

What a Day That Will Be

(Overview of Joel)

11/1/15; Sun PM Pine Grove

Introduction

US History is known by its famous dates.

December 7, 1941 - The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

July 4, 1776 - Signing of the Declaration of Independence.

September 11, 2001 - Terrorist attack on World Trade Center and Pentagon.

Let's get a little harder...

April 12, 1861 - Start of the War Between the States when shots were fired at Fort Sumter.

One more...

February 11, 1974 - The day that Gerald Patrick Moss, Jr. entered the world.

Ok, so well maybe that is not that important of a date, but you get my point.

US history and even world history are known by the days that shaped the world.

Now, most of these days came without warning...

On December 6, 1941, though war was breaking out in the world, Pearl Harbor had little clue about what was coming next.

The same can certainly be said about September 10, 2001.

In New York City, that was simply a normal Monday, but that Tuesday morning changed everything.

In some cases, there was some warning of what was coming...

Tensions had been riding high between the states in the lead up to the Civil War.

Tensions were also high between the colonies and the British government in the lead up to the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

But generally speaking, famous days in history could not be predicted.

Now, when we ask ourselves, what is the greatest day in the Bible, there can be all kinds of answers..

Maybe it was the first day of creation.

That 24 hour period when God when He moved over the surface of the deep and created light and darkness.

Maybe it was that day when Jesus took on flesh and was born in Bethlehem.

Maybe it was that day that Jesus hung on a cross outside of Jerusalem.

Maybe it was that day when Jesus departed his tomb and defeated death.

Maybe it was that day when he ascended back to the Father.

If you took a vote, all of those days were incredibly important...

However, one day stands out if you read the Scriptures, and in fact the Bible sets this day apart by giving it the title, the Day of the Lord.

You will find reference to the Day of the Lord all throughout Scripture.

But what exactly is the Day of the Lord?

Well, the book of Joel is going to give a taste of what that day is like

Because The Day of the Lord is really the theme of the book that we are going to look at tonight.

Joel is a man that we know very little about..

In fact, all we know about Joel is what we find here in the book that God inspired him to write.

If you look at our timelines for the prophets, you will notice that Joel is one of the early prophets to Judah.

However, let me let you in on a little secret.

Bible scholars have a very hard time dating the book of Joel..

They simply make an educated guess of when Joel was a prophet based upon what he wrote and who he wrote like.

And from all the evidence, it appears that Joel wrote just prior to the time of Amos and Hosea.

There is also something else that you need to know about the background of the book of Joel, his prophecy is not about a near event in Israel's history..

Rather, it is about a far event in her history...

And here is what I mean...

If you remember all of our prophets up to this point, all have written about the destruction that was coming quickly to Israel.

Whether that was the fall of Israel in the north to the Assyrians or the fall of Judah in the south to the Babylonians...

Joel is not going to do that in his book.

Rather, Joel is going to talk about a natural disaster in Israel, and he is going to use that as an example of the natural disaster that is coming to everyone who doesn't repent and turn to the Lord.

Let's say that I sit down tomorrow and I write a book about the state of South Carolina..

And in the first chapter of that book, I talk about the floods that just hit our state...

And I showed pictures and I gave statistics and I described the devastation....

But then in chapter 2, I began to talk about how floods are like the power of God on display...

How the rising waters are like the justice of God...

And how we can put out sand bags and make preparations in a flood, but we are all at the mercy of the waters...

And then in chapter 3 of that book, I talk about the flood of God's justice that is going to come and strike down everyone who hasn't believed in Him...

That would be a good way to take a natural disaster and turn it into a reason to avoid the flood of God's wrath.

Now, people would probably look at me funny and say that I was taking advantage of the victims by writing a book...

And the book would probably never be sold by most retailers...

Yet, there would be truth in the book.

Well, that is exactly what Joel is going to do in his prophecy.

He is going to take the natural disaster of locusts striking Israel and destroying the land and turn it into a prophecy of God's coming destruction.

Now, the book is only 3 chapters and it is best divided into 3 parts...

You can see the outline on the screen tonight of the book of Joel...

I. The Shadow of the Day of the Lord (1:1-20)

II. The Snapshot of the Day of the Lord (2:1-17)

III. The Salvation of the Day of the Lord (2:18-3:21)

Now, there's one more thing that we need to do to set the stage for the book of Joel...

We need to talk about the phrase "The Day of the Lord."

A number of things may come to mind when you hear that phrase.

Like I said before, it is used throughout the Bible, but how are we to think about it?

Well, The Day of the Lord can be thought of in a few ways..

First, the Day of the Lord can refer to past judgments that fell upon Israel...

However, the most frequent use of the phrase is pointing to a future time in human history where God will judge the world..

And He will destroy His enemies.

Listen to 1 Thessalonians 5:1-3..

*Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you.
 2 For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord [a]will come just like a thief in the night.
 3 While they are saying, “Peace and safety!” then [b]destruction [c]will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape.*

Then 2 Peter 3:10...

10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and [b]its works will be [c]burned up.

As the NT church, when we hear the phrase, the Day of the Lord, our minds go to this future time that is still to come upon the world..

When it comes to this future Day of the Lord, most people think about this as one day in history...

However, there is both a broad view and a narrow view of the Day of the Lord.

Here is what I mean...

In one sense, the entire 7 year tribulation period, the 2nd coming of Christ, the judgment of the lost, the creation of the new heavens and the new earth are all parts of the Day of the Lord...

However, the narrow aspect of the day of the Lord is the 2nd coming of Jesus Christ to the earth.

Here's a way to think about it..

If I tell you that I am going to the Clemson game next week...

You understand that I don't just mean that I will arrive for the kickoff, watch the game, and leave when the clock hits zero..

Going to the game means that I will leave the house early, probably eat some chicken while tailgating...

Get into the stadium a little while before kickoff and then fighting traffic and then getting home late...

Going to the game has a broad part that involves all the activities, but then going to the game also means actually going and watching the game too.

That is the same idea of the Day of the Lord...

It has a broad meaning and a narrow meaning as well...

We are going to see both of those meaning in the book of Joel...

With that said, let's get into Joel...

I. The Shadow of the Day of the Lord (1:1-20)

This first section of Joel, I have entitled the shadow of the Day of the Lord...

And here is what I mean by that...

If it is a sunny day and you are outside and you look down, you will find your shadow..

Now, we all know that the black image on the ground isn't us....

It is simply our shadow...

However, it looks like us...

Even has our same profile and if it is really bright, our same hair and even is wearing our same clothes..

But the shadow is not us; it is not even a person at all...

Well, in chapter 1, Joel is going to describe a day that sound like the Day of the Lord....

But it is only a shadow of that day...

It is only a small picture of what the truth will be...

But Joel is still going to use this to get the people's attention...

Through an attack of locusts that came upon Israel...

Lets' read verses 1-4..

1 The word of the Lord that came to Joel, the son of Pethuel:

2

***Hear this, O elders,
And listen, all inhabitants of the land.
Has anything like this happened in your days
Or in your fathers' days?***

3

***Tell your sons about it,
And let your sons tell their sons,
And their sons the next generation.***

4

***What the gnawing locust has left, the swarming locust has eaten;
And what the swarming locust has left, the creeping locust has eaten;
And what the creeping locust has left, the stripping locust has eaten.***

We have a hard time understanding an attack of the locusts...

Now, if Joel had written about an attack of the gnats, we would know exactly what he meant...

Here are some pictures of locusts...

This is a single locust...

And here is what a locust is...

It is a grasshopper, and in most places in the world, grasshoppers are few in number...

However, in times of drought and then sudden rains, grasshoppers will begin reproducing very quickly and then begin swarming and moving...

These swarms can contain millions of locusts and can move hundreds of miles...

And in the process they can destroy all the vegetation in an area..

Here are some more pictures of these swarms....

And this is what happened around in Israel that caused Joel to write this prophecy.

The locusts had came and devoured the land..

And it was devastating in that culture and region.

Locusts swarms meant a reduced food supply..

And Joel tells the people to weep over this locust attack that has come upon their land...

In verse 5, he tells the drunkards of Israel to weep because they won't have any grapes to make their wine.

In verse 11, he tells the farmers to weep because they won't have any source of income..

In verse 13, he tells the priests to weep because no one will be able to bring offerings to them from their crops...

And then in verse 14, he tells all of Israel to mourn because the attack of the locusts has affected their whole land...

Not only do they not have food, the locusts even attacked their barns of surplus crops, and now even the livestock have nothing to eat.

We struggle here to understand because we are out of touch with this way of life...

If we need food, we head to Piggly Wiggly.

But just imagine if the grocery stores all closed down.

Most of us would be in a world of hurt.

And that is where Israel found herself in the days and weeks and months after the locust attack...

So, Joel takes this opportunity to get their attention...

And he begins to compare that attack with the judgment that the Lord is going to bring to their doors in the future...

And that happens beginning in chapter 2 with..

II. The Snapshot of the Day of the Lord (2:1-17)

Let's read Joel 2:1...

***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;
Surely it is near,***

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;
There has never been anything like it,
Nor will there be again after it
To the years of many generations.***

This is now a transition away from the locust attack to a day that is coming to Israel in the future...

Let me use the example that I talked about earlier...

Let's say that I went down to help the flood victims in Columbia...

And I am sitting there talking to a man about his home that has been destroyed by the rushing waters..

And I start out the conversation by saying...

Wow, it is incredible how much damage that water did to your house...

And then I talk about the force of the water and all that...

But then I make this statement...

As powerful as that water is, can you imagine the day when God will send his judgment upon the whole world...

It is going to be much worse than this...

Well, that is what Joel is doing here in verse 2...

He is moving from the locusts to a day in the future that will be much worse....

Now, let's take a little break and talk end times a bit...

The point of the coming 7 year tribulation period is centered on Israel...

The wrath that God will pour out on the world in those 7 years is going to be used to judge unbelief,

...

But it is also going to be used to bring Israel to salvation...

Now, we can't examine all the passages that talk about how the tribulation will go...

But let me give you a short version of those 7 years...

The first 3.5 years will be a time for general peace in the Middle East.

The Bible teaches that the tribulation will begin when Israel signs a peace treaty with the AntiChrist...

This peace treaty will last for 3.5 years but at the mid point of tribulation...

The AntiChrist will go in the Jewish temple and demand to be worshipped...

The Jews will resist and that will trigger widespread Jewish persecution...

We are going to see this next week in Mark...

But the persecution against the Jews will get so bad that every army of the world will eventually gather and march on Israel...

Toward the very end of those 7 years...

And I would suggest to you that Joel is writing about those coming armies in Joel 2...

Let me read these verses...beginning back in verse 1...

For the day of the Lord is coming;

Surely it is near,

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;

There has never been anything like it,

Nor will there be again after it

To the years of many generations.

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.

4

Their appearance is like the appearance of horses;

And like war horses, so they run.

5

[a]With a noise as of chariots

They leap on the tops of the mountains,

*Like the [b]crackling of a flame of fire consuming
the stubble,*

Like a mighty people arranged for battle.

6

Before them the people are in anguish;

All faces [c]turn pale.

7

They run like mighty men,

They climb the wall like soldiers;

And they each march [d]in line,

Nor do they deviate from their paths.

8

They do not crowd each other,

They march everyone in his path;

When they [e]burst through the [f]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.

10

Before them the earth quakes,

The heavens tremble,

The sun and the moon grow dark

And the stars lose their brightness.

In these verses, my personal view is that Joel is describing the army that will march on Israel at the very end of the Tribulation.

They will be like a locust swarm..

Organized, ruthless, and unstoppable and they will have their sights set on Israel from the very beginning..

In verse 10, you see that natural disasters will also be occurring as they approach Israel..

Earthquakes, dark sun and dark moon and stars not shining...

And what are all these events?

They are the same events described in Revelation as judgments coming upon the world in the very end of time..

Not only will Israel be dealing with catastrophic worldwide disasters, there will an army fast approaching them like a swarm of locusts...

And then we come to verse 11....

In that day, Israel will have reached her end...

Their world is falling down around them, an army is ready to overtake them...

And the worst part is that no other nation will be there to rush to their aid....

They will have but one choice in that day, and that is to call upon the Lord....

And look at verses 11-14....

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?***

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.”
Now return to the Lord your God,
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,***

God will still offer salvation to them in that great and terrible day...

When everything has fallen completely apart for Israel, God will offer them salvation..

And what does God always require to be saved?

Repentance and faith...

Look at verse 12...

Return to me with what?

Your heart!

That is what God had always wanted from Israel...

Heart obedience and faith in him form the heart..

And then look at what God says in verse 13...

“Rend your heart and not your garments.”

Rend means to rip or to tear...

Jews would often tear their clothes in extreme grief or sadness..

It was an outward show of emotion, but often times it was just that...

A show that had no heart connected to it.

God desires a broken and contrite heart...

He doesn't desire a show of emotion if your heart is not in it..

And so he tells Israel in verse 13...

In that day when you are surrounded on all sides, turn to Me and I will help you if you turn to me with all of your heart...

And guess what?

In that terrible day, Israel will get it with and understand.

They will finally see that God is their only source of help...

That Jesus Christ is their Messiah.

And they will turn to God with their whole heart and He will save them spiritually and even physically in that day..

That is what you see right here in Joel..

WE have one more section to look at in Joel and that begins in verse 18...

III. The Salvation of the Day of the Lord
(2:18-3:21)

In that day when Israel comes to her senses and repents from the heart, God will change everything...

Let me read these verses...

It's too good not to read..

18

*Then the Lord [g]will be zealous for His land
 And [h]will have pity on His people.*

19

*The Lord [i]will answer and say to His people,
 "Behold, I am going to send you grain, new wine
 and oil,
 And you will be satisfied in full with [j]them;
 And I will never again make you a reproach
 among the nations.*

20

*"But I will remove the northern army far from
 you,
 And I will drive it into a parched and desolate
 land,
 And its vanguard into the eastern sea,
 And its rear guard into the western sea.
 And its stench will arise and its foul smell will
 come up,
 For it has done great things."*

21

*Do not fear, O land, rejoice and be glad,
For the Lord has done great things.*

22

*Do not fear, beasts of the field,
For the pastures of the wilderness have turned
green,
For the tree has borne its fruit,
The fig tree and the vine have yielded [k]in full.*

23

*So rejoice, O sons of Zion,
And be glad in the Lord your God;
For He has given you [l]the early rain for your
vindication.*

*And He has poured down for you the rain,
The [m]early and [n]latter rain [o]as before.*

24

*The threshing floors will be full of grain,
And the vats will overflow with the new wine and
oil.*

25

*“Then I will make up to you for the years
That the swarming locust has eaten,
The creeping locust, the stripping locust and the
gnawing locust,
My great army which I sent among you.*

26

*“You will have plenty to eat and be satisfied
And praise the name of the Lord your God,
Who has dealt wondrously with you;
Then My people will never be put to shame.*

Then pay special attention to verse 27...

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.***

The whole point of the invading army...

The whole point of Israel going through the tribulation period is to get to the truth of verse 27..

They will realize that God is their God and their only source of rescue in this world....

And then what does salvation bring?

We see that in verse 28...

Israel will be blessed with the Holy Spirit.

He will come and indwell them like He comes to believer today and indwells them...

But their is one final problem....

Though Israel has turned to the Lord, they still have this massive army to deal with....

They are still in the midst of the tribulation and persecution...

So, how will God solve that problem?

Let's read Joel 3:1-2...

3

***1 “[a]For behold, in those days and at that time,
When I restore the fortunes of Judah and
Jerusalem,***

2

***I will gather all the nations
And bring them down to the valley of [b]Je-
hoshaphat.
Then I will enter into judgment with them there
On behalf of My people and My inheritance, Is-
rael,
Whom they have scattered among the nations;
And they have divided up My land.***

That army marching on Israel will be gathered in the valley of Jehosophat...

Which simply means the valley “God judges.”

You have probably heard it called the valley of Armageddon...

And then in verse 9...

We read this...

9

***Proclaim this among the nations:
Prepare a war; rouse the mighty men!
Let all the soldiers draw near, let them come up!***

And so all the armies of the world come together to prepare to destroy Israel...

And lets pick up the action in verse 15...

15

***The sun and moon grow dark
And the stars lose their brightness.***

16

***The Lord roars from Zion
And utters His voice from Jerusalem,
And the heavens and the earth tremble.
But the Lord is a refuge for His people.***

Long story short, God fights the battle for Israel with nothing but his voice...

Let me give you a better picture of this day by taking us to Revelation 19...

This is the same battle that we see described in Joel 3...

And this is how it ends...

Revelation 19:19

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.

20 And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs [h]in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with [i]brimstone. 21 And the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh.

Isn't it amazing the power of the Lord to defeat all the armies of the world with just His Word?

Yet, that is what he will do, and all the armies will fall, and all of Israel will be saved.

Conclusion

As I think about Joel, he was an unusual prophet in that we don't know when he exactly wrote this prophecy.

But as think about it, it really doesn't matter.

His message is timeless..

Israel had no idea when the Day of the Lord would come...

And we have no idea when the Day of the Lord will come...

But guess what, we don't have to wait until that day to call upon the Lord.

As Gentiles, we have the opportunity to be saved today...

That is not to say that Jews can't be saved today, they can.

But the Bible says that Israel is under a partial hardening until the fullness of the Gentiles has been saved.

We are simply blessed to live in a day where we can be citizens of the kingdom..

And that is exactly what we are.

Let us pray.