

THE FUTURE CLIMACTIC DAY OF THE LORD: GOD'S GREAT PROVISIONS FOR HIS PEOPLE, HIS SPIRIT, WARNING SIGNS, AND SALVATION

JOEL 02:28–32

Introduction

The future judgment of God — the climactic Day of the LORD — has been announced. In the former message, Joel announced that God's judgment was coming at the end of human history. The prophet then called on the people to repent and shared several wonderful promises to those who would truly turn back to the LORD and live righteously. Now, as he continues to look into the distant future, he shares God's deep concern for believers who will be living in the *last days* of human history. The *last days* will be a time of unparalleled tribulation — days of horrifying turmoil and intense anxiety. And because God loves and cares for His genuine followers, He has made provisions for them. These great provisions are the focus of this passage. All who truly believe and have to live through the last days will be especially empowered by the LORD to face the horror to come. God will give His people three wonderful provisions that will strengthen them to walk faithfully through the days of terror and tribulation. This is, *The Future Climactic Day of the Lord: God's Great Provisions for His People — His Spirit, Warning Signs, and Salvation*, Joel 2:28-32

- I. The gift of God's Spirit: to be poured out on all (vv. 28-29).
- II. The warning signs: to arouse people to turn to the LORD (vv. 30-31).
- III. The promise of salvation, Rom 10:12-13; Psa 145:18 (v. 32).

I. Joel 02:28–29 *The Gift of God's Spirit: To Be Poured Out on All*

The LORD will prepare His people by giving them His very own Spirit. That is, true believers will be equipped to endure the terrifying days of the end times through the presence and power of God's Spirit in their lives. The word *afterward* in verse 28 refers back to God's promises to the repentant just discussed in verses 18-27. It will be *after* the Jews' restoration to Israel that God will pour out His Spirit upon His people. Also note that God will give the three provisions to prepare His people *before* the coming *Day of the LORD* (v. 31). Put together, these two references clearly show that God gave Joel a glimpse into the distant future. And when Joel looked at what God showed him, he saw God giving the great provision of His own Spirit to His people.

- 1 First God's Spirit will empower His people to prophesy (v. 28). The gift of *prophecy* means to proclaim God's Holy Word sharing both the lessons of God's work in the past and the prophecies and warnings of things to come, such as the end time events and judgement. The LORD promised that His Spirit would be poured out on all sons and daughters so that everyone could *prophecy* and share His Holy Word with the rest of society.
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Second, the Spirit of God will empower the older men of society to *dream dreams*. The Spirit will speak to them either while they are sleeping or else in a trance-like state. He will guide, correct, warn or arouse them to some service or share needed message with the elderly...all while they are dreaming. A good example is the experience of Mary, the mother of Jesus, and her fiancé Joseph. When Mary became pregnant and Joseph knew he was not the father, he naturally became very upset. Lying in bed one night, pondering how to separate from Mary without exposing her to public shame, Joseph fell asleep. While the young man slept, the LORD appeared to Him in a dream to reveal the fact that Mary had miraculously conceived by the power of God's Spirit (Mat 1:18-21).

Another good example is the apostle Peter. When he first began his ministry, he was having a personal problem with prejudice against the Gentiles. God's Spirit put the apostle in a trance (a dream-like state) and showed him a huge sheet descending from heaven filled with a number of different animals. The animals represented all kinds of people who had been cleansed and accepted by God. Therefore, Peter was to get rid of his prejudice and accept all people as being equally loved and accepted by the LORD (Acts 10:9-16).

Third, when God's spirit is poured out upon the people, He will empower the young men to see visions. God has occasionally used visions down through history to speak to His dear servants. One such example is the prophet Isaiah's vision of the LORD upon His throne in all His glory (Isa 6:1-13).

Note that all three provisions mentioned involve God's sharing His Word with His people so they can draw closer to Him and bear stronger witness for Him. This is exactly what other Scriptures say:

Rom 12:6-8 *We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.* (also see vv. 9-21 and note how the gifts are for the teaching of God's people to live more and more like the LORD commands).

Eph 4:11-13 *It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.*

The reader needs to understand exactly what Joel has said, that God would pour out His Spirit on *all people* (flesh). This phrase, *all people*, suggests both Jews and Gentiles. Centuries after *Joel* was written, the Apostle Peter actually said that Joel's prophecy began to take place on the day of Pentecost when the Spirit of God filled the

hearts of believers who were praying in the upper room. From the day of Pentecost up to this very hour, the Spirit of God fills the hearts of all individuals who place their trust in Jesus Christ. Scripture says that the believer's body becomes the temple of God's Holy Spirit (1 Cor 3:16-17; 6:19-20). The Holy Spirit also begins to give each believer spiritual gifts (abilities), gifts that enable the believer to be a witness for Christ and to encourage and build people up. As pointed out in the Scripture above (Eph 4:11-13), this is exactly what God says. But note a significant fact that is clear from human experience as well as from what is said in the Scripture: Joel's prophecy concerning God's Spirit has not yet been *perfectly* or *completely* fulfilled:

- => Believers have not yet been perfected (fully matured) nor reached the whole measure of the fullness or perfection of Christ (Eph 4:13). To the contrary, every one of us is a far cry from perfection or the fullness of Christ.
- => The end of the last days has not yet taken place. Peter said in Acts 2:17 that *after* or *afterward* referred to the *last days*, which apparently began with the coming of the Messiah and the pouring out of His Spirit on all believers at Pentecost. Just how long a period the *last days* will be has not yet been revealed by the LORD. From a human perspective, it has been an enormously long period of time. But from God's perspective, a thousand years is as but one day (2 Pet 3:8; also see vv. 3-14).
- => According to Scripture, the *last days* will include not only the present period of human history but also the great tribulation to come to earth and the glorious triumph of Christ when He returns to set up God's kingdom (see outlines and notes, Isa 2:1-5; Mica 4:1-5; Jude 17-19. Also see *Day of the LORD*, Joel 2:1-11.)

Thus Joel's prophecy began to be fulfilled at Pentecost, but it will not be wholly fulfilled until Christ returns to earth to establish God's kingdom. At that time, every believer — which will be all the people of the earth — will be filled with the fullness of God's Spirit. In the meantime, the exhortation of God's Holy Word to believers is as follows:

Acts 1:8 *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”*

Acts 2:38 *Peter replied, “Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”*

Eph 4:20 *That, however, is not the way of life you learned.*

Eph 5:18 *Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.*

1 Th 5:19 *Do not put out the Spirit's fire.*

Heb 10:24-29 *And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing,*

but let us encourage one another — and all the more as you see the Day approaching. 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. Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace?

2. In preparation for the end times, God's Spirit will erase all prejudice and discrimination among His people (vv. 28-29). In Joel's day, it was the men who were powerful and wealthy and who ruled society. The women, the young, the poor and the slaves had few rights. Prejudice and discrimination against gender, age, colour and economic status dominated society. It also determined who ruled and possessed the wealth of the land. But, interestingly, God pronounced that a day was coming when all bigotry, intolerance and injustice would be erased from the hearts of His people and from the face of the earth. All people would stand on an equal footing, the footing of faith in the LORD.

Of course, all prejudice and discrimination have not yet been erased from the earth, not from society as a whole nor even within the church. Although Pentecost — the coming of God's Spirit into the lives of believers — has taken place, bigotry and intolerance are still, sadly, a major problem within the church. But when Christ returns to set up God's kingdom, He will personally erase all bias and narrow-mindedness from people's hearts. There will be no physical or social distinctions. Everyone will love one another and understand that all are equally acceptable to God. Listen to what God's Holy Word says:

Rom 10:12-13 *For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile — the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."*

Rom 12:5 *So in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.*

Gal 3:28 *There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*

James 2:5 *Listen, my dear brothers: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him?*

1 John 1:7 *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.*

Psa 119:63 *I am a friend to all who fear you, to all who follow your precepts.*

Prov 22:2 *Rich and poor have this in common: The LORD is the Maker of them all.*

II. *Joel 02:30–31 The Warning Signs: To Arouse People to Turn to the LORD*

The LORD will prepare His people for the end times by giving them warning signs, signs that will point to the terrifying trouble that is coming to earth. These signs will stir believers to be faithful to the LORD and to guard themselves against slipping back into sin. Furthermore, these signs will arouse God's people to be more bold in sharing Christ with family members and friends who are still living in unbelief and sin — lest they be doomed eternally.

As the terrifying day of tribulation approaches, God's people will know that Christ's return is imminent and that God is going to execute true justice on earth. Therefore, true believers will realize as never before that they must reach out in a spirit of urgency to share the gospel of salvation with everyone possible. Note two facts stated by Scripture:

1. God will prepare His people by giving them signs on earth. What signs? Blood and fire and huge pillars of smoke ascending to the sky (v. 30). This is clearly an indication of destruction and death due to war and natural disasters such as...

- earthquakes
- volcanic eruptions
- tornadoes
- hurricanes
- drought and fires
- tsunamis and floods

Every disaster imaginable will take place in the terrifying *Day of the LORD*. Blood will flow, fires will blaze, and huge, billowing clouds of smoke will cover the face of the earth.

2. God will prepare His people by giving them signs in the sky. These signs will reach even into the expanse of outer space (v. 31). What are these heavenly signs? The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood. A total eclipse or an unthinkable catastrophe could take place either in the sky or on earth, a catastrophe that would literally blot out the sun and turn the moon the colour of blood red. This could result from the launching of atomic warfare, sending up a continuous cloud of smoke, or from an asteroid colliding with earth, exploding in a cloud of dust and debris. Or, the LORD could simply speak the words and bring about the stated changes to the sun and moon. Regardless of the method, we can be certain that all events will happen just as the LORD predicted.

Thought 1. Many Scriptures predict the coming disasters that God will unleash upon the earth and in the heavens. In studying the verses below, we should remember that they stand as a warning to all people: we must immediately place our faith in Christ or else face the terrifying judgment of God. And just as critical, believers must be faithful to the LORD and strong witnesses to His glorious salvation:

Mat 24:15-28 *“So when you see standing in the holy place ‘the abomination that causes desolation,’ spoken of through the prophet Daniel — let the reader understand — then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let no one on the housetop go down to take anything out of the house. Let no one in the field go back to get their cloak. How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing*

mothers! Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath. 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. At that time if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Messiah!' or, 'There he is!' do not believe it. For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you ahead of time. So if anyone tells you, 'There he is, out in the wilderness,' do not go out; or, 'Here he is, in the inner rooms,' do not believe it. For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather."

Mat 24:29-31 *"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.' Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. And then all the peoples of the earth will mourn when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, 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."*

2 Pet 3:8-14 *But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. 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.*

Rev 6:12-17 *I watched as he opened the sixth seal. There was a great earthquake. The sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair, the whole moon turned blood red, and the stars in the sky fell to earth, as late figs drop from a fig tree when shaken by a strong wind. The sky receded like a scroll, rolling up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. 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. 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! For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?"*

Rev 8:6-12 *Then the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared to sound them. The first angel sounded his trumpet, and there came hail and fire mixed with blood, and it was hurled down on the earth. A third of the earth was burned up, a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up. The second angel sounded his trumpet, and something like a huge mountain, all ablaze, was thrown into the sea. A third of the sea turned into blood, a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed. The third angel sounded his trumpet, and a great star, blazing like a torch, fell from the sky on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water — the name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters turned bitter, and many people died from the waters that had become bitter. The fourth angel sounded his trumpet, and a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them turned dark. A third of the day was without light, and also a third of the night.*

Jer 4:23-24 *I looked at the earth, and it was formless and empty; and at the heavens, and their light was gone. I looked at the mountains, and they were quaking; all the hills were swaying.*

Joel 2:10 *Before them the earth shakes, the heavens tremble, the sun and moon are darkened, and the stars no longer shine.*

Joel 3:15 *The sun and moon will be darkened, and the stars no longer shine.*

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?*

Amos 8:9 *“In that day,” declares the Sovereign LORD, “I will make the sun go down at noon and darken the earth in broad daylight.”*

Zep 1:15 *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.*

III. Joel 02:32 The Promise of Salvation

The LORD will save all who call on Him, save them from the terrifying judgment that is coming to earth. But, salvation is conditional: a person must *call on the Name of the Lord*. To *call* on Him means to trust Him, acknowledging the LORD to be the only living and true God who can save a person. To *call* on the LORD also means that a person acknowledges the LORD as the *Master* of his life. It means that the person is surrendering his life to be the servant of God. Naturally, a person who has surrendered his life to God believes God's Holy Word, that God will save Him just as He promised.

In closing this great passage on salvation, the LORD says that He will personally call forth a remnant of true believers from among the Jews. This small number of Jews (the

remnant) will be saved by the LORD in the last days of human history. They will then be led back to Jerusalem to worship Him on Mat Zion. This will take place when the LORD Jesus Christ returns to establish God's kingdom on earth.

Thought 1. If there has ever been a day when people need to be saved from the bondages of sin and shame, it is today. Think how many people are enslaved or addicted to...

- drugs
- gambling
- power
- alcohol
- sports
- authority
- illicit sex
- food
- fame
- pornography
- wealth
- false religion

Think how many others are held captive by their depression, emptiness, loneliness, purposelessness, insecurity, jealousy...and so much more. We are all flesh and bones — a part of the material and corruptible substance of this world. Thus we are doomed to die and to face the fearsome condemnation of God. However, there is a way to escape, the way proclaimed by God's dear servant Joel: call upon the Name of the LORD. All who call will be saved.

Mat 22:1-14 *Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come. Then he sent some more servants and said, 'Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.' But they paid no attention and went off — one to his field, another to his business. The rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them. The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. So go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.' So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, the bad as well as the good, and the wedding hall was filled with guests. But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. He asked, 'How did you get in here without wedding clothes, friend?' The man was speechless. Then the king told the attendants, 'Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' For many are invited, but few are chosen."*

John 3:16-19 *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil."*

Acts 2:21 *And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.*

Rom 10:12-13 *For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile — the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”*

Rev 3:20 *Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.*

Rev 22:17 *The Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let him who hears say, “Come!” Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.*

Psa 99:6 *Moses and Aaron were among his priests, Samuel was among those who called on his name; they called on the LORD and he answered them.*

Psa 145:18-21 *The LORD is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth. He fulfils the desires of those who fear him; he hears their cry and saves them. The LORD watches over all who love him, but all the wicked he will destroy. My mouth will speak in praise of the LORD. Let every creature praise his holy name for ever and ever.*

Ezek 33:11 *Say to them, ‘As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, O house of Israel?’*

Hosea 06:1 *“Come, let us return to the LORD. He has torn us to pieces but he will heal us; he has injured us but he will bind up our wounds.” ■*