

The Day Of The Lord

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Preacher: Colin Dow

[0 : 00] If I was not a Christian, I wouldn't have a clue where this world was headed. Wars and pandemics, social and economic breakdowns, climate change, natural disasters.

What does it all mean for where this world is headed? A world without a God who has a sovereign purpose for all things is cold.

It's unthinkable. If you don't believe in God, then all these horrifying things, they mean nothing. You can't allow them to mean anything other than that life has no ultimate meaning.

And that we all, even the best of us, are but random particles of space dust. Coagulated for such a short time on this aggregation of minerals we call planet Earth.

Well, the Bible has many answers to the question of where this world is headed. I say many, but really only one. It's headed exactly where a loving and sovereign God wants it to go.

[1 : 19] Namely, a new heaven and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. In which a redeemed humanity reaches the full potential for which God made us.

And in which all creatures praise and worship King Jesus. This is where this world is headed. Not the destruction of nothingness.

Not the recycling of that which has already been damaged beyond repair. But the fulfillment and the consummation of all of the loving and sovereign plans.

Of God our loving Heavenly Father. Tell me which vision would you rather. That of the consistent atheist.

Or that of the consistent Christian. As human beings, you know purpose is programmed into our DNA. We're programmed to ask that.

[2 : 21] Why question? And the ultimate answer is to be found in a loving and sovereign God's greater purpose for this world. For the Hindu, life is cyclical with everything repeating itself.

For the Christian, time is progressive with all things moving toward God's final destiny. The theology of this phrase, the day of the Lord, is designed specifically in the context of our idea of time and God's purpose.

Think of the history of our world rather like a straight line headed from point A to point B. Point A is creation.

Point B is consummation. Point A is where it all begins. Point B is where it all ends. Point A is old creation.

Adam, Eve, Eden. Point B is new creation. New Jerusalem. God's purpose for our world takes us from point A to point B.

[3 : 36] Now the authors of the New Testament use this phrase, the day of the Lord, to defer to point B. The ultimate end of all things where God creates a new heaven and a new earth.

A redeemed humanity reaches its full potential. And all creatures in heaven and on earth worship and praise King Jesus always.

So for example, in 1 Thessalonians 5 verse 2, the apostle Paul writes, You yourselves are aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.

Or again in 2 Peter 3 verse 10. The day of the Lord will come like a thief and the heavens will pass away with a roar.

So the day of the Lord for these New Testament writers constitutes the divine cataclysm. Which brings this age to an end.

[4 : 40] Ushering judgment upon the unrighteous. And salvation upon the righteous. That is point B.

But the Old Testament phrase, the day of the Lord, is used to describe what we might call dress rehearsals for the New Testament day of the Lord.

Relatively small scale events which serve the same ultimate purpose as the New Testament day of the Lord. bringing judgment upon the unrighteous.

Bringing salvation to the righteous. But just on a smaller scale. These Old Testament days of the Lord serve as warnings of the ultimate day of the Lord, point B.

When all things shall be made new. And so the phrase the day of the Lord in the book of Joel, you find it very often, corresponds to God-ordained events through which God judges the unrighteous and saves the righteous.

[5 : 57] And so the day of the Lord in the Old Testament is not to be understood as a singular event. Point B, as the writers of the New Testament understood it. Rather, it is to be understood as God drawing near to his people through their circumstances to judge the unrighteous.

And to save the righteous. That's why the Old Testament prophets are full of this phrase, the day of the Lord. Each pointing to a different set of events.

For example, in the book we're studying over these few weeks, Joel, the great swarms of locusts invading the land of Judah are called the day of the Lord.

Inasmuch as God is using these locusts to judge the unrighteous and to save the righteous. Let's go back a bit.

If I was an unbeliever, I wouldn't have a clue what was happening when the locusts chewed up my crops and then foreign armies killed my countrymen in battle.

[7 : 35] If I wasn't a believer in God, I wouldn't know where it was all headed when I saw my fields bare and I was being dragged off into captivity by a foreign army. But if I was a believer in God, when I saw that locust cloud on the horizon, I'd say to myself, this is the day of the Lord.

When through the circumstances God sends into my experience, he judges the unrighteous and saves the righteous. If I was a believer in God, when I saw these massed formations of a foreign army marching toward Jerusalem, I'd say to myself, I need to get my relationship with God sorted out.

Are there sins of which I need to repent? Are there promises that I need to believe? See what the day of the Lord means in the Old Testament?

A day of judgment, a day of salvation, where through the stark circumstances God sends into the lives of his people, he brings before them the ultimate reality of judgment and salvation to be handed out on that ultimate New Testament day of the Lord.

Point B, when King Jesus returns. These days of the Lord are dress rehearsals for the final show. In this sense, it's quite right that we call the coronavirus pandemic a day of the Lord.

[9 : 12] Because God has drawn close into the experience of humanity for both judgment and salvation to point to that final day of new creation and total transformation.

Compare Joel 2 verses 1 through 2 with this talk of locusts and armies with today's crises.

Wars and pandemics. Social economic breakdowns. Natural disasters. Climate change. These two are the day of the Lord.

Make no mistake about it. And therefore, it's a day for the church to blow a mighty trumpet to call the nation to repentance. It's a day for the church to sound the alarm that God is coming to judge the unrighteous and to save the righteous.

It is not a day for silence. It is a day for trumpets and for alarms. A day when God shakes his church and brings us to our senses.

[10 : 20] It is time for us to get our relationship with him sorted out. To repent of our sins. And to believe the gospel. But before we move to apply this theology of the day of the Lord in Joel, I want to clear something up of primary importance.

Namely, by the measure of the definition itself, who are the righteous God will save? And who are the unrighteous God will judge?

Who are the righteous God will save? And who are the unrighteous God will judge? Here is the good news of the biblical gospel. From Genesis through Revelation.

That a person is declared righteous not according to his or her good works. Not according to their ceremonial purity. Not according to their religious zeal.

Not according to their moral goodness. But according to their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Faith in Christ equals righteousness.

[11 : 36] So when a man or a woman believes in Christ, God declares him or her righteous.

Though she may have lived a useless life, because she believes and trusts in Jesus, she is the one

whom God will save on the day of the Lord.

Point B. By contrast, a person is unrighteous not according to his or her evil works. They're not unrighteous just because they never come to church. They never pray. Or they're immortal. They're unrighteous because they refuse to put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ. That rejection of Jesus equals unrighteousness. Though this person may have lived an eminently respectable life, a useful life, a life which contributes to society, because he or she refuses to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, he or she is the one whom God will judge on the day of the Lord. Point B. So it is our faith and not our works, which is the measure of God's judgment or God's salvation. That is the good news of the gospel.

[12 : 55] Righteousness, righteousness, therefore salvation, comes not according to our good works, but according to our faith in God's Messiah, Jesus Christ himself.

Okay then, having set all these ground rules for our understanding of Joel's theme of the day of the Lord as being extraordinary circumstances which herald judgment and salvation, I want us to explore just for a few moments what impact this should have upon us.

We cannot ignore the COVID pandemic. We cannot ignore climate change. We cannot ignore social breakdown. What impact should this understanding of the day of the Lord have upon us? Well, I'm sure there are many more, but I want to point to just four. The day of the Lord is a terror to the spiritually cold. The day of the Lord is an alarm to the spiritually lazy.

The day of the Lord is an encouragement to the spiritually confused. The day of the Lord is a comfort to the spiritually hopeful. Remember all the way through, the language and theology of the day of the Lord in Joel is God's signal for his church to blow a mighty trumpet, to call the nation to dependence, and the day for the church to sound an alarm that God is coming to judge the unrighteous, to save the righteous.

[14 : 41] First of all, Joel's theme of the day of the Lord is a terror to the spiritually cold.

A terror to the spiritually cold. Imagine a boy. The locusts are coming. He shouts as he sees in the distance this great cloud of insects flying toward him. There are cutting locusts and there are swarming locusts.

There are hopping locusts. There are destroying locusts. And they leave devastation on their trail. Crops are gone. Animals are dead. Water supplies are polluted.

Drought, famine, and death soon follow. That same boy, the foreigners are coming. He cries as he sees in the distance the chariots of an army moving toward him.

There are infantry and there are cavalry. There are chariots and there are archers. They leave a scorched earth policy behind them. Anyone the locusts did not kill the foreign armies did.

[15 : 49] Indeed, for such a person who has no faith in God such days are terrifying especially if they should be heralds of God's judgment and salvation.

What else can it mean for the person who has refused to trust in God other than in divine judgment? Other than divine judgment.

You see, this theme of the day of the Lord when God draws near in the experience of the locusts and the invading army is terrifying to the man or woman who does not trust in God.

Each day of the Lord in whatever form it takes is a terror to the spiritual cold. Those who refuse to have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ because it is a mark of certain judgment upon them.

They chose to reject God's loving and purposeful hand in the day of the Lord. In fact, rather than acknowledging God's hand in these things, they'll curse him sooner than they trust him.

[16 : 59] They'll blame God for the locusts, not themselves. They'll blame God for the armies, not that it was their own sins that brought this upon them.

I fully confess that I don't preach enough on the second coming of Christ that day, point B, of cataclysmic endings when the exalted Son of God shall appear in the sky to judge the righteous and the unrighteous.

There is no good news in the doctrine of the second coming of Christ for the person who rejects him, the person who chooses to be blind to the love of God in the gospel of his Son.

every time there is a dress rehearsal for that day, it should terrify the man who is spiritually cold. It's like a condemned man and he's looking outside the bars of his cell and he's watching the hangman testing the gallows upon which he is to be hung the next day.

every time he hears the trap door open, every time he hears the hangman's rope snap, surely this condemned man is terrified of the thought that will happen to him soon also.

[18 : 20] In the same way, each day of the Lord, in whatever form it takes, is a terror to the spiritually cold. If today you are still rejecting faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and you are choosing the path of blindness to his love, the day of the Lord should rightly terrify you.

I'm blowing the trumpet through this verse. I'm sounding an alarm through Joel. Whether it's a pandemic or a natural disaster, whether it's a war or a breakdown, it is a dress rehearsal for the real show.

It is time to open your eyes to the reality of God and his loving offer of salvation through Jesus Christ. It is time to respond to him in faith. Second, Joel's theme of the day of the Lord is an alarm to the spiritually lazy.

An alarm to the spiritually lazy. The problem with the people of Judah was not that they weren't God's people, like the spiritually cold of whom I spoke in the last point.

They were spiritually lazy. They had forgotten that they were God's beloved children, and as such, they were to follow his ways and obey his word.

[19 : 46] They were slipping from their faithfulness to him. They were beginning to allow the worship of foreign gods to impinge upon their religious life. Perhaps they had given in to the trappings of externalism where one's religious observance was all about being seen to do religious things.

religious they were never atheists, but they were practical atheists. They lived as though there were no God. To them the trumpet, the day of the Lord must come not as a trumpet blast, but as an alarm.

It is time to wake up. It is time to stop being a spiritual couch potato and to start straining those spiritual muscles which for so long have been inactive.

It is time to get back to the basics of the gospel, a living faith in a living saviour. Pick up your Bible. Get your heart right with God. As Joel will go on to say and we'll look at it next week, do not rend your garments, rend your hearts.

Consider your heart before God. Pray for the Holy Spirit to cleanse you from your apathy, from your laziness. Get into the race. Swing for the ball.

[21 : 05] Throw the pass. It is no time for sleeping when the day of the Lord comes in whatever form that should take. Many years ago the Christian singer Keith Green talked about this kind of Christian as being asleep in the light.

Asleep in the light. Tell me, are you asleep in the light tonight? Playing at your Christianity.

Happy with the externals. Subconsciously allowing other things to take the place only Christ should have in your heart. Things like money, popularity, pleasure, reputation, relationships.

When the day of the Lord comes, be it disaster, pandemic, or economic meltdown, the alarm is sounding. It is time for you, backslider, to wake up and get real about your faith in Christ.

It is time for repentance. It is time for recommitment. Third, the day of the Lord is an encouragement to the spiritually confused.

[22 : 27] It is an encouragement to the spiritually confused. I guess this goes without saying really, but of course it doesn't. 99% of everything I say from this pulpit isn't something you don't already know.

It is reinforcing truths that you already do. In Joel 2, 1-2, we read of something called the day of the Lord, a sequence of disasters, a great swarm of locusts followed by an invasion of a foreign army. Some look at these disasters and say to themselves, see, that's proof there is no God. That either he's not in control or he does not care enough about these things, enough about me to stop these things happening to me.

And so they get somewhat spiritually confused. It's understandable, I guess. you're trying to swat locusts away with one hand and you're trying to fight enemy soldiers with the other.

But by definition, look, according to the text, Joel says, this is the day of the Lord. It is entirely within the control and plan of God.

[23 : 45] It is not the day of the devil. It is not the day of the world. It is the day of the Lord. for the purpose of either judgment or salvation, it is God who has brought the locusts and it's God who has brought the enemy.

They might be enemy armies, but they're God's armies, his tools for judgment and for salvation.

They might be swarming locusts, but they're God's locusts, his tools for judgment and for salvation.

This is the day of the Lord, a day not for confusion, but a day for concentration. There may be some among us who are spiritually confused because of the COVID pandemic, because of climate change, because of societal breakdown.

the Lord, your God, is reigning. These days aren't signs that he's not in control or that he doesn't love you.

Rather, he has sent them for judgment and for salvation. They are reminders that God's plan is moving from point A, creation, to point B, new creation.

[25 : 08] They are dress rehearsals for the end show. I know I'm teaching my granny how to suck eggs here when I speak these words to you. But the day of the Lord is an encouragement to us all to remember that the Lord God in the face of Jesus Christ, his son, is seated on the throne of heaven and he doesn't just know, but he is directing where everything is headed.

dead. And then lastly, the day of the Lord is a comfort to the spiritually hopeful.

The day of the Lord is a comfort to the spiritually hopeful. There are many among us who, in our own pilgrimages, have traveled a fair way from point A, where it all began for us.

In fact, we're longing to get to point B. We're longing for Jesus to return and to make all things new.

We see only too well the pains of this world, the pandemics, the natural disasters, the terminal illnesses people suffer, the social disorders, the violence, the war.

We long for the day when God shall wipe all the tears from our eyes and usher in his kingdom of righteousness, where Jesus shall sit as king and we'll all praise him in the beauty of his holiness.

[26 : 42] Ah, we've had our fill of sin and we're longing to be purified. Our bodies are growing weak. We long to be glorified. Our hearts are empty and we long for Christ to fill them with his own inner presence.

Jesus. Joel's doctrine of the day of the Lord reminds us that time is moving in a line. That God is working his way from point A creation to point B new creation.

When these enemy armies attack and these locusts swarm, even though it hurts, it comforts the spiritually hopeful because it reminds us point B is closer today than it was yesterday.

Christ's return is closer now than it was yesterday. And that the sky which is now filled with locusts shall soon be filled with the vision of the Lord appearing in his glory.

And that the streets now filled with the sounds of foreign armies will one day be filled with the sounds of voices confessing that Jesus Christ is Lord.

[27 : 52] Lord. A day of the Lord like a COVID pandemic or a global economic meltdown is a reminder this world is headed somewhere.

It's not a cycle, it's a line to judgment or salvation. For the spiritually hopeful, for the person who has put his faith and trust in Jesus Christ and believes the gospel, strangely enough, it's a comfort.

For the consistent atheist, these can only be dress rehearsals of a hanging. For the consistent Christian, these are dress rehearsals for a wedding.

All the difference in the world. Let me ask you, where are you among these various people? The spiritually cold, the spiritually lazy, confused, the spiritually hopeful.

When there is a day of the Lord, whatever that looks like, what is your response? Terror? Wake up? Encouragement?

[29 : 08] Or comfort? Whatever it is, now is the time. As we come to the end, we hope and trust. Of this particular day of the Lord, we call the coronavirus pandemic.

Now is the time to make our peace with God through Christ and his gospel. And then let that trumpet blow and sound an alarm for Glasgow, for the day of the Lord is near.

Let us pray. audible? última universe■