

Zephaniah & Joel and the Day of the Lord

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- ▶ The bestselling book the Seven Habits of Highly Effective People totally revolutionized the lives of millions of people and one of the habits he talked about is a great summary of our podcast today.
- ▶ The habit I'm talking about is Habit #2—Begin With the End in Mind
- ▶ Join me as we look at the challenge of how to Begin with the End in Mind in the books of Zephaniah and Joel in our podcast today.

Class PLAN today

- ▶ First we will briefly go over the historical setting of the messages of the prophets Zephaniah and Joel
- ▶ We won't spend much time on the history because their time and messages are similar to the other prophets of the time
- ▶ But though they have similar messages that can be summed up by saying "Repent, change your way of life because judgement is coming" they also spend significant time talking about the phrase "Day of the Lord"
- ▶ And that's what we want to spend the majority of our time on today

A little emotional adjustment before we start

- ▶ When we talk about Beginning with the end in Mind, we are referring to "the Day of the Lord" a major theme in these books
- ▶ This is the end we have in mind because
- ▶ The term "Day of the Lord" means God's judgement on humanity, both in contemporary disasters and his final call to judgement of our world
- ▶ Having said that, many of us tend to avoid this topic because it's scary
- ▶ We would prefer a happier image, but instead when we think of a biblical end, images of fire and brimstone and the world dissolving in chaos and flames seem right out of, but far worse than any disaster movie we've seen fill out minds.
- ▶ But I don't want us to look at the challenges

about the Day of the Lord in that way.... So first....

Let me tell you a little story

- ▶ When I was in 6th grade I had my very own Sunday School class. It was in California near a military base. I had started helping in Sunday school when I was old enough for them to let me do it, but this was my very own class.
- ▶ I don't remember what the exact lesson was on that day, but I remember it seemed like some of the kids were being naughty and I wanted to put the fear of God into them.
- ▶ So I said—"You know Jesus is going to come back and how will you feel if you are acting badly?" Because I knew most of them were from military families I thought I'd come up with the greatest illustration ever to make them realize the seriousness of the situation when I said
- ▶ "It's just like when your Daddy is on TDY (a temporary assignment away), and he comes home when you aren't expecting it. Won't you feel terrible if you are doing something naughty?"
- ▶ A little girl immediately answered me and told me then everything I would ever need to know about the return of Jesus if we are a believer
- ▶ "OH, no!" she said, "I'll just be so happy to see him!"

We will be so happy to see Him!

- ▶ And we will!
- ▶ But to make our joy complete and to live our lives in the most fulfilling way possible
- ▶ Let's look at what his prophets had to say about "the Day of Lord"
- ▶ Not to make us afraid
- ▶ But to help us live our lives in the most meaningful way possible as we look forward to it
- ▶ Jesus died for us, lives for us, intercedes for us and someday (the Day of the Lord) we will meet Him face to face
- ▶ That is our assured ending and so to live the best way possible now, let's look at what it is all about

Historical setting of these books, Zephaniah primarily

- ▶ Joel—not sure of the timing (talking about both because of the prominence of the Day of the Lord as a topic in each), but Israel has gone into captivity,
- ▶ Good king Hezekiah died, then dark times in Judah’s history beginning with Manasseh who persecuted prophets, mostly likely killed Isaiah
- ▶ Made altars to Ashtoreth (Canaanite), Chemosh (Moabite), Milcom (Ammonite), and Baal (Canaanite)
- ▶ Manasseh restored child sacrifice (2 Ki 21) even sacrificing two of his own sons in the Valley of Hinnom
- ▶ Very long rule, 55 years, he later repented, but too late
- ▶ His son Amon was named after an Egyptian god, continued in idolatry and was assassinated after only 2 years

Then his son Josiah becomes king, last good king in Judah and this is when Zephaniah preaches

- ▶ Becomes King in 622 B.C. (2 Ki 22-23) at only 8 years old
- ▶ At age 26 decides to restore the Temple
- ▶ Finds the book of the Law
- ▶ Great sorrow, repentance, Prophetess Huldah tells him:
- ▶ **2 Kings 22:16-20** ‘This is what the Lord says: I am going to bring disaster on this place and its people, according to everything written in the book the king of Judah has read. ¹⁷ Because they have forsaken me and burned incense to other gods and aroused my anger by all the idols their hands have made, my anger will burn against this place and will not be quenched.’¹⁸ Tell the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the Lord, **‘This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says concerning the words you heard:’**¹⁹ **Because your heart was responsive and you humbled yourself before the Lord** when you heard what I have spoken against this place and its people—that they would become a curse and be laid waste—and because you tore your robes and wept in my presence, I also have heard you, declares the Lord. ²⁰ Therefore I will gather you to your ancestors, and you will be buried

in peace. Your eyes will not see all the disaster I am going to bring on this place.’”

The remainder of Josiah’s life in response to challenges of the prophets

- ▶ Zephaniah and Huldah prophesied early on in his reign; Jeremiah comes later and through the rest of his life and into the lives of his sons
- ▶ Josiah dedicated his life to revival in Judah
- ▶ Had the Law publicly read; renewed the Covenant
- ▶ Got rid of pagan altars and priests, mediums and spiritists
- ▶ Reinstated Passover
- ▶ End of life foolishly went to fight Pharaoh of Egypt and was killed
- ▶ Sons deteriorated back into sin, not trusting God and finally after several deportations, Judah is completely conquered by Babylon and the people go into captivity

Now for the books themselves—

Setting of the book of Joel

- ▶ Not sure of time other than in the general time-frame of the prophets we are studying
- ▶ The plague of locusts (most likely real, not simply an illustration) a forewarning of the coming national destruction
- ▶ Over both references to the Day of the Lord, here are some of Joel’s
- ▶ Joel 1:15 Alas for that day!
For the day of the Lord is near;
it will come like destruction from the Almighty.
- ▶ Joel 2:1-2 Let all who live in the land tremble, for the day of the Lord is coming. It is close at hand—
² a day of darkness and gloom,
a day of clouds and blackness.
Like dawn spreading across the mountains
a large and mighty army comes,
such as never was in ancient times
nor ever will be in ages to come.

Verses related to the Day of The Lord In Zephaniah

- ▶ Zeph. 1: 14 The great day of the Lord is near—near and coming quickly.
The cry on the day of the Lord is bitter;
the Mighty Warrior shouts his battle cry.
¹⁵ That day will be a day of wrath—

***Neither their silver nor their gold
will be able to save them***

on the day of the Lord's wrath."

- ▶ In the fire of his jealousy
the whole earth will be consumed,
for he will make a sudden end
of all who live on the earth.
- ▶but for those who trust in God
- ▶ Zephaniah 3:17 The Lord your God is with
you,
the Mighty Warrior who saves.
He will take great delight in you;
in his love he will no longer rebuke you,
but will rejoice over you with singing."

**A few of the other passages on it in the same time
frame**

- ▶ Isaiah 2:12 "For the day of the LORD of hosts
shall be upon every one that is proud and
lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and
he shall be brought low"
- ▶ Amos 5:18 "Woe unto you that desire the day
of the LORD! to what end is it for you? the
day of the LORD is darkness, and not light.
- ▶ Obadiah 1:15 "For the day of the LORD is near
upon all the heathen: as thou hast done, it
shall be done unto you: thy reward shall
return upon your own head."

**A consistent them warning of OT judgement, but
also in New Testament**

- ▶ Acts 2:20: The sun will be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood
before the coming of the great and
glorious day of the Lord.
- ▶ 1 Thessalonians 5:2 Now, brothers and sisters,
about times and dates we do not need to
write to you, ² for you know very well that the
day of the Lord will come like a thief in the
night. ³ While people are saying, "Peace and
safety," destruction will come on them
suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant
woman, and they will not escape.
- ▶ 2 Peter 3:10 But the day of the Lord will
come like a thief. The heavens will disappear
with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by
fire, and the earth and everything done in it
will be laid bare.
- ▶ Many more

**Why is this an important topic for us to study and
understand?**

- ▶ Idea of "the Day of the Lord" is Key to one of
the unique characteristics of Christianity
- ▶ Christianity is a linear religion with a clear
beginning and a clear end
- ▶ And verified historical markers along the
way—that we've looked at and will continue
to in our study of the Old Testament
- ▶ It is history with an end point—

**Very different from religions such as Hinduism,
Buddhism, modern New Age**

- ▶ These see existence as circular
- ▶ No "final judgment"
- ▶ Not to be flippant, but reincarnation is a
series of endless "do-overs"
- ▶ If you don't get it right this time, you have an
infinite opportunities to do it
- ▶ Christianity in contrast says very clearly in
Hebrews 9:27 "...it is appointed unto men
once to die, but after this the judgment."
- ▶ No do overs
- ▶ Which belief we hold, what reality is true has
tremendous consequences for how we live
our daily lives

A little like taking a class without grades

- ▶ You tend not to try very hard
- ▶ Very different (or it should be) if we believe
 - ▶ ***Only one life will soon be past***
 - ▶ ***Only what's done for Christ***
 - ▶ ***Will last***

▶ ***If we know there is a test, an end point, we
study, we try to do well***

What the Day of the Lord is.....

- ▶ A time when God supernaturally acts in
judgment (some say not necessarily a "day"
but a time
- ▶ Two purposes:
 - ▶ To punish wickedness
 - ▶ To purify and restore and reward his people
- ▶ In the past it was the time when after many
warnings judgement finally came on God's
people and the locus horde (which God
promised to restore what was lost) or they
were carried into captivity—but it was a
captivity with a promised return
- ▶ Today the coming Day of the Lord is when

Jesus will return

- ▶ Just like the prophets told people how they were supposed to act, God has told us also how we are supposed to act
- ▶ Because case the Day of the Lord **WILL COME**

Old Testament applications

- ▶ Knowing that God would bring judgment, but ultimately healing and restoration the prophets reminded people of the covenant they had made with God and how they should live as his people
- ▶ All that was prophesied came true—judgement and restoration that were both foretold
- ▶ Today we are told that a final “Day of the Lord” is coming and clearly shown how to live
- ▶ Let’s look at some of these passages

New Testament reminders & challenges

- ▶ ¹Thes. 5:⁴ But you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. ⁵You are all children of the light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. ⁶**So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be awake and sober.** ⁷For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night.
- ▶ ⁸But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. ⁹For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. ¹⁰He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. ¹¹**Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.**
- ▶ In the verses: Strong’s definition of “sober”: to be sober, not drunk, **to be calm and collected in spirit, to be temperate, dispassionate, circumspect**
- ▶ 1Pe 5:8 Be **sober**, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:
- ▶ Importance of one’s entire approach to life—starts in our minds and should influence how we live our lives—because we know what the end will be
- ▶ Take life seriously, your attitudes, how you

live—in so much of the culture today everything is a joke, but it isn’t

- ▶ 2 Peter 3:10-14 New International Version (NIV)
- ▶ ¹⁰But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare.
- ▶ ¹¹Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives ¹²as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. ¹³But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.
- ▶ ¹⁴So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.
- ▶ *Commentary on this: Not only might we rightly conclude that the cosmos will be resurrected, not annihilated, on the basis of Christ's conquest over Satan, but the Greek word used by Peter to designate the newness of the cosmos is kainos, meaning "new in quality," not in kind—a cosmos existing in continuity with the present creation.*
- ▶ *Put another way, the Earth will be thoroughly transformed, not totally terminated. When a flood destroys an island, it does not cease to exist, nor will the Earth when it is renewed by fire.*

Hank Hanegraaff

C.S. Lewis. . . .a quote not only for us, but that is important for others

- ▶ *“God will invade. But I wonder whether people who ask God to interfere openly and directly in our world quite realize what it will be like when He does. When that happens, it is the end of the world. When the author walks on to the stage the play is over. God is going to invade, all right: but what is the good of saying you are on His side then, when you see the whole natural universe melting away like a dream and something else - something*

it never entered your head to conceive - comes crashing in; something so beautiful to some of us and so terrible to others that none of us will have any choice left?

- ▶ *For this time it will God without disguise; something so overwhelming that it will strike either irresistible love or irresistible horror into every creature. It will be too late then to choose your side. There is no use saying you choose to lie down when it has become impossible to stand up. That will not be the time for choosing; it will be the time when we discover which side we really have chosen, whether we realized it before or not. Now, today, this moment, is our chance to choose the right side.*
- ▶ Another story: When I taught seminars on church communications I used to close with this quote to remind people of the incredible responsibility they had in their work and I think it is a good quote to remind us of the choices that need to be made by everyone on earth.
- ▶ Application here—to pray that the Lord will show us opportunities to share the importance of that choice
- ▶ I don't always do this, but once when traveling I was checking out and I left one of my books on Church Communications at the front desk of a hotel in South Bend. The young desk clerk looked at it, noticed it was a God related something and said, "Do you really believe that stuff?"
- ▶ I certainly do I said—he made some smart remark and then I added, "You ought to consider it because it's far better to meet Jesus as Savior now, before one day you face him as judge."
- ▶ The airport shuttle was waiting and I had to dash off, but the smart aleck attitude was gone and he said to me, "I never thought of that before."
- ▶ I've prayed for him over the years and I hope to see him in the kingdom. We never know how we might plant one seed the Lord can use.

Finally, some day it will be for us like it was for the children at the end of Narnia

- ▶ *There was a real railway accident, said Aslan*

softly....the term is over: the holidays have begun. The dream is ended; this is the morning.....

- ▶ *All their life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia had only been the cover and the title page: **now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story which no one on earth has read: which goes on for ever: in which every chapter is better than the one before.***
- ▶ The future "better than all that has come before" is how we want to focus on the Day of the Lord—not fears, not worries,
- ▶ But Thankful, anticipating
- ▶ Looking forward to a time when our Savior, our Lord, our Friend, perhaps the Father we never had, comes home and we will be SO happy to see Him!