

Thursday Evening Bible Study

Series: the End Times – Bible prophecy about future events and periods

NOTE: We will not be having Bible study next Thursday, August 2. We will resume on Thursday August 9.

Teaching Summary for Week 39

The Tribulation Period

Part 1. Introduction to the Tribulation

The Old Testament prophets describe a period that precedes the Messianic Kingdom.

It is a period of calamity (Oba 12-14), vengeance (Isa 34:8), trouble, wrath, distress, destruction, desolation, darkness, gloominess, clouds, alarm (all in Zeph 1:15).

The prophets call this period **the Day of the LORD**. We will study the Day of the Lord.

It is given several other names in the Bible as well, including the Time of Jacob's Trouble (Jer 30:7), the Day of the LORD's wrath (Zeph 1:18), The Tribulation (Deut 4:30, Mat 24:29), and the Great Tribulation (Mat 24:21, Rev 2:22, 7:14).

We ended in the book of Joel, and that is where we begin our study tonight. Joel contains a lot of great information about the end times, and especially the Tribulation.

Here's how the book of Joel describes the Day of the Lord:

Joel 2:1-11

1 Blow a trumpet in Zion,
And sound an alarm on My holy mountain!

Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble,
For the **day of the Lord** is coming;
Surely it is near,
2 A day of darkness and gloom,
A day of clouds and thick darkness.
As the dawn is spread over the mountains,
So there is a great and mighty people;
There has never been anything like it,
Nor will there be again after it
To the years of many generations.
3 A fire consumes before them
And behind them a flame burns.
The land is like the garden of Eden before them
But a desolate wilderness behind them,
And nothing at all escapes them.
4 Their appearance is like the appearance of horses;
And like war horses, so they run.
5 With a noise as of chariots
They leap on the tops of the mountains,
Like the crackling of a flame of fire consuming the stubble,
Like a mighty people arranged for battle.
6 Before them the people are in anguish;
All faces turn pale.
7 They run like mighty men,
They climb the wall like soldiers;
And they each march in line,
Nor do they deviate from their paths.
8 They do not crowd each other,
They march everyone in his path;
When they burst through the defenses,
They do not break ranks.
9 They rush on the city,
They run on the wall;
They climb into the houses,
They enter through the windows like a thief.

10 Before them the earth quakes,
The heavens tremble,
The sun and the moon grow dark
And the stars lose their brightness.
11 The Lord utters His voice before His army;
Surely His camp is very great,
For strong is he who carries out His word.
The **day of the Lord** is indeed great and very awesome,
And who can endure it?

Then in chapter 3 of the book of Joel, we learn that the Tribulation is followed immediately by **the Second Coming of Christ**:

Joel 3:9-21

9 Proclaim this among the nations:
Prepare a war; rouse the mighty men!
Let all the soldiers draw near, let them come up!
10 Beat your plowshares into swords
And your pruning hooks into spears;
Let the weak say, "I am a mighty man."
11 Hasten and come, all you surrounding nations,
And gather yourselves there.
Bring down, O Lord, Your mighty ones. [angels]
12 Let the nations be aroused
And come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat,
**For there I will sit to judge
All the surrounding nations.**
13 Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe.
Come, tread, for the wine press is full;
The vats overflow, for their wickedness is great. [compare to **Rev 14:15-20**]

14 Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision!
For the **day of the Lord** is near in the valley of decision.
**15 The sun and moon grow dark
And the stars lose their brightness.**
**16 The Lord roars from Zion
And utters His voice from Jerusalem,**

And the heavens and the earth tremble.
But the Lord is a refuge for His people
And a stronghold to the sons of Israel.
17 Then you will know that I am the Lord your God,
Dwelling in Zion, My holy mountain.
So Jerusalem will be holy,
And strangers will pass through it no more.

Perhaps you were able to identify certain events here. Like

- The Lord coming down from heaven with His angels
- The battle of Armageddon
- The Matthew 25:31-46 judgment of the Gentile nations

Joel teaches that the Second Coming of Christ comes immediately after the Tribulation.

Jesus said the exact same thing in the gospel of Matthew:

Matt 24:29-32

29 "But **immediately after the tribulation** of those days THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 30 "And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the **SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY** with power and great glory. 31 "And He will send forth **His angels** with A GREAT TRUMPET and **THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER** His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.

We also learn from Joel 3: 14-17 that **the Day of the Lord** includes **the Second Coming of Christ**.

Finally, in Joel 3:18-21, we learn that **the Millennial Reign** comes after the Second Coming of Christ (Joel 3:18-21). However, it does not come immediately after the Second Coming.

Joel 3:18 And in that day
The mountains will drip with sweet wine,

And the hills will flow with milk,
And all the brooks of Judah will flow with water;
And a spring will go out from the house of the Lord
To water the valley of Shittim.
19 Egypt will become a waste,
And Edom will become a desolate wilderness,
Because of the violence done to the sons of Judah,
In whose land they have shed innocent blood.
20 But Judah will be inhabited forever
And Jerusalem for all generations.
21 And I will avenge their blood which I have not avenged,
For the Lord dwells in Zion.

We will see more of this when we study the **external chronology** of the Tribulation Period.

Part 2. Overview

In this section, we will treat the Tribulation Period as a whole. We will study the title “the Day of the Lord”, the external chronology, the nature and description of the period, the source and purpose of the Tribulation, a high-level look at the internal chronology, and the major events of the Tribulation.

Chronology

First, though, a review of the three aspects of chronology.

Remember how we studied chronology (timing of events) early in our series on the End Times?

Chronology: For any event or period, there can be three aspects of chronology.

The first one is the **absolute** aspect. We can identify the absolute chronology of an event or period if we can pinpoint **the exact date** of that event or period.

The second one is the **relative to others** aspect (also called **external** chronology). For example, we can attempt to identify when the Second Coming occurs in relation to the Millennial Kingdom.

The third one is **internal** chronology. This pertains to **the order of events within a period**. An example would be the order of events during the Tribulation Period. It also pertains to **the duration** of the period. An example would be the length of the Tribulation.

The Day of the Lord

Several Old Testament prophets use the title “the Day of the Lord” to refer to that period that comes just before the Millennial kingdom.

We have already seen how Joel uses this title.

Now we will turn to other prophets to learn more about the Day of the Lord.

Isa 13:6-16

6 Wail, for **the day of the Lord** is near!

It will come as destruction from the Almighty.

7 Therefore all hands will fall limp,

And every man's heart will melt.

8 They will be terrified,

Pains and anguish will take hold of them;

They will writhe like a woman in labor,

They will look at one another in astonishment,

Their faces aflame.

9 Behold, **the day of the Lord** is coming,

Cruel, with fury and burning anger,

To make the land a desolation;

And He will exterminate its sinners from it.

10 For the stars of heaven and their constellations

Will not flash forth their light;

The sun will be dark when it rises

And the moon will not shed its light.
11 Thus I will punish the world for its evil
And the wicked for their iniquity;
I will also put an end to the arrogance of the proud
And abase the haughtiness of the ruthless.
12 I will make mortal man scarcer than pure gold
And mankind than the gold of Ophir.
13 Therefore I will make the heavens tremble,
And the earth will be shaken from its place
At the fury of the Lord of hosts
In the day of His burning anger.
14 And it will be that like a hunted gazelle,
Or like sheep with none to gather them,
They will each turn to his own people,
And each one flee to his own land.
15 Anyone who is found will be thrust through,
And anyone who is captured will fall by the sword.
16 Their little ones also will be dashed to pieces
Before their eyes;
Their houses will be plundered
And their wives ravished.

Consider these questions about this passage in Isaiah:

1. How does Isaiah describe the Day of the Lord?
2. How widespread is the destruction and judgment?
3. What events occur during the day of the Lord?
4. What happens to the people?

Ezek 30:1-9

1 The word of the Lord came again to me saying,
2 "Son of man, prophesy and say, 'Thus says the Lord God,
'Wail, 'Alas for the day!'
3 "For the day is near,
Even **the day of the Lord** is near;
It will be a day of clouds,

A time of doom for the nations.

4 "A sword will come upon Egypt,
And anguish will be in Ethiopia;
When the slain fall in Egypt,
They take away her wealth,
And her foundations are torn down.

5 "Ethiopia, Put, Lud, all Arabia, Libya and the people of the land that is in league will fall with them by the sword."

6 "Thus says the Lord,
"Indeed, those who support Egypt will fall
And the pride of her power will come down;
From Migdol to Syene
They will fall within her by the sword,"
Declares the Lord God.

7 "They will be desolate
In the midst of the desolated lands;
And her cities will be
In the midst of the devastated cities.

8 "And they will know that I am the Lord,
When I set a fire in Egypt
And all her helpers are broken.

9 "On that day messengers will go forth from Me in ships to frighten secure Ethiopia; and anguish will be on them as on the day of Egypt; for behold, it comes!"

Questions:

1. Who are the people whom Ezekiel describes?
2. What happens to them?
3. What words does Ezekiel use to describe the nature of this period?
4. Is anything positive or hopeful included by Ezekiel here?

Amos 5:14-24

14 Seek good and not evil, that you may live;
And thus may the Lord God of hosts be with you,
Just as you have said!

15 Hate evil, love good,
And establish justice in the gate!
Perhaps the Lord God of hosts
May be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.

16 Therefore thus says the Lord God of hosts, the Lord,
 "There is wailing in all the plazas,
 And in all the streets they say, 'Alas! Alas!
 'They also call the farmer to mourning
 And professional mourners to lamentation.
 17 "And in all the vineyards there is wailing,
 Because I will pass through the midst of you," says the Lord.
 18 Alas, you who are longing for **the day of the Lord**,
 For what purpose will **the day of the Lord** be to you?
 It will be darkness and not light;
 19 As when a man flees from a lion
 And a bear meets him,
 Or goes home, leans his hand against the wall
 And a snake bites him.
 20 Will not the day of the Lord be darkness instead of light,
 Even gloom with no brightness in it?
 21 "I hate, I reject your festivals,
 Nor do I delight in your solemn assemblies.
 22 "Even though you offer up to Me burnt offerings and your grain offerings,
 I will not accept them;
 And I will not even look at the peace offerings of your fatlings.
 23 "Take away from Me the noise of your songs;
 I will not even listen to the sound of your harps.
 24 "But let justice roll down like waters
 And righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

Questions:

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What people are addressed in Amos's prophecy? How do you know? 2. How does Amos describe the Day of the Lord? 3. What does the metaphor in verse 19 mean? |
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Obad 10-21

10 "Because of violence to your brother Jacob,
 You will be covered with shame,
 And you will be cut off forever.
 11 "On the day that you stood aloof,
 On the day that strangers carried off his wealth,
 And foreigners entered his gate
 And cast lots for Jerusalem —You too were as one of them.

12 "Do not gloat over your brother's day,
The day of his misfortune.
And do not rejoice over the sons of Judah
In the day of their destruction;
Yes, do not boast
In the day of their distress.

13 "Do not enter the gate of My people
In the day of their disaster.
Yes, you, do not gloat over their calamity
In the day of their disaster.
And do not loot their wealth
In the day of their disaster.

14 "Do not stand at the fork of the road
To cut down their fugitives;
And do not imprison their survivors
In the day of their distress.

15 "For **the day of the Lord** draws near on all the nations.
As you have done, it will be done to you.
Your dealings will return on your own head.

16 "Because just as you drank on My holy mountain,
All the nations will drink continually.
They will drink and swallow
And become as if they had never existed.

17 "But on Mount Zion there will be those who escape,
And it will be holy.
And the house of Jacob will possess their possessions.

18 "Then the house of Jacob will be a fire
And the house of Joseph a flame;
But the house of Esau will be as stubble.
And they will set them on fire and consume them,
So that there will be no survivor of the house of Esau,
"For the Lord has spoken.

19 Then those of the Negev will possess the mountain of Esau,
And those of the Shephelah the Philistine plain;
Also, possess the territory of Ephraim and the territory of Samaria,
And Benjamin will possess Gilead.

20 And the exiles of this host of the sons of Israel,
Who are among the Canaanites as far as Zarephath,
And the exiles of Jerusalem who are in Sepharad
Will possess the cities of the Negev.

21 The deliverers will ascend Mount Zion
To judge the mountain of Esau,
And the kingdom will be the Lord's.

Questions:

1. Who is the Lord speaking to through the words of Obadiah?
2. Who are those who escape in verse 17?
3. What will happen to the house of Esau during the Day of the Lord?

Zeph 1:7-18

7 Be silent before the Lord God!

For **the day of the Lord** is near,

For the Lord has prepared a sacrifice,

He has consecrated His guests.

8 "Then it will come about on **the day of the Lord's sacrifice**

That I will punish the princes, the king's sons

And all who clothe themselves with foreign garments.

9 "And I will punish on that day all who leap on the temple threshold,

Who fill the house of their lord with violence and deceit.

10 "On that day," declares the Lord,"

There will be the sound of a cry from the Fish Gate,

A wail from the Second Quarter,

And a loud crash from the hills.

11 "Wail, O inhabitants of the Mortar,

For all the people of Canaan will be silenced;

All who weigh out silver will be cut off.

12 "It will come about at that time

That I will search Jerusalem with lamps,

And I will punish the men

Who are stagnant in spirit,

Who say in their hearts,

'The Lord will not do good or evil!'

13 "Moreover, their wealth will become plunder

And their houses desolate;

Yes, they will build houses but not inhabit them,

And plant vineyards but not drink their wine."

14 Near is the **great day of the Lord**,

Near and coming very quickly;

Listen, **the day of the Lord!**

In it the warrior cries out bitterly.
15 A day of wrath is that day,
A day of trouble and distress,
A day of destruction and desolation,
A day of darkness and gloom,
A day of clouds and thick darkness,
16 A day of trumpet and battle cry
Against the fortified cities
And the high corner towers.
17 I will bring distress on men
So that they will walk like the blind,
Because they have sinned against the Lord;
And their blood will be poured out like dust
And their flesh like dung.
18 Neither their silver nor their gold
Will be able to deliver them
On the **day of the Lord's wrath**;
And all the earth will be devoured
In the fire of His jealousy,
For He will make a complete end,
Indeed a terrifying one,
Of all the inhabitants of the earth.

Questions:

1. Who is the Lord speaking to through the prophet Zephaniah?
2. How is the Day of the Lord described?
3. How widespread is the destruction?
4. What period of time is called the Day of the Lord by Zephaniah?

Zech 13:7-14:8

Questions:

1. Who is Zechariah addressing in this prophecy?
2. What does Zechariah describe in Zech 13:8-9?
3. What period does Zechariah describe in Zech 14:1-8? How do you know?