

# Joel: The Day of the Lord

## Joel 1-3

**Introduction:** When you think about *the Day of the Lord*, what do you think about? In a sense, every day is the Day of the Lord. Each day that you or I live is a gift from God. God grants daily grace to all of His Creation, making the rain to fall on the just and the unjust. His mercies are new every morning, withholding His just wrath on our sins.

In the Scriptures *the Day of the Lord* is used to describe a day when God intervenes in His Creation in a distinct way that can only be described as a day when His hand is actively seen by all— both unbelievers and believers, people and creation acknowledge God is doing something great. As we see Joel's description of the Day of the Lord, we will see God's noteworthy work in the present (chapter 1), God's anticipated judgment in the future (chapters 2-3), with a present response for us to draw near to Him now.

### 1. The Day of the Lord: Noteworthy News in the Present (Joel 1)

The Lord summoned elders and inhabitants of the land to behold the historically unique work he was doing in Joel's day (Joel 1:1-3). God was working in ways He had not in the past. He did things on a scale that He had not previously done in Judah.

**The Situation (Joel 1:4-7).** Yes, Egypt had ten plagues. In those days bugs had descended upon Egypt- *for a few days*. In Joel's devastating Day of the Lord, the armies of God were small but mighty— Almighty God used little locusts to swarm the land- and leave it destroyed. In Gideon's day, the Midianites had settled over the land, clearing it as locusts; Gideon's 300 had swept those human pests from the land under the battle cry "the sword of the Lord and of Gideon!" The locusts of Joel's day had swarmed, filling the land. Then they stripped the land of all produce (1:4). Joel described the tiny locusts as a multitude of little lions with fierce teeth (1:6)<sup>1</sup>.

The locusts left the land with nothing. Drunkards lost their drinks; even social drinkers had no wine to drown their sorrows (1:5). The vines that produced grapes were stripped (1:7); fig trees were left barren white, mere splinters of their former glory.

**The Solution: Seek the Lord.** Famine was imminent. The House of God, the temple was affected. People no longer brought offerings to God. That meant the priests were also unsupported (1:9). Farmers were ashamed while vinedressers wailed (1:11). The entire land mourned (1:10). Every fruit tree that showed God's blessing had become fruitless (1:12). As the showers of God's blessing dried up,

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew Henry said of the locusts: God is Lord of hosts, has every creature at his command, and, when he pleases, can humble and mortify a proud, rebellious people by the weakest and most contemptible creatures. (ESV Church History Study Bible at [www.esv.org](http://www.esv.org) )

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so did men's rejoicing (1:12). People were commanded to wail like widows who lost their beloved husbands in their youth (1:8).

#### **This was a time for both priests and people to mourn and fast (1:13-19).**

They were concerned for their own lives as well as for the people. Tears shed through the night would be seen by God. The priests would gather God's people to join them in intercession for the land (1:14-15). Notice the army of locusts, the famine, and the resulting prayer meeting are all part of this "day of the Lord" (1:15). Both the loss of food and joy mark this work of God in their lives (1:16). Storehouses and barns totter, fall, or were torn down (1:17). Even animals suffer (1:18). In such devastation there was only one possible help. Only God could help when all possessions, all resources were gone. No friend could loan food- they needed food too! With humble broken pleas, God's people cry: *To YOU, O LORD, I cry; for fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness and the flame has burned up the trees of the field. Even the beasts of the field pant for You; for the water brooks are dried up and fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness* (Joel 1:19-20).

#### **2. The Day of the Lord: Alarm for Future Judgement (Joel 2:1-11;3)**

Joel 1 is sobering. If we truly understand what God's people endured, we realize that some of the heart-rending videos we see of the suffering poor around the world was experienced by these heirs of the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants. These people knew how their ancestors had suffered in Egypt. They could remember the hosts who conquered the land in the days of the judges. They knew from experience "the way of the transgressor is hard."

If Joel 1 is sobering, Joel 2 is both shocking and scary. It begins with the trumpet calls of military invasion. This future Day of the Lord will bring to a climax God's judgment; even the contemporary judgment of Joel 1 would be eclipsed by God's work in this day of the Lord. This is the day when God's patience comes to an end. This is the day of judgment for the wicked. We live in the day of God's mercy- seek it today while you may!!!

**The warning** (2:1-2): The trumpet sounds. The alert comes: the army comes!

**The woe** (2:3-6): Fire before/ behind (3). Eden destroyed. No escape. Terror (6).

**The war** (2:7-10): Enemy discipline (7-8). Enemy enthusiasm to engage (9).

**This is the Day of the Lord** (2:11). No one can endure this. It is a day both local (for Jerusalem and Judah) and universal. Joel 3 indicates that nations such as Egypt and Philistia will rue their evil in acting as the agents of judgment on God's

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people. Joel 3:2 is the summons of the Judge of all the earth to all the earth: Come!

**The Philistines are singled out for their cruelty to Israel** (Joel 3:3-9). These people sold God's people as slaves; they would become slaves. Both nations and individuals "reap what they sow" (Galatians 6:7-10). Egypt, too, comes in for condemnation for her wickedness (Joel 3:19).

**The Captain of the hosts of the Lord summons the nations for a great fight to settle all wars (Joel 3:9-14).** Unlike World War 1, this will truly be the "war to end all wars!" Goliath was the champion of the Philistines in David's day; the "great warriors" of this day are challenged to fight Lord Sabaoth (3:9). The Lord loudly, definitely speaks (3:16). The "one little word that slays them"<sup>2</sup> will be what Revelation describes as the Sword coming out of our Lord's mouth (19:15). The strength that slays the wicked will protect the people of God; they will find God is their sure refuge (3:16).

In this, the Day of the Lord, God will be seen. His strength will be uncontested; His reign over all the earth will be glorious (3:17). The Day of the Lord will be a day of blessing for the people of God (3:17-18, 20).

### 3. The Day of the Lord: Requires Present Response to Receive Mercy

For saint and sinner alike, the way to avoid the terror of the Day of the Lord is to preemptively surrender. Lay down your arms against God. Cease all hostilities. Surrender all to God.

#### **The Lord's recipe for revival (Joel 2:12-26):**

1. Return with all your heart (Joel 2:12). Rend your heart, not your clothes (2:13a).
2. Remember who God is (Joel 2:13). He is gracious, merciful, slow to anger. He abounds in *chesed*, steadfast love. Remembering Him comes from remembering His Word (Exodus 34:6-10).
3. Receive mercy as the Lord relents concerning judgment (2:14)
4. Return with all God's people (Joel 2:15-17).
5. Receive in full what God removed (2:25)

God's mercy is great! (Joel 2:18-26). His people are satisfied in Him (2:19). God defeats the enemy army decisively (2:20). God's people have joy (2:21,23).

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<sup>2</sup> Martin Luther "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" (Korean-English Hymnal, #384, v. 3 last line).

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Praise the name of the Lord your God (2:26).

#### **The Lord's requirement for relationship with Him: belief (Joel 2:28-32)**

God is now working in a new way among His people. Peter said in his message at Pentecost that this passage is fulfilled at Pentecost. God has now baptizes with His Holy Spirit all who believe in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ (2:28-29). The one condition for this indwelling of the Holy Spirit is believing on His Son, Jesus Christ (32). This work that God does in us is earth shattering, earth shaking (30-31). God's own dwell in safety (28:32).

**Conclusion:** As we conclude today, I want to ask two questions:

1) **Christian is your life barren, stripped by locusts of sin or suffering?** If so, seek your God for times of refreshing! God has told us to seek Himself. We need to stop seeking our own way "rend our hearts." Let us come to Him trusting that He is indeed "gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and He relents over disaster." (Joel 2:13). If you have sinned, confess and forsake it; if this is a time of trial, commit it to the Lord in prayer. Trust Him to bring you through this hard time. He cares for you! The Lord promises that those who seek Him will find Him! We must cast all our burdens on our Heavenly Father.

2) **Friend, if today were "The Day of the Lord", do you know for certain that you are on the Lord's side?** Would He come to punish you as one of His enemies because you have opposed His Son and His people? Have you ever trusted His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ for eternal life? This is the only way to have the Holy Spirit dwell within you. This is the only way to please God (Hebrews 11:6). God so loved the world that He sent His only begotten Son into the world to die on the cross for your sins and mine (John 3:16).

God promises that whoever believes on His Son will not perish but have everlasting life. Do you have God's gift of salvation (Ephesians 2:8-9). Salvation is gift God gives by grace; you and I do nothing to deserve it. We simply receive that gift by trusting God's Son, Jesus Christ. If you have never trusted in God and His Son, Jesus Christ— do so today! The Bible says *behold! Today is the day of salvation!* Don't put this off. Believe in Jesus Christ today to ensure that you will live in heaven with Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior forever!