

THE COMING DAY OF THE LORD: A WARNING TO ESCAPE THE COMING JUDGMENT JOEL 02:01–11

Introduction

The *Day of the LORD* will unexpectedly strike the whole universe. This term — *the Day of the LORD* — is one that must be learned and understood by the entire human race. The *Day of the LORD* refers to the terrifying judgment of God that will fall upon all the wicked of the universe — both nations and individuals. But we must always remember that the *Day of the LORD* also refers to the great deliverance of God's people from their enemies and from all the corruption of this world (see *Day of the LORD*, Joel 2:1-11).

Dramatically, the prophet Joel shifted the thrust of his message away from the locust invasion. He began to warn of the invasion by the powerful northern army that would soon sweep down upon the tiny nation of Judah. The locust invasion — as terrible as it was — would end up being minor in comparison to the destruction and death caused by the northern army's appalling brutality.

Studying this passage, the reader should keep the following fact in mind: the locust invasion of Judah was only a foreshadowing of God's terrible judgment against sin that would come through various armies down through the ages:

=> the Assyrian army

=> the Babylonian army

=> the Roman army

=> the Armageddon army — the nations in the end times who will oppose the LORD and His people.

The subject of the present Scripture is, *The Coming Day of the LORD: A Warning to Escape the Coming Judgment* Joel 2:1-27.

- I. The announcement of the *Day of the LORD*: a warning to fear the Lord's wrath (vv. 1-11).
- II. The urgent appeal for genuine sorrow and repentance (vv. 12-17).
- III. The Lord's wonderful promise to the repentant — mercy and restoration: a picture of God's coming kingdom (vv. 18-27).

Joel 02:01–11 The Announcement of the Day of the LORD: A Warning to Fear the Lord's Wrath

Joel announced the coming *Day of the LORD*. Standing before his audience, the prophet shouted instructions to the people. They were to blow the trumpet of warning in Zion, God's holy city. Everyone had to be warned, for the day of the LORD's wrath was coming.

Joel then proceeded to give a detailed description of the *Day of the LORD*. He used the locust invasion to symbolize the army from the north who would soon invade Judah as well as Israel (v. 20). But keep in mind this fact: the invasion by the northern army was to be only a foreshadowing of the climactic *Day of the LORD* that is coming in the end times of human history. Although Scripture's detailed description of the *Day of the LORD* refers primarily to the invasion by the northern army, it also signifies the dark day of God's wrath in the end times:

1. The *Day of the LORD* would be a day of danger near at hand, looming over and threatening them (v. 1). Therefore, the warning trumpet must be blown by the watchmen on the walls of God's holy city. Every citizen within the city should tremble with fear, for the day of the LORD's wrath was ready to explode upon the people. No doubt, Joel shook his audience, for they felt secure in their prosperity and worship. But keep in mind what they were worshipping: false gods. They mixed the worship of the LORD with the worship of other gods, in what is known as eclectic worship. Down through history the Israelites had always felt secure. After all, the LORD had given the unconditional promise to send the Messiah and His Holy Word through the descendants of Abraham, the Jews. What they failed to see was that the LORD demanded that He and He alone be worshipped. He and He alone is the only living and true God; therefore, He and He alone deserves to be worshipped. But now the prophet Joel was proclaiming that the LORD would no longer tolerate rebellion against Him. The people had gone too far; therefore, the *Day of the LORD* — God's holy wrath — was to fall upon the people. And the day of danger was imminent, very close at hand.
2. The *Day of the LORD* would be a day of darkness and gloom, a day of the thickest clouds and deepest blackness imaginable (v. 2a). Most likely, this is a picture of utter terror as both judgment and destruction strike the nation of Judah. It is also a bleak picture of absolute helplessness gripping people's hearts. When the *Day of the LORD* comes, people's hearts will melt within them and a spirit of hopelessness will take hold, for there will be no escape whatsoever.
3. The Day of the LORD would be a day of war. The most powerful army ever mobilized would suddenly invade the nation of Judah (vv. 2b-9). Note the statement that there would never be another army as powerful, not even in the ages to come. This army would be unrivalled, unparalleled in all of history. The army of the Assyrian Empire was the most powerful up until its day, and the same could be said of the Babylonian and Roman armies that were yet to come. Up until their day, each of these armies was the most powerful, unmatched by any other army. But Joel's statement that there would be an army so mighty that it would surpass even those in the ages to come must be referring to the massive army that will march against the LORD and His

people in the end time (3:1-16). When the northern army struck, the impact upon the people would be overwhelming and devastating. Five graphic statements describe the destructive power of the northern army:

- a. The army would set the cities and fields ablaze, devastating the land so much that it would be like the Garden of Eden being turned into a desert waste (v. 3). Nothing — absolutely nothing — would escape the fierce, destructive force of the army.
 - b. The army would appear with a frightening war-machine (vv. 4-6). Note how Joel merges the invasion by the locusts with the invasion by the northern army, both having the appearance of a locust-like military force. In the case of the northern army, they would have a war-machine that included horses, cavalry, and chariots — all with the accompanying terrifying noise.
 - c. The army would move quickly, as though leaping over the mountaintops. They would be as horrifying as a raging fire, sweeping over and consuming the hillsides of the nation. At the very sight of the invading army, the people would be terrorized. In deep anguish, every face would lose its colour and grow increasingly pale (vv. 5-6).
 - d. The army would be well-organized and disciplined in their charge. They would scale the walls and never swerve in their attack, not even when they broke through the opposing army's defences (vv. 7b-8).
 - e. The army would have overwhelming forces and be invincible as they attacked and conquered the city (v. 9). They would run along the walls at will and climb into houses like unrestricted thieves (v. 9).
4. The *Day of the LORD* will be a day of astounding signs in heaven and earth (v. 10). These signs will apparently include earthquakes, catastrophic volcanic eruptions, the collision of asteroids and meteorites with the earth, eclipses of the sun and moon, and the stars themselves being blacked out by the power of the LORD. Obviously, the Spirit of God was using Joel to forecast the cosmic chaos that will take place in the end time of human history, a chaos that will characterize the climactic *Day of the LORD*. It will be a day when God pours out His wrath upon the earth (Joel 2:30-32; 3:15; Isa 13:10; Eze 32:7; Zec 14:6-7; Mat 24:29; 2 Pet 3:8-14. See outline and notes, Rev 6:12-17; 8:6-12; 16:1-21.)
 5. The *Day of the LORD* would be a day of judgment executed by the LORD Himself (v. 11). He would appoint the northern army, the Assyrians, to be His agent of chastisement, His instrument to carry out justice upon the Southern Kingdom of Judah. As the Sovereign LORD of the universe — the only living God, He who possesses omnipotent power — the LORD could choose whomever He wanted to accomplish the mission. But it would be God Himself who would launch the great and dreadful *Day of the LORD* against the Israelites. Furthermore, no Israelites would be able to stand up or endure the punishment that was to fall upon them in the terrifying *Day of the LORD* (see *Day of the LORD*, 2:1-11).

Thought 1. The LORD warns us all: the *Day of the LORD* is coming. Because of all the evil and wickedness on earth — the immorality, lawlessness and violence — God’s holy wrath will fall upon us. And when it falls, there will be no escape. Every human being will stand before the LORD to face the execution of perfect justice. All who have not placed their faith in the Lord Jesus will suffer the wrath of God. Listen to what God’s Holy Word says about His wrath:

John 3:36 “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him.”

Rom 1:18, 29-32 The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness.... They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Although they know God’s righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.

Rom 2:5-10 But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God’s wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed. God will give to each person according to what he has done. To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honour and immortality, he will give eternal life. But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. But glory, honour and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

Eph 5:3-6 But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person — such a man is an idolater — has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God’s wrath comes on those who are disobedient.

Heb 10:26-27 If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God.

Rev 14:9-10 A third angel followed them and said in a loud voice: “If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives its mark on their forehead or on their hand, they, too, will drink the wine of God’s fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. They will be tormented with burning sulphur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb.”

Psa 2:12 *Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and you be destroyed in your way, for his wrath can flare up in a moment. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.*

Psa 69:24 *Pour out your wrath on them; let your fierce anger overtake them.*

Jer 10:10 *But the LORD is the true God; he is the living God, the eternal King. When he is angry, the earth trembles; the nations cannot endure his wrath. ■*

JOEL 02: 01–11 DAY OF THE LORD (YAHWEH, JEHOVAH)

In the simplest of terms, the *Day of the LORD* is a dramatic period of time when God executes swift judgment on the wicked and saves the righteous. Throughout history, the *Day of the LORD* has fallen time and again on unbelieving nations in order to save God's dear people and fulfil His will for the earth (Isa 13:9; 34:8-9; Jer 46:10; Eze 30:3; Oba 15).

At other times, the *Day of the LORD* has fallen on Israel, both the Northern and Southern Kingdoms (Lam 1:12; 2:1, 22; Eze 7:19; 13:5; Amos 5:18-20; Zep 2:2-3). Whether dealing with Israel or an unbelieving nation, the LORD is seen intervening in human history. Each event is a foreshadowing or sign of the final, climactic *Day of the LORD* that is to come in the last days. This climactic *Day of the LORD* refers to the day when Christ will return to execute judgment and to establish God's kingdom on earth. It is a definite day that is coming to earth, and it is coming at the end of the present age, also called the *last days*. (See outlines and notes, Mat 24:1-25:46.) In that day, the LORD will arouse the Jews to return to the promised land and to place their faith in Christ, the promised Messiah (Isa 61:2; Mal 4:5). Note two significant points:

1. The final climactic *Day of the LORD* is to be characterized by several things:
 - a. *Wonders (terata)*: signs and events in heaven above (outer space) that point to something unusual about to happen (Acts 2:19-20).
 - b. *Signs (semeia)*: events and happenings on earth given by God to warn that the end is at hand.
 - c. *Blood and fire and vapour of smoke*: terrible bloodshed and an explosive fire that causes...
 - mushrooming vapours of smoke
 - the sun to be turned into darkness and blotted out
 - the moon to be turned to blood red

Thought 1. It is thought-provoking when we consider how closely the language resembles atomic warfare.

2. The events that will happen in the climactic *Day of the LORD* (as revealed by the whole of Scripture) seem to be fourfold. Note: no attempt whatsoever is made to put these events in a specific order. There are two reasons for this.

=> There are many different opinions about the matter.

=> More importantly, Scripture does not give a complete list of events taking place in the last days.

As stated throughout Scripture, at least four events are pointed out as happening on the *Day of the LORD*: the terrible tribulation, the return of Christ as Sovereign LORD, judgment and the remaking of the universe.

- a. A terrible period of tribulation (7 years): this includes the last half of the period known as the great tribulation (3.5 years). This is the fulfilment of Daniel's *seventieth week* (Dan 9:27). (See outline and notes, Mat 24:15-28; Mark 13:1-37; Luke 21:20-24; Rev 6:1-19:21. Also see Isa 13:6-16; Eze 30:1-26; Joel 1:15; 2:1-11; Zep 1:7-18; Zec 14:1-15.)
- b. The return of Christ as Sovereign Lord: He will rule and reign in glory upon earth (the millennial reign of God's Son, Rev 20:4-6).
- c. The resurrection and final judgment of all: this will include...
 - men who are described as sheep and goats (Mat 25:31-46)
 - the Beast or the antichrist, the false prophet, and their followers (Rev 19:11-21)
 - Satan and his angels (Rev 20:10)
- d. The destruction and remaking of the earth and heavens (the universe) (2 Pet 3:3-15; Rev 21:1; see Isa 65:17; 66:22).

The following verses of Scripture give a glimpse into the *Day of the LORD*...

- that still lies out in the future
- that will bring about the climactic end to this corruptible world
- that will set God's people free from all enemies — including the enemies of sin and death — to live eternally with God

Mat 24:1-3, 21-22, 29-31 *Jesus left the temple and was walking away when his disciples came up to him to call his attention to its buildings "Do you see all these things?" he asked. "Truly I tell you, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down." As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. "Tell us," they said, "when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?"....For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now — and never to be equalled again. "If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened.... "Immediately after the distress of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken. At that time the sign of the Son of Man will*

appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.”

Mat 25:31-33 *“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.”*

Acts 2:17-20 *In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.*

Acts 17:31 *For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead.”*

Rom 2:16 *This will take place on the day when God will judge men’s secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares.*

1 Th 5:1-3 *Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you. For you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, “Peace and safety,” destruction will come on them suddenly, as labour pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.*

2 Th 2:1-4 *Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers and sisters, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by the teaching allegedly from us — whether by a prophecy or by word of mouth or by letter — asserting that the day of the Lord has already come. Don’t let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshipped, so that he sets himself up in God’s temple, proclaiming himself to be God.*

2 Pet 3:10-14 *But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives*

as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells. So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.

Isa 13:6, 9-11 *Wail, for the day of the LORD is near; it will come like destruction from the Almighty....See, the day of the LORD is coming — a cruel day, with wrath and fierce anger — to make the land desolate and destroy the sinners within it. The stars of heaven and their constellations will not show their light. The rising sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light. I will punish the world for its evil, the wicked for their sins. I will put an end to the arrogance of the haughty and will humble the pride of the ruthless.*

Ezek 30:3 *For the day is near, the day of the LORD is near — a day of clouds, a time of doom for the nations.*

Joel 1:15 *Alas for that day! For the day of the LORD is near; it will come like destruction from the Almighty.*

Joel 2:1 *Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound the alarm on my holy hill. Let all who live in the land tremble, for the day of the LORD is coming. It is close at hand.*

Joel 2:11 *The LORD thunders at the head of his army; his forces are beyond number, and mighty is the army that obeys his command. The day of the LORD is great; it is dreadful. Who can endure it?*

Joel 2:31-32 *The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. And everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved; for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be deliverance, as the LORD has said, even among the survivors whom the LORD calls.*

Joel 3:14 *Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision.*

Amos 5:18-20 *Woe to you who long for the day of the LORD! Why do you long for the day of the LORD? That day will be darkness, not light. It will be as though a man fled from a lion only to meet a bear; as though he entered his house and rested his hand on the wall only to have a snake bite him. Will not the day of the LORD be darkness, not light — pitch-dark, without a ray of brightness?*

Oba 1:15 *The day of the LORD is near for all nations. As you have done, it will be done to you; your deeds will return upon your own head.*

Zep 1:14-18 *The great day of the LORD is near — near and coming quickly. The cry on the day of the LORD is bitter; the Mighty Warrior shouts his battle cry.*

That day will be a day of wrath — a day of distress and anguish, a day of trouble and ruin, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness — a day of trumpet and battle cry against the fortified cities and against the corner towers.

“I will bring such distress on all people that they will grope about like those who are blind, because they have sinned against the LORD. Their blood will be poured out like dust and their entrails like dung. Neither their silver nor their gold will be able to save them on the day of the LORD’s wrath.” In the fire of his jealousy the whole earth will be consumed, for he will make a sudden end of all who live on the earth.

Mal 4:5-6 *“See, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes. He will turn the hearts of the parents to their children, and the hearts of the children to their parents; or else I will come and strike the land with total destruction.”*

(This prophet who is like Elijah will probably be one of the two witnesses in Revelation 1:1-3:13).

Thought 1. All the disasters and catastrophes of this life are but small pictures of the final, climactic *Day of the LORD* — the terrifying judgment of God that is coming in the last days of human history. Each disaster, as tragic as it may be, should stir us to obey God’s holy commandments and to live thoughtfully, righteously and godly in this present world.

Titus 2:12-13 *It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope — the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ. □*