

Central Church Series

“The Day of the Lord” (in 3 parts)

1. Before It Happens: “A Snapshot of the ‘Day of the Lord’”

The “Day of the Lord” is an extended period of time in which God deals with Israel’s constant rejection of Him. It began with a veiling over a profound relationship between God and Israel, and will one day end with Israel’s restoration at Messiah’s return and His judgment of His people.

2. Before It Happens: “Checking the Prophetic Record”

Prophecy in Scripture is designed to press us to change. It should increase our confidence in God’s person and plan, and offer us a dramatic call to reach those still resisting God. Prophecy places demands on obedient believers for renewed holiness. What did the prophets say about the ‘Day of the Lord’ and its significance?

3. Before It Happens: The “Day of the Lord” in the New Testament and its Signs.

Joel 2 clarified two important issues information about the “Day of the Lord.” Now, we want to look specifically at the promise of the sign gifts and how those rich manifestations beginning at Pentecost related to Joel’s predictions long before.

Part One
January 7, 2026

Before It Happens: Snapshot of the 'Day of the Lord'

Predicting _____ is *not* a NEW THING... but it isn't at all! In fact, God, in His great mercy, sent **prophets** *centuries ago* who did just that.

One chief theme of predicted troubles can be found in prophecies marked by the phrase "**the Day of the Lord**."

So, let's start with the prophet _____, and build the frame of the new house we are constructing.

Joel was a prophet in Judah in the Divided Kingdom Period, a time about 210 years long between 928-722/1 BCE. God granted him special insight into the reason some natural disasters seemed to have stripped the economy of his day.

God in His mercy gave Joel the ability to peer through the darkness of the hour and hear clearly God's beckoning voice. He was tasked with repeating that voice to the world around him.

The writing he left is small, divided now into three simple chapters. The first part included words about why a _____ invasion, partly past and partly anticipated, came ripping through the farms of Judah's hills. The second part was a call to repent and change some _____, urging the people to turn back to God. The last part was included some marvelous _____ that showed God was going to bless the people in the future. So we have:

- The report of a desolation in Joel 1:1-2:11.
- The demand of an exhortation Joel 2:12-27, and
- The promise of a restoration in Joel 2:28-3:21.

Let's drop our eyes into Joel 2 for this lesson:

2:1 "**Blow a trumpet** in Zion, and **sound an alarm** on My holy mountain! Let **all** the inhabitants of the land **tremble**, For **the day of the Lord is coming...**"

God used a _____ to get the people's attention. They saw a locust invasion described in vivid terms in Joel 1. **The warning of God was made plain: this modeled something much larger that would devastate the children of Israel in the days ahead.** The prophecy was horrid, messy and *terrible*... but that wasn't the end of the story. Prophecy was never designed to leave people in the "soup" of judgment.

Some prophecies are revealed in very _____ terms. Some of them are *not linear* prophecies – neatly unfolded in chronological order like the organized closing argument of a lawyer. Rather, as God unwinds the cosmos around us and replaces it with a new Heaven and earth, there is a painful and nasty process – but it is **designed to bring forth something wonderful and exciting**. This isn't the only example of such pain-ridden processes in life.

Renovations are messy. The work is *arduous* and filled with *chaotic and painful* processes that are **designed to end in beauty and organization**. In the Bible, that is how God's eventual and dramatic end to the history of human rebellion is taken apart. The renovation precedes the rebuilt, at the edge of when time will surrender to eternity, and mutiny will be replaced by worship!

Joel's opening vision was stark, powerful and heartbreaking – but the _____ devastation provided a moving picture to refocus Israel on a coming judgment, and encourage them with the message that after the mess it would all end well.

These prophecies are more than they appear on the surface. They tell *pieces* of a story of the *world* God made, and what He is going to do with it in the end. They are parts of a story of what God did for His people, Israel – and what He **will do** to bring them to full surrender to Him. Like the intricate settings of a great movie, there is detail and drama. But here's a caution: We must not become quickly impatient for the revealed ending and **miss the _____ of the struggle** – because the prophets weren't in a hurry to over skip the painful details.

Here is why. **God's faithful character is uniquely revealed in the depths of a painful struggle. His glory is best discovered in a commanding triumph over the rebels, and His vast wisdom becomes most clearly seen in the rich texture of the prophetic struggle.**

Joel 2 turns on the words: "**The Day of the Lord**." This phrase was used **five times** in Joel beginning with Joel 1:15 (see also: 2:1, 11, 31; 3: 14). **You cannot begin reading the second chapter for but a few words and the phrase appears yet again.**

Because the prophet did not begin with a definition, we will need to distill the meaning of the phrase *FROM* the text. As we seek to do so, we will see this truth emerge...**The "Day of the Lord is an extended period of time in which God deals with Israel's constant rejection of Him.**

It began with the dropping of a **veil or blindfold** that hid a relationship with God the people once had, and ends eventually with the removal of that blindfold, when a final _____ at Messiah's return will bring about the final judgment of His people. I believe we will be able to discern this by looking at Joel 2.

Now, let's dive deep here.

Remember, when the prophets use the term "day" they don't always seem to mean a chronological 24-hour period. It isn't an instant, and doesn't imply a short event.

To be sure of that, all I have to do is look at prophetic literature in the Word. The term "day" **always appears to refer to time**, but some references appear to be **more** than a single calendar day:

1. There is the term "day of man's judgment" in 1 Corinthians 4:3 referencing our current time, when men "run the courts" on earth.
2. The "Day of _____" is mentioned six times in Scripture (1 Cor. 1: 8; 5: 5; 2 Cor. 1: 14; Phil. 1: 6, 10; 2: 16) and appears to refer to a time period with a major feature of when Christ will come to snatch away His church from the earth (as described in 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18), bringing Christians of the Church Age to be with Him forever (Jn. 14:1– 3).

3. Another term is the “Day of _____” (cp. 2 Peter 3:12) that seems to refer to the final disposition of heaven and earth (when they all ‘pass away’) as God remakes things using devastation and fire.
4. With these, there is also the “Day or the Lord” which seems to include several profound judgments of God on His people and on the nations before, during and after the Great Tribulation.

Based on those uses of the term “day” in the context of revealed judgment, the word **doesn’t appear to be only used of 24-hour periods**, but sometimes may be reckoned a protracted *period of time*.

Rather than defining the terms outright in Scripture, God gave us descriptions on which we can build a construct for the meaning of the “Day of the Lord” as we follow the record of Joel 2. This passage offers **seven descriptions** of the “Day of the Lord”: beginning with the call to assemble because of its impending arrival.

After Joel called the people in 2:1 to: “**Blow a trumpet in Zion, And sound an alarm on My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, For the day of the Lord is coming.**” He went on to describe the event...

First, the “Day of the Lord” was _____.

Joel 2:1b “...Surely it is **near**.”

From God’s perspective, God’s people were **running out of time** before an event that was part of Divine judgment would come upon them.

Don’t forget, when you read “near” in the Bible, that when we talk in terms of time with God, we have to be careful, since **He dwells outside of the dimension of time**.

Peter **defended the disciples who were speaking in tongues in Acts 2**. In my view, Peter carefully noted that with the coming of the Spirit to begin indwelling the believers, the “Day of the Lord” judgments were commencing. Something at Pentecost appeared to be acting as the _____ of the “Day of the Lord.” If my analysis of his reference is true, the “Day of the Lord” is a period of judgment beginning with the celebration of Pentecost in Acts 2, when the Spirit of God fell upon the church. The often-omitted effect *that event* had on Israel will become clear as we study further.

Second, the “Day of the Lord” would mark the moment a _____ was placed over the discerning eyes of God’s people.

Critical to the understanding of the nature of the “Day of the Lord” is the sentence that included the nature of the judgment – it was a “darkening” or “veiling.” The writer said it was:

Joel 2:2 A Day of darkness and gloom, A Day of clouds and thick darkness. As the dawn is spread over the mountains, so there is a great and mighty people;

The words evoke the image of the blanket of locusts that blocked out the sun. In the same way, the people of God would experience a **darkening and a gloom**. It may be a reference to natural disturbances – and clearly that was part of the issue. It may come with a great invasion of sorts, spread over the mountains and invading.

At the same time, the emphasis appears to be on the _____, because a veil descends over hearts to make a clear walk with God a distant, vague, and darkened pursuit. Paul appeared to have referred to such a “veil” as a “hardening” in Romans 11:25:

“For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery—so that you will not be wise in your own estimation—that a **partial hardening** has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; 26 and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, “The Deliverer will come from Zion, He will remove ungodliness from Jacob.” 27 “This is My covenant with them, When I take away their sins.”

Let me suggest it is reasonable to see the “Day of the Lord” includes as a main feature, a judgment of that intentionally placed a blindfold over the eyes of the Jewish people, in a time period that began with a painful sense of distance from God. It was not permanent, but it was God’s response to leadership that called Him to “leave them alone.”

Third, the “Day of the Lord” (though offering some resemblance of other judgments) seems _____ in the prophetic scheme.

It was promised to be both an *exceptional* and *distinctive* time...

Joel 2:2b “...There has never been anything like it, nor will there be again after it to the years of many generations.

In the Bible, the “time of Jacob’s Trouble” (called by Jesus the “Great Tribulation”) was described in Daniel 12:1 and Matthew 24:21 *exactly* that way – as a time unlike any other. The description in those places showed a judgment so heavy on the earth that the world would have been *decimated* were it not for God putting a stop to those days.

Unique judgment requires special attention. The fact that God clearly marked out a coming time that was *unlike any other* was an “historical highlighter” marking something very important. To God, the time of purifying His people wasn’t a WASTE of resources. The destruction of the landscape was “entirely worthwhile” as God drew people back.

Fourth, the “Day of the Lord” includes severe _____ of the landscape through Divine judgment as a main feature.

Obviously, if you are a Bible student, the description here fits well with the later description of the Great Tribulation...

Joel 2:3 A fire consumes before them and behind them a flame burns. The land is like the garden of Eden before them but a desolate wilderness behind them, And nothing at all escapes them.

Parts of the Great Tribulation are described in those exact terms, like in Revelation 8:6:

"And the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound them. 7 The first sounded, and there came hail and fire, mixed with blood, and they were thrown to the earth; and a third of the earth was burned up, and a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up. 8 The second angel sounded, and something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea; and a third of the sea became blood, 9 and a third of the creatures which were in the sea and had life, died; and a third of the ships were destroyed."

It appears the "Day of the Lord" **included the _____ Period** revealed most completely in Revelation 6-19, with the seven seal judgments (Rev.6), the seven trumpet judgments (Rev. 8) and the seven bowl or vial judgments (Rev. 16).

It will take a near decimation of the world to bring Israel to her knees. She won't realize she needs God until there is literally no stone left unturned and no forest unburned in her attempt to find her way *without Him*.

Fifth, the "Day of the Lord" includes the appearance of a _____, just as the locusts graphically pictured.

The story of "The Great Tribulation" captured in Revelation 16 and again in Revelation 19 both end with a *massive military buildup* on the earth that prepares to destroy Israel – but meets doom in the coming of Messiah and His forces from Heaven. Note how the "Day of the Lord" in Joel 2 appears to include this time...

- It includes the movement of a swift army: **Joel 2:4** Their appearance is like the appearance of horses; And like war horses, so they run.
- That massive army moved with great noise: **Joel 2:5** With a noise as of chariots They leap on the tops of the mountains, Like the crackling of a flame of fire consuming the stubble, Like a mighty people arranged for battle.
- The army that struck terror into hearts as it advanced: **Joel 2:6** Before them the people are in anguish; All faces turn pale.
- It appeared as a well-trained, overwhelming force on the earth: **Joel 2:7** They run like mighty men, They climb the wall like soldiers; And they each march in line, Nor do they deviate from their paths. 8 They do not crowd each other, They march everyone in his path; When they burst through the defenses, They do not break ranks. 9 They rush on the city, They run on the wall; They climb into the houses, They enter through the windows like a thief.
- The militia seemed _____, and blocked out even the stars (dust cloud or aircraft?) above in their overwhelming power and might: Joel 2:10: Before them the earth quakes, The heavens tremble, The sun and the moon grow dark And the stars lose their brightness.

The gathering of an army that would surely destroy them without God's intervention was also foretold in detail in Zechariah 12:12-14:5:

The burden of the word of the Lord concerning **Israel**. ... 2 “Behold, I am going to make Jerusalem a cup that causes reeling to all the peoples around; and when the siege is against Jerusalem, it will also be against Judah... 7 The Lord also will save the tents of Judah first, so that the glory of the house of David... 10 “I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn. 11 In that day there will be **great mourning in Jerusalem**, like the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the plain of Megiddo. 12 The land will mourn, every family by itself...14: 2 For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city will be captured, the houses plundered, the women ravished and half of the city exiled, but the rest of the people will not be cut off from the city. 3 Then the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fights on a day of battle. 4 In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east... 5 You will flee by the valley of My mountains ... Then the Lord, my God, will come, and all the holy ones with Him!

In the end, **Israel won't _____ herself**. They will finally see God's Son, their Messiah, and He will bring them rescue – just as He did for many of us. Salvation isn't about our ability to find God – it is about our response to Him when He stands right in front of our messed up lives and calls us to take His hand and follow Him. God isn't interested in people “**getting their lives together**” so they can meet Him. We *can't* do it. He is interested in us recognizing we have *no one* who loves us like He does.

Sixth, God's rescuing army also arrives.

Mid-way through the description of the advance of the army, the prophet appeared to have changed his description from the *opponents* of God, to the *army* God **sent** in response:

Joel 2:11 The Lord utters His voice before His army; **Surely His camp is very great**, For strong is he who carries out His word. The **day of the Lord is indeed great** and very awesome, And who can endure it?

Isn't this just like the description of the **assembly called from Heaven** for the defeat of the armies representing nations defiant against God that is found in Revelation 19:17?

“...Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and he cried out with a loud voice, saying to all the birds which fly in mid heaven, “Come, assemble for the great supper of God, 18 so that you may eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of commanders and the flesh of mighty men and the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them and the flesh of all men, both free men and slaves, and small and great.” 19 And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies assembled to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army.

The “Day of the Lord” doesn't only include the Tribulation Period, but also the end of that time with the coming of the Lord. The gathering of the nations was organized to attempt to destroy Israel and remove any memory of the God of the Bible – but then God showed up.

Seventh, when God's army appears, His people will again be called to _____.

Here, a message was passed to the Jewish people to get serious with God yet again, as their time had run out. Even though God called for generations, yet He called again. Long after they had forgotten His love... His patience called them back to Him:

The message of repentance is offered to His people: Joel 2:12 "Yet even now," declares the Lord, "**Return to Me** with all your heart, And with **fasting, weeping and mourning**; 13 And **rend your heart** and not your garments."

The opening to *return* to God's arms is offered to His people: Joel 2:13b "...Now return to the Lord your God,

Is that true of **YOU** today? Have you been on the run trying to make it without God, but you sense Him calling you today? Don't ignore Him! In fact, listen to the way the prophet, the **SAME GUY** who described the decimation of things all over the world, described the character of God...

Joel 2:13 b "...For He is gracious and compassionate, Slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness And relenting of evil. 14 Who knows whether He will not turn and relent And leave a blessing behind Him, Even a grain offering and a drink offering For the Lord your God?

Just as Zechariah 12:10 reminded us of the coming response of the people of Israel, so Joel cites the turning of the hearts of the people to the Lord in the face of the battle between God and the nations. **The appearance of the army of God will be a new opportunity to bow before the Lord.** The people will recognize the day and nothing will be more important!

In Joel 2:15 they are called to "**Blow a trumpet**"... to "**Consecrate a fast**" ... 16 **Gather** the people... **Assemble the elders**...

Even the long resistant spiritual leaders of Israel will call the people to repentance and recognize their own sins:

Joel 2:17 Let the **priests**, the Lord's ministers, **Weep** between the porch and the altar, And let them say, "**Spare Your people**, O Lord, And **do not make Your inheritance a reproach**, A byword among the nations. Why should they among the peoples say, 'Where is their God?'"

Clearly this will be a day when Israel will understand the choice they have to *finally* see the Lord clearly once again.

Here is the simple truth: God rescues when He is **invited** to do so. He saves when we **recognize** we need saving. As long as we think we can run our lives without Him, He lets us try. Here is what Scripture makes plain: It won't work for Israel, and it won't work for *you*.

The "Day of the Lord" includes God's heavy hand of judgment to get His people to _____.

It seems to have begun at Pentecost, when a blindfold fell in the echo of the sounds of the tongues in the room. It seems to end when the blinders are lifted at the appearance of the Redeemer in the midst of His rescue from the skies.

In coming studies, we will see more about God's wonderful rescue – but don't leave the **conviction** of this moment...

The penalty for constant neglect of God and their invitation of evil while distancing themselves from God was this: **God** . Intimate knowledge of God became **veiled**. For dark generations the Jewish people suffered. Many invented marvelous things, and some achieved notoriety and wealth. Yet, through it all they were living in turmoil under the "fog" of a spiritual life largely darkened. The prophet explained it.

When we push away from God, He politely lets us walk in the peril of our own arrogance.

God's judgment in His withdrawal is always palpable. They *KNEW* something shattered their identity. Even after the State of Israel has attempted to offer stability and identity to world Jewry, still they know *the world waits for their destruction* and they don't know *why*. It hurts. It is lonely. It feels wrong and isn't clear why these things are happening.

Yet, God's promises never stop at pain and rejection. There is coming an END to the pain. Significant to the narrative was this record of its end:

Joel 2:25 "Then I will make up to you for the years That the swarming locust has eaten, ... 26 ... **Then My people will never be put to shame.** 27 "Thus **you will know that I am in the midst of Israel**, and that I am the Lord your God, and there is no other; and **My people will never be put to shame.**

Look at that. **Grab the import of a nation redeemed, their lives restored.** Think about many people who have lived apart from God for much of their lives, only to find peace in the Savior late in life.