

## 45. Defining a Northern Invasion (Hosea 1–6, 10–14; Joel)

The prophecies of Joel capture the invasion of the Assyrian army into the Promised Land in his day. Like the prophecies of Isaiah, however, the Day of the Lord that he predicts has a second fulfillment at the end of the world. It therefore most nearly typifies what we may expect in our day. The groundwork for this end-time scenario is laid by the laxness of God's people and their leaders. Their backsliding and unholiness sets the stage not just for God's retribution upon his own people but also upon the entire world. As in Abraham's day, it's as if there aren't enough righteous persons left in Sodom to prevent its destruction. The spiritual blindness that comes with evildoing catches them unaware of God's judgments now suddenly looming upon them:

“Gird yourselves, and lament, ye priests: howl, ye ministers of the altar: come, lie all night in sackcloth, ye ministers of my God: for the meat offering and the drink offering is withholden from the house of your God. Sanctify ye a fast, call a solemn assembly, gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of the Lord your God, and cry unto the Lord, Alas for the day! For the Day of the Lord is at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come. Is not the meat cut off before our eyes, yea, joy and gladness from the house of our God?” (Joel 1:13–16).

A time of scarcity that precedes an even bigger calamity causes temple worship to cease and paves the way for a powerful enemy to invade the land: “Tell ye your children of it, and let your children tell their children, and their children another generation. That which the palmerworm hath left hath the locust eaten; and that which the locust hath left hath the cankerworm eaten; and that which the cankerworm hath left hath the caterpillar eaten. Awake, ye drunkards, and weep; and howl, all ye drinkers of wine, because of the new wine; for it is cut off from your mouth. For a nation is come up upon my land, strong, and without number, whose teeth are the teeth of a lion, and he hath the cheek teeth of a great lion. He hath laid my vine waste, and barked my fig tree: he hath made it clean bare, and cast it away; the branches thereof are made white” (Joel 1:3–7).

An enormous army of men and vehicles overwhelms God's people and their land, causing utter destruction in its path. Called the “Day of the Lord” or God's Day of Judgment upon a wicked world, it is essentially God's doing as he uses the wicked to destroy the wicked in the process of cleansing the earth:

“Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the Day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand; A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains: a great people and a strong; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations. A fire devoureth before them; and behind them a flame burneth: the land is as the Garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness; yea, and nothing shall escape them. The appearance of them is as the appearance of horses; and as horsemen, so shall they run. Like the noise of chariots on the tops of mountains shall they leap, like the noise of a flame of fire that devoureth the stubble, as a strong people set in battle array” (Joel 2:1–5).

At their earth-shaking attack, an abiding darkness or pall of pollution settles over the land so that but little light is seen: “The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble: the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining: And the Lord shall utter his voice before his army: for his camp is very great: for he is strong that executeth his word: for the Day of the Lord is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?” (Joel 2:10–11).

Among God’s people, a speedy reformation occurs as leaders and people commence a period of mourning, repentance, and intercession with the Lord to save his people from their enemies: “Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly: Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children, and those that suck the breasts: let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet. Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God?” (Joel 2:15–17).

Upon seeing his people’s sincere repentance, the Lord has mercy upon them and drives the invading enemy from their land: “Then will the Lord be jealous for his land, and pity his people. Yea, the Lord will answer and say unto his people, Behold, I will send you corn, and wine, and oil, and ye shall be satisfied therewith: and I will no more make you a reproach among the heathen: But I will remove far off from you the northern army, and will drive him into a land barren and desolate, with his face toward the east sea, and his hinder part toward the utmost sea, and his stink shall come up, and his ill savor shall come up, because he hath done great things” (Joel 2:18–20).

The Lord will manifest himself among his people and restore their former sustenance: “And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you. And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you: and my people shall never be ashamed. And ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the Lord your God, and none else: and my people shall never be ashamed” (Joel 2:25–27).

A great outpouring of God’s Spirit will affect all ages as all become prophets in their own right: “And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit” (Joel 2:28–29).

An Armageddon type of scenario occurs in which invading armies are gathered to a place of their destruction after their work is done: “Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the Valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about. Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the press is full, the fats overflow; for their wickedness is great. Multitudes, multitudes in the Valley of Decision: for the Day of the Lord is near in the Valley of Decision. The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining. The Lord also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the Lord will be the hope of his people, and the strength of

the children of Israel. So shall ye know that I am the Lord your God dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain: then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more” (Joel 3:12–17).