

“Day of the LORD” (Joel 1:15-20)

1. “Day of the LORD” (15)
 - a. Care & Caution: Too often (mostly in the West), contemporaries interpret this phrase to fit into their systematic eschatological system. It is better to interpret such in the immediate context of the prophet’s day, and the immediate context of the OT prophets who also used the phrase.
 - b. Coming Calamity: Such a day of judgment was seen originally by Israel as a day of their vindication and the Pagans’ punishment e.g. Isa. 13:6; 14:31. But Amos and Joel (among others) apply this judgment as pertaining also to covenant Israel e.g. Amos 5:18-20; Zeph. 1:7-13.
 - c. Covenant Consequences:
 - i. What Israel seemed to have obviously lost sight of was their sworn obligations to their covenant with God. Perhaps due to the past generations and or apathy they (like we) were blind to the obvious.
 - ii. What should have been obvious is the covenant contract between the LORD and Israel. Consider Deut. 28-30:
 1. Covenant Reviewed (28)
 2. Covenant Renewed (29)
 3. Covenant Requested (30:19-20) where God implored them to choose life and blessings, to choose Him.
 - iii. What could be more obvious than the literal descriptions of the promised curses in e.g. Deut. 28:38, 42, 49, and 51? In fact, these find fulfillment in *Joel* 1.
 - d. Covenant Consecration:
 - i. What is obvious to the NT writers is that Jesus consecrated the covenant to which Israel failed to comply. The covenant was administered by the Law and Jesus came to fulfill it to the letter. And having done so nullified the curses which came from man’s disobedience having secured the **New Covenant (NC)** of His blood (see Lu. 22:20 cf. Jer. 31:31-33).
 - ii. Either we are under the Covenant that curses our failures or the Covenant that covers our sins by the blood of Christ e.g. Ro. 6:14; Gal. 3:18; 4:21-26ff. Therefore, the temporal blessings and curses which the Covenant LORD (CL) predicted and promised came true under the **Old Covenant (OC)** to which we no longer adhere (see Heb. 10:29). *Now you are intelligent folks and can figure out the implications of locusts, land, luxury, and lineage. God is no respecter of persons and thus rather than interpret such passages in light of a new eschatological system which erroneously regards lineage (2 Cor. 5:16-17) and land (Mat. 5:5; Acts 1:8; Rev. 21:1) as pertinent as if the OC was still in operation.¹
 - iii. One may rightly ask, why then does the OT state that certain ceremonial ordinances will be done “perpetually”? First to answer, it is of pertinence that the land is not unconditionally Israel’s but God’s (as seen in Deut. 28ff.). Furthermore, re: lineage, Ro. 2 and 9 adamantly articulate that the true Jew is only found in the true Messiah and that true Israel are those who share Abraham’s faith not lineage. Finally, with regard to the perpetual ordinances; they are fulfilled in the eternal One to whom they pointed. Today, it’s not about the Levitical order, locusts, luxury, lineage, nor land

¹ A covenant with an entire nation of people is obviously not the same as a covenant with individuals who are born again in that some (or many) within the covenant nation may not prove faithful and thus be outside the covenant blessings, whereas those born from above are new creatures who will not forsake the seal of the Spirit of Christ.

“Day of the LORD” (Joel 1:15-20)

but the Lord Jesus! Rightly dividing the Word is not wrongly dividing Jew from Gentile but those in the true Jew from those outside of Him. Mat. 12:48-50 and even the OT reveals that only those who repent and trust the LORD are His people e.g. Jonah 3:6-10; Josh. 2 *Rahab the Pagan prostitute repented and is found in Jesus’ genealogy along with Ruth the Moabite; and Naaman the commander of Syria.

iv. Having been taught this in the NT, we now return to the context of *Joel*.

2. “How the animals groan!” (16-18)

- a. “Were not plagues of locusts commonplace in the experience of Israel? And was not the Day a mighty manifestation of eschatological wrath against his own nation or other nations? Indeed, there were those who interpreted the downfall of Jerusalem in 587 B.C. as so shattering that it constituted realized eschatology, the fulfilment of that terrible Day.”²
- b. Such devastation from the locusts was judgment from the “Almighty.” “*Mighty ruin from the Almighty* is an attempt to render a striking play on words, *shōd—shadday*. The second term is an ancient title for God associated with the patriarchs and taken up in Israel’s psalmody.⁷³ Its meaning is unknown, although there is an exegetical tradition preserved in the Septuagint and Vulgate that it signifies “omnipotent.” But here it is related to *shōd, ruin*. The venerated, comforting title of the God of help in ages past is turned into a negative expression for dread and alarm, “destroyer,” which in its original context spells disaster for a foreign nation, but here for Israel itself.”³ And yet she apparently refused to mourn her sin.
- c. V. 16-17 In Joel’s phrasing it conveys an astonishment that they refused to lament e.g. “Is not the food cut off before our eyes?” In other words, “Can’t you see what has happened and that such has direct correlation to the promised curses?” There is no true “joy” apart from the LORD.
- d. Here we see that the land, crops, and animals groan for the sin of the people. When the stewards fail, the commission suffers. When we fail to be salt and light the darkness remains and grows.
- e. V. 18 Sad is the narrative when the people refuse to mourn while the animals look to God (Job 38:41; Psalm 104:21; 147:9). The point is not that animals literally beseech and contemplate God but that we should take clues (all the more obvious ones) from nature and natural consequences that we need to return to the CL. →
- f. Ro. 8:18-23. As mentioned, we are not under the OC hence we need not interpret every natural disaster nor conflict as punishment from our CL. Nevertheless, all creation has been subjected to the consequences of sin entering the world. Paul thus instructed us not to be troubled with the present sufferings but understand that we and all of creation must endure sin’s effects until our hope is realized.

3. “O LORD, to You I cry out” (19-20)

- a. Amidst the aftermath of judgment, Joel cried out personally to the CL for all had been consumed. It’s the proper response. But are we to merely cry out to God when tragedy strikes?
- b. Are you groaning at the state of our nation? We may still have crops (albeit mainly GMOs). We may still have animals and livestock albeit often genetically modified as well. We may still have houses with couches, TVs, refrigerators, water heaters, and AC albeit in debt and or broke. We may have the ocean, lakes, and rivers albeit polluted. We may have children

² Allen, L. C. (1976). *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah* (p. 60). Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

⁷³ E.g., Gen. 17:1; 43:14; 49:25; Ex. 6:3; Num. 24:4; Ps. 68:14(15); 91:1.

³ Allen, L. C. (1976). *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah* (p. 60). Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

“Day of the LORD” (Joel 1:15-20)

albeit fewer and fewer and more in despair. But we have little to no righteousness, compassion, discipline, or conviction. What we are experiencing is a famine of morality, righteousness, and the Word of God.

- c. We must mourn and return to the CL taking back the good and great commission to bring redemption to this world. For the final Day of the LORD is yet to come for the wicked. We have the Day of the LORD behind us as the full of His wrath was poured out at Calvary!

PC

We must preach the certainty of the Day of the LORD. God’s judgment has come many a time, it will come on the final day, and it is actually happening in the present (Ro. 1:18ff.). Many ignore and or deny this reality and refuse to mourn their sin and the sins of society. But even the animals know stuff ain’t right (vv. 18, 20). Creation and animals suffer because of mankind’s sin. And those failing to acknowledge God and mourn their sin are stuck there because God’s chosen agents of salt and light have also refused to truly mourn such and take up their commission. Well, am I saying it all depends on us? Not entirely, but since Jesus left us with His commission, we need to have the urgency to mourn our sins, cling to our blessed hope, and share the Gospel. Oh, LORD, help put a fire under and in me to do this, in Messiah’s holy name, amen.