

Week 1: “Joel & The Day of the Lord” (Joel 2:1-18)

Leaning into LENT

Dwelling in the Word

1. Prayerfully read through Joel 2:1-18 and ask: 1) What words, phrases, or images stood out to you? 2) What does this say about what God desires to accomplish in you? 3) How could you respond to what God says in this passage?

Beginning the Conversation

1. What ideas and images come to mind when you think about Old Testament Prophecy? How about the Minor Prophets?
2. Pastor Tyler suggested thinking about the prophets as “covenant police” who conveyed Yahweh’s message to call the people back to covenant faithfulness. What do you think of that metaphor for the role of a prophet?

Digging Deeper

1. The book of Joel warns of the coming “day of Yahweh.” Read Joel 1:15; 2:1-2, 11, 31; 3:14. How would you describe the “day of Yahweh”?
2. Joel also describes the “day of Yahweh” is also a day of hope, when Yahweh will usher in the new age. Read Joel 2:12-14, 18-19, 24, 28, 32; 3:1, 18. How does Joel describe human flourishing?
3. From the perspective of the Old Testament prophets, “the” day of Yahweh was understood as a singular event at the end of the ages which would usher in the age to come. How did the coming of Jesus the Messiah shift our understanding of the “day of the Lord”?
4. Joel issues calls for repentance and return to Yahweh a number of times: first to the priests in 1:13-14 and then to the people in 2:12-17. How would you describe the characteristics of repenting and returning to Yahweh their God?
5. How do you understand the meaning of Joel call to “Rend your heart and not your garments” (2:13, NIV)? What does this say about the importance of our internal heart attitudes toward our outward religious actions?
6. When Joel describes Yahweh as “gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in covenant love,” he is drawing on the way God described himself to Moses (Exod 34:6; see also Ps 86:15; 103:8; 145:8; Jonah 4:2). Does this description of the character of God motivate you to return and follow him?
7. After the description of the “day of Yahweh,” Joel tells the people, “Do not be afraid, land of Judah; be glad and rejoice. Surely Yahweh has done great things!” (2:21). Pastor Tyler mentioned that those who follow the Jesus no longer have to be afraid of the coming day of the Lord (i.e., the return of Jesus). Do you still live in fear of the coming day of the Lord? What motivates your actions: fear, or gratitude and joy?

Living it Out

1. The season of Lent is a time to take stock and consider your relationship with God as we approach Easter. Are there some ways you are trying to “lean into Lent” this year?
2. We live in the time between the “days” – between the first and second coming of Jesus the Messiah. How does living in the tension between the “already” and “not yet” characterize life for the Christ follower?

Return to the LORD

A Call to Covenant Faithfulness from the Minor Prophets

Pastor Tyler Williams
First Sunday of Lent (March 9, 2025)
Greenfield Community Church

Leaning into **LENT**

The Minor Prophets

Why “Minor” Prophets?

- Not called “minor” because they are insignificant, but only because they are short.
- In Jewish tradition, they all are put on one scroll called “The Book/Scroll of the Twelve.”

The Minor Prophets

Event	Super Power	Minor Prophets
Fall of Israel (722 BC)	Assyria	Hosea, Amos, Micah
Exile of Judah (587 BC)	Babylonia	Zephaniah, Nahum, Habakuk, Obadiah
Return (538 BC)	Persia	Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi Joel* and Jonah*

The Prophets & Prophecy

Prophets as “Covenant Police”

- Called Israel back to Covenant Faithfulness.
- Less about “foretelling” (predicting the future) than it is about “forthtelling (bringing God’s message to the people’s present situation).



The Prophets & Prophecy

Nature of Biblical Prophecy

- Historically Particular: They brought God's word to his people at a particular moment in time.
- Meaningful to Original Audience: Their message was almost always meaningful and understandable to the original audience.



Joel & The Coming Day of Yahweh

Joel 2:1-18



Leaning into **LENT**



The Book of Joel

Heading (1:1)

An infestation of Locusts and the Day of Yahweh (1:2-12)

- Call to Repentance (1:13-20)

An army of Locusts and the Day of Yahweh (2:1-11)

- Call to Repentance (2:12-17)
- Yahweh's Response (2:18-32)

The Nations and the Day of Yahweh (3:1-16)

- Blessings from Zion (3:17-21)



The Book of Joel

“The word of Yahweh that came to Joel son of Pethuel” (1:1).

- Don't know who this Joel is, but his name means “Yahweh is God” (יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים).
- Don't know when the book was written, though due to the frequency of allusions to other prophetic books it is likely quite late (400s?).



Locusts!! And more locusts!

Opens with a vision of a terrifying locust epidemic:

- “After the **cutting locusts** finished eating the crops, the **swarming locusts** took what was left! After them came the **hopping locusts**, and then the **stripping locusts**, too!” (1:4, NLT).
- “The fields are ruined, the ground is dried up; the grain is destroyed, the new wine is dried up, the olive oil fails” (1:10, NLT).



Locusts!! And More Locusts!

Locust epidemics were a dire threat to ancient peoples and were often used symbolically to refer to judgment (see Exod 10; Rev 9:3, 7-9).

Joel used this image of a locust epidemic to describe the coming “day of Yahweh.”

- Ch. 1: Past; Ch2: Immanent; Ch3: Future.



The Day of Yahweh

“Alas for that day! For the day of Yahweh is near; it will come like destruction from the Almighty” (1:15).

“Let all who live in the land tremble, for the day of Yahweh is coming. It is close at hand — ²a 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” (2:2).



The Day of Yahweh

“The day of Yahweh is great; it is dreadful. Who can endure it?” (2:11).

“The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of Yahweh” (2:31).



The Day of Yahweh

The day when Yahweh would defeat all of Israel's enemies and rescue his people once and for all (Isa 10:3; Ezek 7:19; Zeph 1:14; etc.).

The prophets shockingly announced that even Israel would not escape God's judgement on that day.

- "Woe to you who long for the day of Yahweh! Why do you long for the day of Yahweh? That day will be darkness, not light" (Amos 5:18).



The Day of Yahweh

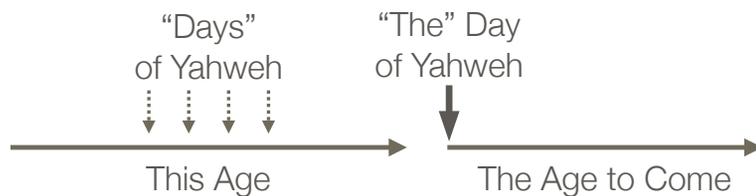
Also a day of hope — the day of Yahweh ushers in the new age, characterized by renewal, transformation, and *shalom*.

- For Joel, it is also a day of blessing (2:12-14);
- A day of renewal, for both land and people (2:18-19, 24, 28; 3:18);
- A day of salvation (2:32; 3:1).



The Day of Yahweh

For Joel the "day" is both near and far; both immanent and eschatological.

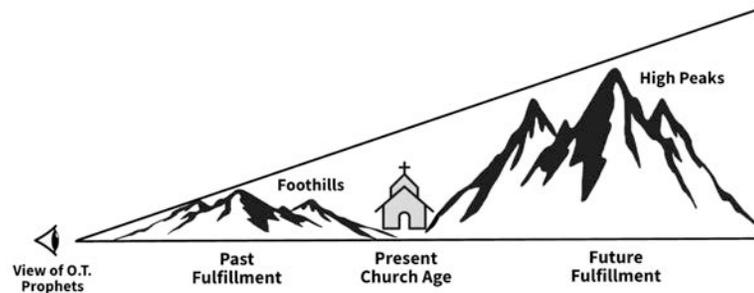


The Day of the Messiah

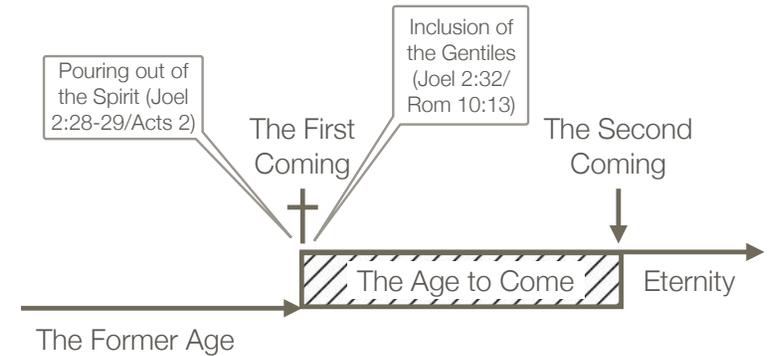
Picked up in the NT, but transformed to the "day of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1Cor 1:8; 2Cor 1:14); or the "day of the Christ/the Messiah" (Phil 1:6, 10; 2:16).

- This is a day of grace and salvation, but also a day of judgment (Matt 10:15; Rom 2:16; 2Pet 3:7, 10-12; Jude 6; Rev 6:17).

The Day of the Messiah



The Day of the Messiah



Repent, Return, and Reconcile

“Even now,” declares Yahweh, “return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.”¹³Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to Yahweh your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity. ¹⁴Who knows? He may turn and relent and leave behind a blessing—grain offerings and drink offerings for Yahweh your God” (2:12-14).

Repent, Return, and Reconcile

“Rend your heart and not your garments” (NIV) or “Don’t tear your clothing in your grief, but tear your hearts instead” (2:13, NLT).

- The point Joel is making with this image is that outward acts of grief or repentance *without the equivalent internal change of heart* are meaningless.



Repent, Return, and Reconcile

Why repent? Why return? Why reconcile?

- Because God “is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in [covenant] love, and he relents from sending calamity.”
- These qualities that Joel highlights get to the very heart of who God is (Exod 34:6; Ps 86:15; 103:8; 145:8; Jonah 4:2).



Invitation

For Joel, the coming day of Yahweh was meant to provoke a response.... to provoke a decision...

- “For the day of Yahweh is near in the valley of decision” (Joel 3:14).
- “Now is the time of God’s favour, now is the day of salvation” (2Cor 6:2; quoting Isa 49:8; cf. 2Peter 3:9).