



Lesson 24 / October 15, 2017

DAY OF THE LORD

Joel 2

Key Verse

“Blow a trumpet in Zion; sound an alarm on my holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the LORD is coming; it is near, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness!”

Joel 2:1-2

Discussion Questions

1. How does Joel describe the day of the LORD? (Joel 2:1-11)
2. Why would this day cause his people to tremble with fear?
3. How should people respond to Joel’s warning? (Joel 2:12-14)
4. What does it mean to “rend your heart”?
5. How does the LORD respond to us when we rend our hearts?
6. Have you rent your heart and returned to the LORD?
7. Has the day of the LORD already happened, or is it still in the future? Consider Acts 2:14-21 and 2 Thessalonians 2:1-2.
8. Do you look forward to the day of the LORD with fear or with hope, or with both? Why?
9. How does Joel sound the alarm? How do we sound the alarm today?

Question 47: Why does the day of the LORD cause us to tremble?

Short Answer: *We tremble with fear because the LORD will pour out the full measure of his wrath upon the wicked.*

Full Answer: *We tremble with fear because in the coming day of the LORD, the LORD will appear with terrifying power, judge all humanity, pour out the full measure of his wrath upon the wicked, and utterly destroy them.*

Question 48: How is the day of the LORD our hope?

Short Answer: *The day of the LORD is our hope, for in that day God will eternally restore his people.*

Full Answer: *The day of the LORD is our hope, for in that day God will eternally restore his people who have returned to him, repented of their sin, called upon the name of the LORD Jesus, and received his Spirit; and we will be saved forever.*

Summary

Have you ever received a fair warning? Some warnings prompt us to react quickly in order to avoid imminent danger. Duck! Heads up! Watch out! Other warnings alert us to take action in case a potential “accident” occurs (i.e. buckling up in the car) or a possible threat materializes (i.e. preparing for a hurricane). The Old Testament prophets frequently warn Israel that terrible suffering will soon come upon them as a judgment from God unless they repent of their rebellion.

Likewise, the prophet Joel warns Israel about the coming “day of the LORD” when the LORD’s wrath will be poured out in judgment upon the wicked. We know very little about Joel himself or precisely when he lived, but we do learn from Joel 1 that the people of Israel are suffering a severe famine. Swarms of locusts have devoured all of their crops and now a drought is drying up what little remains. God’s people are hungry.

When we are suffering, our present pain consumes our minds and we no longer have the luxury of worrying about remote dangers and future threats. Joel, however, sounds the alarm in Jerusalem and warns Israel that the coming day of the LORD will be far more catastrophic than their current famine. Therefore, they must look beyond their present suffering and take heed of God’s impending judgment, and they must repent of their wickedness so that the day of the LORD will become for them a day of restoration rather than destruction.

Joel warns Israel in 2:1-11 by describing the terror associated with the day of the LORD (cf. 3:9-16). It will be a dark day filled with blackness, earthquakes, and devouring fires. The LORD himself will lead his armies in conquest and victory. Creation will be affected, with the sun and moon being darkened and the stars no longer shining. The power of the LORD will be displayed against all wickedness and the LORD will judge all humanity. Other prophets also describe this day of the LORD as a day of judgment upon *other* nations (e.g. Isa 13:6-16; Obad 15-17; Zeph 1:7-18), but Joel makes the shocking proclamation that this judgment will come also upon *Israel* for their disobedience (cf. Amos 5:18-20). Joel’s warning is truly alarming.

What can people do besides fear and tremble at the thought of this day? They can repent, of course! Joel’s call for repentance in 2:12-17 includes the memorable charge to “rend your hearts and not your garments.” The LORD does not want mere outward

demonstrations of repentance, such as tearing our clothes, but he wants our hearts so he can make them new (remember Jer 31:31-34 and Ezekiel 37). We rend our hearts when we repent of our wickedness; and when we repent, our gracious LORD will in turn relent from his judgment upon us. Thus Joel tells Israel to repent and the LORD will relent. Return to the LORD and the LORD will turn to you and bless you.

And the LORD will bless his repentant people by restoring them. Joel speaks first of an immediate restoration for Israel when the LORD will forgive their sins, revive their crops, and supply an abundant harvest so his people will again worship him with their tithes and offerings (2:18-27). But Joel also speaks of further *blessing* and *judgment* that will come “*afterward*” (2:28). In the *afterward blessing*, the LORD will pour out his Spirit on all humanity so that everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved (2:28-32). In the *afterward judgment*, the LORD will bring final judgment upon all humanity, condemning the wicked once and for all, and providing refuge for his own people and enabling them to flourish before him forever (3:1-21).

If we look ahead in the Biblical story, we find the apostle Peter standing in Jerusalem and declaring that Joel’s *afterward blessings* were fulfilled when the Holy Spirit was poured out upon Jesus’ disciples in the days following Jesus’ death and resurrection, so that the day has now come when everyone who calls on the name of the LORD Jesus will be saved (Acts 2:14-21; 4:12). However, the *afterward judgment* remains unfulfilled even today. The New Testament associates this final day of the LORD with the future return of Jesus (e.g. 2 Thess 2:1-2), when Jesus will return on the clouds with great glory and judge the all peoples and nations. This future day of terrible judgment is also the hope of all who know Christ, for in this judgment we will receive our eternal reward and our heavenly home.

Still today, therefore, the LORD’s work remains unfinished. Let us remember that the day of the Lord is at hand, when Jesus will return and the LORD will pour out his wrath upon the wicked. Let us hear the alarm and tremble at the thought of that day, and let us heed Joel’s warning and rend our own hearts and call upon the name of Jesus. Return to the LORD and he will turn to you and bless you, and you will be saved.