

# THE COMING DAY OF THE LORD: A WARNING TO ESCAPE THE COMING JUDGMENT JOEL 02: 12–27

## *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).

## **I. Joel 02:12–17 *The Urgent Appeal for Genuine Sorrow and Repentance***

Joel called for the people to repent of their sins and turn back to the LORD. And his appeal urgent. There was no way to escape the coming judgment unless the people returned to the LORD with all sincerity. Note exactly what Joel says: this was the Word of the LORD Himself. The LORD was pleading with the people to return — fasting and weeping over their horrible sins and mourning over their violation of God's holy nature, His Word and

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His commandments. This indicates that it was not too late for the people to escape the coming judgment. It was *right then*, at that very moment, that the people were to repent. If they waited any longer it might be too late. Thus the opportunity for repentance was limited, existing for only a short period of time.

Furthermore, true repentance necessitated a complete change of heart. The people must be genuine when they fasted. Their tears of weeping and mourning had to be a genuine expression of sorrow over dishonouring the LORD and His Holy Word.

The prophet pleaded with the people to be radical, to actually tear their hearts and not their garments as a sign of their sorrow over sin. The people had to undergo a complete change of heart if they were sincere. They were guilty of the most despicable sins and wicked behaviour. There were three strong reasons given to encourage the people to turn their lives around so drastically:

- ⇒ The LORD is gracious and merciful or compassionate.
- ⇒ The LORD at times relents, actually turns back His judgment.
- ⇒ The LORD could answer their prayers and respond to their repentance by restoring their economy, both the agriculture and the productivity of the nation. Thus the people would once again be able to renew their worship of the LORD, for there would be plenty of food and drink to present for offerings to Him.

Not only did Joel plead with the people to repent, but he also called upon them to hold a public worship service — a public fast and prayer meeting (vv. 15-17). Joel urged everyone to attend, the leaders as well as the small babies who were nursing at the breasts of their mothers. Even the bride and groom should leave their chambers to attend the public service. Every person was to attend and be sanctified (set apart) to God. Note that the priests were encouraged to take the lead in crying out to the LORD (v. 17). In fact, God's faithful prophet told the priests specifically what to pray for: that God spare the people from the coming judgment, that God keep His people, His very own inheritance...

- from being scorned
- from becoming a shameful byword as people referred to them
- from discrediting and shaming the LORD's Name before the unbelievers and nations of the world

**Thought 1.** Repentance is an absolute essential in order to escape God's coming judgment. Time and again the LORD pleads with us to repent lest we suffer the consequences of our sins. Repentance simply means that we turn away from sin and turn to the LORD. We believe in Him and seek to follow Him by obeying His Holy Word. True belief translates into obedience, and heartfelt obedience signifies belief. Therefore, true repentance involves placing our faith in the LORD so much that we become His genuine followers. Listen to what God's Holy Word says about repentance:

**Mat 3:2** *And saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.”*

**Mat 5:4** *“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.”*

**Luke 13:3** *“I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish.”*

**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.”*

**Acts 3:19** *Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.*

**Acts 8:22** *Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord. Perhaps he will forgive you for having such a thought in your heart.*

**2 Chr 7:14** *If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.*

**Isa 22:12** *The LORD, the LORD Almighty, called you on that day to weep and to wail, to tear out your hair and put on sackcloth.*

**Isa 55:7** *Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.*

**Ezk 18:21** *“But if a wicked person turns away from all the sins they have committed and keeps all my decrees and does what is just and right, that person will surely live; they will not die.”*

**Ezk 18:31** *Rid yourselves of all the offenses you have committed, and get a new heart and a new spirit. Why will you die, people of Israel?*

## **II. Joel 02:18–27 The LORD’s Wonderful Promise to the Repentant — Mercy and Restoration: A Picture of God’s Coming Kingdom**

Joel now proclaimed the LORD’s wonderful promise to the repentant: *mercy* and *restoration*. Israel — all Jews who truly believed in the LORD and followed Him — would be given God’s mercy (pity) and restored to the promised land. A day was coming when true believers would receive their inheritance, all that God has promised them in His Holy Word.

1. God promised mercy (salvation) and restoration to His dear people (vv. 18-26). These two wonderful gifts would be showered upon Israel because the LORD was jealous for His land and longed to have pity on His people (v. 18). Although these promises were directed to the Jews of Joel’s day, they are a picture or foreshadowing of the blessings that will flood the earth in the Messianic kingdom. A day is coming when Jesus Christ will establish God’s kingdom on earth. Christ will rule as King of kings and LORD of lords. God promised six wonderful blessings to the Israelites if they would sincerely place their faith in the LORD.

- a. First, God would restore material prosperity (v. 19a). All the farms and vineyards of the nation would be healed, and the land would produce enough crops, wine and oil to satisfy every person.
- b. Second, God would restore respect and honour to His people (v. 19b). Never again would they be humiliated, scorned or ridiculed among the other peoples of the earth. Since this promise has not yet been fulfilled, it must refer primarily to the future when the Messiah will establish God's kingdom on earth (the Millennium).
- c. Third, God would restore peace and national security (v. 20). When the northern army attacked the Jews, the LORD Himself would defeat the enemy. Some of their divisions would be driven into a desert land, others into the eastern sea (Dead Sea), and still others into the western sea (Mediterranean Sea). This marvellous victory would be achieved by the LORD Himself.

Note that the northern army is not identified by Scripture. Thus it is applicable to all the armies that have invaded or will invade Israel from the North. This would include the Assyrians, Babylonians, Romans and, in particular, the massive army of the end times that will launch the final battle against the LORD and His people, the battle known as Armageddon. For the sake of His repentant people, the LORD promised to destroy the northern army of locusts, the enemies of His people (those who are His precious inheritance or heritage, v. 17).

- d. Fourth, God would restore the land itself, the promised land of God (vv. 21-22; Psa 65:9-13. Also see note, Rom 8:19-22). Note that the LORD instructed the land not to fear. Although some interpreters apply this exhortation to the people of the land, most likely it is a poetic way of describing a restoration of the land's...
  - fertility and production
  - peace and security
  - freedom from war and destruction

Evidence for this interpretation is the fact that God encourages the wild animals not to fear any longer. The land would now produce more than enough fruit for them (v. 22). Destroyers of the land such as locusts and invading armies would no longer be a threat to the wild animals.

- e. Fifth, God would restore good weather (v. 23). There would no longer be famine, for there would no longer be droughts. An abundance of rain, both spring and fall, would fall from the sky to water the earth.

A further fact should be noted about this verse: the word *rain* (moreh) can mean teacher. Some scholars say that God is promising to give a *teacher of righteousness* — the Messiah Himself — to His people. In that light, the Messiah would come down to rain righteousness upon His dear people as well as to give rain to water the earth.

- f. Sixth, God would restore the people's food supplies (vv. 24-26a). All storage facilities and distribution centres would be filled with food. The threshing floors would be filled with grain and the vats would overflow with wine. In fact, the years of production lost due to the invasion of the locusts (the northern army) would be repaid in full. Never again would the people go hungry. They would always have plenty of food to eat.
2. God had three major purposes for restoring His people (vv. 26b-27):
  - a. To stir them to praise Him, offering up thanks for the wonderful miracles He performed on their behalf.
  - b. To make sure they were never again shamed and that His own Name would never again be discredited by the people's sins.
  - c. To make sure they knew the most wonderful truth: that He is always present with them and that He is the LORD, the only living and true God.

**Thought 1.** God the Father fulfilled His promise to send the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, to earth. And in Christ, everyone receives the wonderful offering of mercy and restoration. Christ came and lived a life of perfect righteousness. He was sinless; therefore, He could die on the cross as the *Perfect and Ideal Man*. As the *Perfect and Ideal Man*, He could die for every human being. His righteousness and death could stand or substitute as the righteousness and death for everyone who truly trusted Him.

This was the reason Christ came to earth: to offer mercy and restoration (salvation) to every human being who would place his or her faith in Him. But this was only the first coming of Christ.

God has also promised that Christ will return one day to establish His kingdom on earth. When Christ returns, He will not come as Saviour, but as the LORD God of the universe. Christ will return as King of kings and LORD of lords. On that day, all the promises and blessings of God's Holy Word will be fulfilled. All who truly trust the LORD will receive the ultimate mercy and restoration; that is, they will finally inherit the eternal promises of God — a new heavens and earth. Listen to what God's Holy Word says about the return and exaltation of Christ:

**Mat 2:2** *And asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him."*

**Mat 21:5** *"Say to Daughter Zion, 'See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'"*

**Mat 25:34** *"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.'"*

**Mark 16:19** *After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, he was taken up into heaven and he sat at the right hand of God.*

**Luke 1:31-33** “You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.”

**Luke 22:29-30** “And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”

**John 1:49** Then Nathanael declared, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel.”

**John 18:37** “You are a king, then!” said Pilate. Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.”

**Acts 2:32-36** God raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it. Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, ‘The Lord said to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand until I make our enemies a footstool for your feet.”’ Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.

**Acts 5:30-31** The God of our fathers raised Jesus from the dead — whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Saviour that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel.

**Rom 14:9** For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living.

**1 Cor 15:25** For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.

**Eph 1:19-21** And his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.

**Phil 2:9-11** Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

**1 Pet 3:22** Who has gone into heaven and is at God’s right hand — with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.

**Rev 1:5** And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the first-born from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood.

**Rev 5:12** *In a loud voice they sang: “Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and praise!”*

**Rev 17:12-14** *“The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but who for one hour will receive authority as kings along with the beast. They have one purpose and will give their power and authority to the beast. They will wage war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will triumph over them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings — and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers.”*

**Rev 19:11-16** *I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. He will rule them with an iron sceptre. He treads the wine-press of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. ■*