corinthians 3:13 (above). It is the same event that he called "the day of the Lord Jesus" in 2 Corinthians 1:14. Notice what he says about it.

Is this a time when Paul expects to be condemned? If "judgment" is the same as "punishment," then being judged would mean being punished. When you go to a fair and they have a sheep judging, what does that mean? Does the sheep judge punish the animals that all the young people bring to him? No! He evaluates them. And one of them gets a prize. Actually, the way it works, three of them usually get a prize.

Judging sheep

It's works this same way when God judges His children. In Matthew 25 Jesus separates the sheep from the goats. This is the ultimate sheep judging! And some of them get a prize – eternal life. They don't earn their prize, any more than the sheep earn the prizes they get for their owners at a county fair. But the Judge awards a prize based on whether they have accepted His Son.

At a fair notice that the prize given to a sheep actually goes to its owner. In the same way, when we receive the prize of eternal life, that honors our Owner. It is to God's glory for His children to be saved. He is not looking for ways to trip us up. He very much wants us to be saved and is happy when we are.

Judging people

Judgment is not the same thing at all as punishment. Paul says that "on that day" he will receive the crown of righteousness. Think for another moment with me about what day he's talking about. He says "the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award [this] to me on that day" (2 Timothy 4:8). Which day is this? It is the day on which the Lord sits as "righteous Judge." That's the day of judgment.

Paul of course was a great apostle. As for the rest of us, we'll all be condemned. True or false? It can go either way, depending on whether we are in Christ or not, but notice Paul's words: "and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing" (2 Timothy 4:8). Do you long for Christ's appearing? If so, then you will receive the same prize Paul expects to get. It's not just for him. It's for you too.

When do these things happen?

Has the day we're talking about happened yet? Not yet. Notice it is closely connected with "his appearing." It takes place at the end of the age. So has Paul received the crown of righteousness yet? Not yet. He did not receive it when he died. On the contrary, he will receive it on the day he lives again.

There is a point I need to clarify here. We need to understand the difference between announcing a decision and carrying it out. When our sheep judge at the county fair judges the sheep that are brought before him, he feels each one and looks them over carefully. He puts them in a certain order and then changes the order as he continues thinking about his decision. He doesn't bring any medals or trophies with him into the sheep pen. That's later. After the decisions are all made, then the winners are brought forward and the decisions are announced and explained.

"Explained" is a key term here. By the time the judge actually says anything, his decisions are all made. And we can turn this around. When the sheep judge is making his decision, he hasn't announced it yet. There are two things here (the deciding and the announcing, or explaining) and they happen at slightly different times. But not at widely different times. The winners don't have to come back the next week to get their medals and trophies. It all happens close together, but just not at the same moment.

Discussion

The difference between our illustration and the actual event, when Christ comes again in glory, is that He has always known what His decisions would be. But we don't know what He has decided until He tells us, and the rest of the universe doesn't know what He has decided about us until He tells them. So there's a time when these things are announced, and there's another time when they're carried out. The judgment is something that takes place in heaven. In that setting God's announces to the onlooking universe what His decision is concerning each of us (see Daniel 7:9-10). The second coming, when the decisions are carried out and we actually receive the prize, is slightly later. When Christ finally comes in the clouds, His reward is with Him.

"Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done." (Revelation 22:12)

If anyone doesn't like the way that verse reads, bear in mind I didn't write it. Those are the words of Christ. We are saved by our faith – that God gives us – but are judged by our works – "to everyone according to what he has done" (Revelation 22:12, above). Faith is "the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8), just as eternal life is "the gift of God" (Romans 6:23). So what is eternal life? It is a free gift based on faith in God's Son. And yet we are judged by our works – by what we have done. You wouldn't want to be judged by someone else's works, if they did worse than you. And yet the part about being saved by faith is exactly a matter of being judged, if you will, by Someone else's works. Those who are saved are saved because of what Someone else did – on the cross. What we're dealing with here are some of the deep things of God. Anyway, that's what it says. We need to take it like it reads.

Conclusion

The expression "the day of the Lord," that appears sixteen times in the Old Testament, occurs also in the New Testament. The meaning is generally the same, but the term can take different forms. It can be longer than expected ("the day of the Lord Jesus," 2 Corinthians 1:14) and it can be shorter ("the Day," 1 Corinthians 3:13; "that day," 2 Timothy 4:8). The Navajo translators added the word "Christ" in 1 Corinthians 3:13, but that's what it means. The sense they have given the passage is exactly right.

In any case, what we're talking about is the second coming of Christ. This is only a fearful time if we don't love Him.

Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. ¹⁶ They called to the mountains and the 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 their wrath has come, and who can stand?" (Revelation 6:15-17)

These people obviously have not longed for Jesus' appearing. For them, seeing Him is the worst thing that could happen. However, for those who love Him, seeing Jesus is the very best thing that could happen.

Let me close with a quotation from the Old Testament that illustrates this point. After all, we aren't the only ones who have looked forward to Jesus' coming. Many saints of God down through the ages have looked forward to seeing His day (see John 8:57; Hebrews 11:1-40). They saw it and were glad. They rejoiced, as Paul did, and will receive the same prize he does. So here's the passage.

And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this *is* our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this *is* the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation. (Isaiah 25:9)

This is the way I feel about seeing Jesus again. If this is the way you feel about it too then be glad when you hear about Jesus coming back. For you it will be a happy time. Receiving the crown of righteousness is not bad news. Not bad at all.