

An aerial view of Earth from space, showing the blue oceans and white clouds. Sun rays are streaming down from the top right, creating a dramatic, ethereal atmosphere. The title 'The Day of the Lord' is overlaid in large white text with a drop shadow.

The Day of the Lord

Dr. Ron J. Bigalke

Terrorists not only seek to overthrow governments, but also they appear to focus their efforts upon decimating vulnerable religious populations that are contrary to their own. Scripture reminds believers, “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Eph 6:12).

The Day of the Lord is certain to occur, and just as one of our days reaches a conclusion, so also will it. In view of that coming time, Scripture proclaims, “...Behold, now is ‘THE ACCEPTABLE TIME,’ behold, now is ‘THE DAY OF SALVATION’” (2 Cor 6:2).

Therefore, the people of God are to “pray at all times in the Spirit” (v. 18). The indisputable fact that terrorists are enemies necessitates the holy obligation given by Jesus: “love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven” (Matt 5:44-45; cf. Luke 6:27; Acts 7:60; Rom 12:20).

Terrorists kill their enemies in the name of their god. God’s people are instructed to love their enemies and “do good to those who hate you” (Luke 6:27). The believer’s response to terrorism is not Facebook rants, ground troops, online petitions, or tweets. Terrorism is a spiritual enemy, and thus the church loves rather than hates (cf. Rom 12:21). One manner in which one can demonstrate such love is by praying for the enemies of the gospel message. Of course, what has just been stated is not easy; it is impossible, and yet Jesus obligates His followers to love, not hate. The biblical worldview is that God created every human being in His image, and thus each person is potentially a brother or sister in Christ ... even the most hardened terrorist.

The prophet Joel encountered a world in which terrorists were victorious. Although the land was devastated, God told the prophet not to be anxious. The day of the Lord would soon commence, and that period would be a time of decision. Just as current terrorists have a decision and can receive God’s salvation—by grace through faith in Jesus Christ—so also did the terrorist nations attacking Judah in the prophet’s era. The time of decision was the final judgment, wherein they would be accountable for the eternal consequences of their terrorism against God. The opportunity to make decisions affecting eternity would not arise again.

God has spoken to certain individuals throughout the centuries, who have proclaimed a message hundreds of years into the future. Some of the biblical prophecies from 2,500 years ago remain to be fulfilled from humanity’s perspective today (Mic 4:1-5;

Mal 4; Isa 65:17; cf. 1 Cor 15:50-58; Rev 11:15). Critics tend to discount the prophecies as mere dreams, or to indicate that other nations asserted the role of prophets.

Regardless of how the critic understands the biblical prophets, one must consider the context in which a prophet was received. The validity of a prophet was based upon prophecies occurring with 100 percent accuracy in a relatively brief period of time (Deut 18:22). The people were to test a prophet’s speech based upon proclamations that would be fulfilled in months, a year, or two years. If such accuracy was demonstrated, the people realized that a true prophet had spoken, and they were to receive the prophecies occurring in an extended period of time. Through the prophetic Word, one is able to perceive how the supernatural impacts the present world context (as the Bible’s accuracy is confirmed).

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God’s Day

The background for Joel’s prophecy is a locust plague. Athaliah (“whom Yahweh has afflicted”) was the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel. She was the granddaughter of Omri, who was Ahab’s father. Athaliah married Jehoram, the son of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, and introduced pagan worship into the south-

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ern kingdom. Through her pernicious influence she led her husband and son, Ahaziah, into crime and idolatry. Ahaziah came to the throne when Jehoram died. Ahaziah “walked in the ways of the house of Ahab, for his mother was his counselor to do wickedly” (2 Chron 22:3). Ahaziah reigned one year and was put to death by Jehu (v. 9), whereupon Athaliah “rose and destroyed all the royal offspring of the house of Judah” (v. 10). From the slaughter, only Joash, the youngest son of Ahaziah escaped, due to his aunt Jehoshabeath rescuing him (vv. 11-12).

Joash was reared under the care of Jehoiada the priest for six years. In his seventh year, Joash was publicly declared king, and Athaliah was put to death (23:1-21; 2 Kgs 11:1-21). At approximately this time, a devastating locust plague invaded Judah. God often uses natural disasters to awaken people’s conscience to repentance. The incredible

catastrophe was a call for repentance and a harbinger of a greater judgment to come: the Day of the Lord. Embedded in physically vibrant imagery, this time of ultimate calamity, which is still future for humanity today (2 Thess 2:2; 2 Pet 3:10), makes evident the solemnity of God’s judgment against sin.

Joel is the prophet of the Day of the Lord, a concept well known in Old Testament prophetic texts. Several times in his three-chapter prophecy, Joel made reference to “the day” (1:15) or “the day of the Lord” (2:1, 11, 31; 3:14). The term “Day of the Lord” designates any time period in which God brings judgment upon Israel (and all nations); it is an appropriate concept for the prophets to use in relation to such divine punishment.

The expression “that day” has a broad range of meaning in Scripture, and can designate both calamity and favor. According to the Jewish calendar, a day begins in the evening at sundown, which

means that a period of darkness is followed by a time of light. Not only does such chronology reflect the creation account (“there was evening and there was morning,” a day), but also the nature of God’s dealings with Israel (and the world): first in judgment (darkness), and culminating in blessing (light).

God’s Charges

Joel 3 depicts four vivid representations of God’s future dealings with His people and the nations. In the future Day of the Lord, which is related to the coming of Messiah, all the nations will be summoned to God’s court and judged for their rebellion. Specifically, the charges against the nations involve their scattering of God’s people (v. 2), in addition to dividing their land (v. 2), stealing their wealth (v. 5), and behaving as if they were slaves (vv. 3, 6-8). God declared innocence in contrast to the nations (v. 4). Judgment was delayed, yet it is certain to arrive (cf. 2 Pet 3:9-10).

God’s Harvest

God calls the nations to assemble for battle and reap a final harvest (Isa 63:1-6; Rev 14:14-20). Peace is realized when military weapons are transformed into agricultural tools (Joel 3:10; cf. Mic 4:3). When the Lord summons the nations to their final battle, there will be no time to squander (Joel 3:11). God has chosen the locale where He will “sit” enthroned “to judge all the surrounding nations” (v. 12). The battle represents God’s judgment upon all the nations for mistreating His people (v. 13). God’s people will be resolute because the Lord will uphold their cause.

God’s Storm

The nations will experience the wrath of God (Joel 3:14-16). The Lord will provide for His people as “a refuge” and “a stronghold” (v. 16; cf. Ps 46; 91). The outcome will be to remove all doubt that the Lord is the God who dwells in Jerusalem (Joel 3:17), and “there is no other” (2:27). God is always a refuge for those who make Him their stronghold: by demonstration of personal faith (Ps 71:6-24) and by act of will (73:28). The final Day of the Lord will no longer allow people to experience a preview of ultimate re-

ality. The time of decision will culminate in abiding judgment upon the enemies of God’s people. God will then forever dwell among His people.

God’s Field

Joel’s prophecy began with the announcement of drought and famine, yet concludes with a description of a land flowing with sweet wine and milk (Joel 3:18). God will graciously dwell among His people (vv. 19-20). The Day of the Lord will conclude with a new beginning for God’s people.

The book of Joel reveals that one’s future is dependent upon his or her relationship to the Lord. Whosoever trusts Jesus Christ as Savior will never be called into God’s court (John 5:24; Rom 8:1-4; 1 John 2:1-2), and thus never must fear the wrath of God. With consideration of the Day of the Lord, how should God’s people respond? *First*, “be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming” (Matt 24:42). *Second*, recognize that each of us must “give an account” to God for our faithfulness to “do business” until the Lord comes (Luke 19:13; Rom 14:12; cf. 1 Cor 3:10-15; 4:5; 2 Cor 5:10). Jesus used the term “do business” (Gk. *pragmateusasthe*) in the parable of the ten minas (Luke 19:11-27), to command His followers to work until He comes for them.

The parable of the ten minas concerns a nobleman who traveled to a distant country, giving ten minas (pounds) to his servants and instructing them to gain more by doing business (trading in the market place). The “minas” represent the spiritual gifts and responsibilities that the Lord grants to believers. When the nobleman returned, he called his servants to give an account of their stewardship. The application is obvious. The believer is to “do business” in the marketplace of life by using God-given gifts to bring glory to the Lord.

Knowing that the Lord will hold each believer accountable for his or her stewardship, God’s people should be “making the most” of every opportunity (Eph 5:16). The Day of the Lord will come. Therefore, one glorifies and pleases God by using all his/her resources or strength in service of the Lord. “In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy” (1 Cor 4:2). (821)