

• *More on the Day of the Lord*

In chapter 2 Joel is continuing the theme of the Day of the Lord, only now he goes further. Once again he describes the Day of the Lord<sup>1</sup>; and again he calls the people to seek the Lord<sup>2</sup>. But this time he does so in a deeper way.

<sup>1</sup> 2:1-11  
<sup>2</sup> 2:12-17

• *The locust plague – a picture of judgement day for the entire universe*

The relationship between chapter 1 and chapter 2 is this: the locust plague is being used as a picture of the Day of the Lord, at a higher level and in a greater way. He is describing the final great Day of the Lord as though it was a very great plague of locusts. The picture of a locust plague is taken up by the prophet and used as a way of picturing judgement day. The Book of Revelation does the same thing in Revelation 9:3, 7–11. In chapter 1 the background had been local. Now the outlook is on the entire universe. Now Joel refers to 'the nations'<sup>1</sup>, 'the earth... sky... sun ... moon... stars'<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> 2:6  
<sup>2</sup> 2:8

**1. God's people are called to be ready for the Lord's intervention at any moment.**

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*'Blow the trumpet in Zion;  
sound the alarm on my holy hill.  
Let all who live in the land tremble,  
for the day of the Lord is coming.  
Surely it is near.'* (2:1)

*Vast and terrible – described in pictures and metaphors*

Remember the prophets' view of the Day of the Lord. The prophets had a conviction that there was so much wrong with the world that God would just have to step in, in some special way. They knew that God would judge sin and save the righteous. They did not give any dates concerning these matters. They had a vision of everything that God would do. They did not see any dates or times. The Day of the Lord can be foreshadowed. It is near upon all the nations. Every crisis gets us to see what the Day of the Lord is like. The judgement day is such a vast and terrible thing that all the Bible can do is use various pictures and metaphors to describe it.

• *Always near*

The Day of the Lord is always near. Even if the end of the world is not at hand there can be a foretaste of the end of the world.

• *God's people called to be ready*

It is God's people Israel who ought to be ready. He refers to Zion (Jerusalem), the capital of God's people in pre-Christian times. The 'holy hill' was where the temple was. Others are careless and do not believe in God's interventions. They do not know of the Day of the Lord. God's people are called to be ready.

**2. In the Day of the Lord there is judgement**

**2. In the Day of the Lord there is judgement and punishment of sin. There can be salvation too<sup>1</sup>, but God's intervention always exposes and punishes sin.**  
This day is:

<sup>1</sup> 2:32

**judgement  
and  
punishment  
of sin. There  
can be  
salvation too**

*'a day of darkness and gloom,  
a day of clouds and thick darkness.'* (2:2)

It is large and powerful:

*'Like darkness<sup>1</sup> spreading over the mountains,  
a large and mighty army comes,...'* (2:2)

This still uses the language of a locust plague, but it describes any judgement. It is unique:

*'... such as never was of old  
nor ever will be in ages to come.'* (2:2)

It is characterised by complete extermination. Verse 3 says:

*'A fire consumes before them,  
and behind them a flame burns.'*(2:3)

'Before' and 'after' refer to totality.  
It is devastating:

*'Before them the land is like the garden of Eden;  
but behind them it is like a desolate wilderness.'* (2:3)

Verses 4–11 describe God's judgement as being like a terrible army of invaders.

**• God's  
judgement like  
terrible invaders**

*'They have the appearance of horses; (2:4)  
and they run like war horses.  
With a noise like that of chariots they leap over the tops of  
the mountains,  
like the noise of a flame of fire consuming stubble,  
like a mighty army arranged for battle. (2:5)*

*Before them the tribes are in anguish,  
every face turns pale. (2:6)*

*They run like warriors;  
they climb the wall like soldiers.  
They all march in line,  
not swerving from their course. (2:7)*

*They do not crowd each other;  
they each go straight ahead. They break through the  
defences,  
they do not break ranks. (2:8)*

*They rush upon the city;  
they run over the wall.  
They climb into the houses  
like thieves they enter through the window. (2:9)*

*Before them the earth quakes,  
the sky trembles.  
The sun and the moon grow dark,  
and the stars lose their brightness. (2:10)*

*And the LORD utters His voice before His army.  
Surely His forces are very great,  
for strong is He who carries out His Word.  
The Day of the Lord is great and terrifying.  
Who can endure it?'* (2:11)

• **Picture language to describe God's judgement**

Some of this is picture-language. Revelation 9:7–12 uses the same language. The judgements of God are like armies of locusts. In Joel's day the locust plague was so great that Israel went on using the language of a locust-plague afterwards when describing the judgements of God. Yet there are indications that Joel is using the locust plague to point to something bigger and greater. Joel refers to 'nations' in 2:6. There is reference to the world and the universe in 2:11. So we have had many pictures of judgement: darkness – invasion – fire – a garden becoming a desert – an army of locusts. This is all picture-language picturing God's terrible judgement.

**3. The way to escape God's imminent judgement is to get close to Him and turn from sin**

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*'But even now, says the LORD,  
turn to Me with all your heart,  
with fasting and weeping and mourning.'* (2:12)

• **Fasting**

Joel tells the people to get close to God. 'Turn to Me', says God. The way of safety in the midst of judgement is to be close to the Lord. They are to take time ('with fasting'). Fasting was a way of giving up the common activities of life in order to give time to seeking God. They are asked to face their sins till they see how awful sin is.

We also may get foretastes of judgement day. Crises come. What do we do? We turn to God. We do so through Jesus. Jesus died for our sins so that we might turn to God in the way Joel asks.

Footnote

1 The word 'darkness' is 'dawn' in some translations. It is likely that the Hebrew *sh-ch-r* should be pointed *shechor* with *shewa* and *cholem*. The Masoretic text means 'dawn'; *shechor* means 'darkness'.

	<p>Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His <i>Preaching Through The Bible</i> (PTTB) books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.</p>	
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