

5. The Book of Acts 2:19-21

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We have entered into Acts 2 which is divided into 3 main sections—

- 1) **The outpouring of the Holy Spirit**—verses 1-13
- 2) **Peter's first sermon as a Spirit-filled believer**—verses 14-39
- 3) **The practice of the early Church**—verses 40-47

Acts 2:1–4 (NKJV)

¹ When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. ² And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and *one* sat upon each of them. ⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

We have already looked at the outpouring of the Holy Spirit which was manifested with **'tongues of fire'** and the filling of the disciples with the Holy Spirit accompanied by them speaking in tongues. (Explain)

This led to the question asked by the multitude—**"Whatever could this mean?" (verse 12)**

That led Peter to respond—

Acts 2:14–21 (NKJV)

¹⁴ But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words. ¹⁵ For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is *only* the third hour of the day. ¹⁶ But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: ¹⁷ *'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams. ¹⁸ And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; And they shall prophesy. ¹⁹ I will show wonders in heaven above And signs in the earth beneath: Blood and fire and vapor of smoke. ²⁰ The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord. ²¹ And it shall come to pass That whoever calls on the name of the Lord Shall be saved.'*

I got to tell you I'm very impressed with Peter's grasp of the Scriptures. In Acts 1 he quotes extemporaneously from two different passages in the Psalms and applies them both to the replacing of Judas. Then here in Acts 2 he quotes from the prophet Joel (all from memory) and not a single verse or two—he quotes an entire passage on what we would call a *'last day's prophecy.'*

The prophecy of Joel basically starts with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit as recorded in Acts 2:1-4—and then goes on to talk about what the results would be:

- **Young men shall see visions**
- **Old men shall dream dreams**
- **The gift of prophecy (and other gifts of the Holy Spirit) given**
- **Wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath: blood skies; fire and smoke; sun darkened; moon becoming blood red**

So, the prophecy in Joel started with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the birth of the Church two-thousand years ago on the Day of Pentecost and continues right on into the Tribulation Period and the **'Day of the Lord.'**

"The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord." (verse 20)

The **"day of the Lord"** is a phrase that is used 19 times in the Old Testament and 4 times in the New Testament (Acts 2:20 (quoting Joel 2:31); 1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Peter 3:10).

Some associate *"the day of the Lord"* with what Peter said in 2 Peter 3:12 when he mentioned *"the day of God"*—but they are not the same thing as we will see.

The Day of the Lord is also referred to as the *"day of wrath"* in Zephaniah 1:15; and the *"day of darkness"* in Joel 2:2 and Zephaniah 1:15.

Scholar and New Testament Professor Renald Showers—

"The Day of the Lord refers to God's special interventions into the course of world events to judge His enemies, accomplish His purpose for history, and thereby demonstrate who He is—the sovereign God of the universe."

The Bible indicates that there have been several local *'day of the Lord'* judgments that took place in the Old Testament period when God raised up several nations to execute judgment on other nations. For example, God raised up Babylon to judge the southern kingdom of Judah during the 7th and 6th centuries BC.

We also read in the Old Testament how God used Babylon to judge Egypt and Medo-Persia to judge Babylon in the 6th BC—for example:

Ezekiel 30:2-4 (NKJV)

²"Son of man, prophesy and say, 'Thus says the Lord God: "Wail, 'Woe to the day!' ³For the day *is* near, Even the day of the Lord *is* near; It will be a day of clouds, the time of the Gentiles. ⁴The sword shall come upon Egypt, and great anguish shall be in Ethiopia..."

These were *local* *'day of the Lord'* judgments upon nations during the Old Testament period—but they also were a foreshadowing of the future **'Day of the Lord'** judgments that will be *worldwide* during the 7-year Tribulation Period (this is what Joel prophesied).

Often in the same passage there is a *local* day of the Lord judgment mentioned—but then the prophecy broadens and *'telescopes out'* to talk about the future *worldwide* Day of the Lord judgment—for example:

Isaiah 13:6-9 (NKJV)

⁶ Wail, for the day of the LORD is at hand [*local judgment pronounced upon Babylon—verse 1*]! It will come as destruction from the Almighty. ⁷ Therefore all hands will be limp, Every man's heart will melt, ⁸ And they will be afraid. Pangs and sorrows will take hold of *them*; They will be in pain as a woman in childbirth; They will be amazed at one another; Their faces *will be like flames*. ⁹ Behold, the day of the LORD comes, Cruel, with both wrath and fierce anger, To lay the land desolate; And He will destroy its sinners from it.

Now the language broadens to include the whole world in the future ultimate Day of the Lord judgment—

Isaiah 13:10-13 (NKJV)

¹⁰ For the stars of heaven and their constellations Will not give their light; The sun will be darkened in its going forth, And the moon will not cause its light to shine [*sixth seal of Revelation 6*]. ¹¹ "I will punish the world for its evil, And the wicked for their iniquity; I will halt the arrogance of the proud, And will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible. ¹² I will make a mortal more rare than fine gold, A man more than the golden wedge of Ophir. ¹³ Therefore I will shake the heavens, And the earth will move out of her place, In the wrath of the LORD of hosts And in the day of His fierce anger...

One author elaborates—

"The Old Testament prophets used the expression to describe both near historical judgments_(local) (Isaiah 13:6–22; Ezekiel 30:2–19; Joel 1:15; Amos 5:18–20; Zephaniah 1:14–18) and distant eschatological [end times] judgments (Joel 2:30–32; 3:14; Zechariah 14:1; Malachi 4:1, 5). Six times they call it "the day of doom" and four times "the day of vengeance."

These are horrifying judgments from God (cf. Joel 2:30–31; 2 Thessalonians 1:7–10) rendered because of the world's overwhelming sinfulness."

Let me stop and bring in something Peter said in his second epistle that I think is important that we understand—

2 Peter 3:10-12 (NKJV)

¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. ¹¹ Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner *of persons* ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, ¹² looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?

Bible scholars and teachers have debated—does the Bible teach that there is one more catastrophic, world-wide judgment that is coming (Tribulation Period—Revelation 6-19)—or two (the Tribulation Period and the total annihilation of the physical universe—2 Peter 3:12)?

Most Bible scholars say one more is coming and yet the Bible does talk about both the Tribulation Period and the total annihilation of the physical universe. That sounds like two more world-wide judgments that are coming separated by the Millennial Kingdom (1000-years). The answer to that question lies in our understanding of the term the "**day of the Lord**" which Peter makes reference to and associates with the physical universe being vaporized in future judgment.

2 Peter 3:10 (NKJV)

¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.

Once again, the term **“Day of the Lord”** is a term used in Scripture to describe God’s cataclysmic judgments on the wicked.

The **“Day of the Lord”** (as Peter uses it) is not a literal ‘day’, but a *period of time* that will start with the breaking of the first seal (Revelation 6:1-2) and will end with the destruction of the present material universe by God (2 Peter 3:10).

Another thing about the Day of the LORD that confuses people is that—some passages call it a *‘time of light’* while other passages refer to it as a *‘day of darkness’*—so which is it?

Well, to answer that question, you need to understand a standard Jewish day. The Jewish day is from sundown to sundown—just as it will be with the **“Day of the Lord.”**

It will start with the darkness of judgment during the Tribulation Period which will then be followed by the dawn of a new day in the history of mankind (the Kingdom Age)—a time of glorious *light* (God’s truth, righteousness, and justice) as Jesus reigns over the whole earth from Jerusalem.

The light of that “day” (Kingdom Age—one-thousand years in duration) will end with the *‘darkness of judgment’* (Great White Throne Judgment-Revelation 20:11-15) after which God will destroy heaven and earth (the final act of God’s judgment).

The Bible then says He will then create a brand-new universe containing a new earth and a new Jerusalem, and we will move from time into eternity (‘eternal state’)—the ultimate and never ending ‘day’ (no more night—Revelation 21:25).

The term *“day of God”* (2 Peter 3:12) is not the same as the *“day of the Lord”* (2 Peter 3:10).

- Again, the **“Day of the Lord”** refers to the time of world-wide judgment from the coming of the Antichrist (first seal in Revelation 6:1-2)—to the destruction of the physical universe.
- The **“day of God”** refers to the eternal state consisting of the *‘new heavens, new earth and new Jerusalem’*—the place where believers will live for all eternity (possibly consisting of a brand-new dimensionality).

Peter admonishes believers, considering the transitory nature of this present world—

2 Peter 3:11–12 (NKJV)

¹¹ Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner *of persons* ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, ¹² looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?

Some commentators believe that Peter is telling us that as Christians—we can actually *hasten* the coming of the day of God by living godly lives, praying, witnessing so as to bring others to faith in Christ, etc. Others say that there is nothing believers can do to rush or hasten the coming of the eternal state since the ‘day of God’ will only come *after* the Millennial Kingdom takes place (a definite 1000-year period of time).

They rather favor the translation of verse 12—not ‘hastening the coming’ but *‘desiring earnestly the coming’* (RSV) or realizing that we are *“rapidly approaching the coming”* (KJV)—*so start living a life of holiness and godliness*” etc.

Once again, Peter goes on to tell us that eventually (after the Millennial Kingdom) the Lord Jesus will go on to destroy the entire physical universe (corrupted by the Fall) before creating a new heaven, a new earth, and a new Jerusalem where the righteous will live for eternity.

2 Peter 3:13 (NKJV)

¹³ Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens [new universe] and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

Revelation 21:1-2 (NKJV)

¹ Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. ² Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

The original creation (Genesis 1) that God said was ‘good’ was corrupted by sin and therefore He destroys it and creates a new universe, earth and Jerusalem—that is untainted by sin.

This idea of the Day of the Lord starting in darkness (judgment) followed by light (the reign of Jesus Christ and the Millennial Kingdom)—is seen in several Old Testament references.

For example, Joel, after talking about the darkening of the sun, moon and stars and God’s Day of the Lord judgment on the armies of the nations gathered against Israel (Joel 3:9-16)—then foretold of a time of great divine blessings that will follow, “in that day” (Joel 3:17-21).

The prophet Zechariah, after laying out the future Day of the Lord judgments when all nations will war against Jerusalem and the Messiah will come to the earth to fight against the nations (Zechariah 14:1-5)—then Zechariah said “that day” will not be characterized totally by either darkness or light; instead, that “one day” would be characterized by both ‘darkness and light.’

The earlier part of that day (Day of the Lord) would be characterized by darkness (judgment) and the latter part by light—

Zechariah 14:6–7 (NKJV)

⁶ It shall come to pass in that day *That* there will be no light; The lights will diminish. ⁷ It shall be one day Which is known to the Lord Neither day nor night. But at evening time it shall happen *That* it will be light. [Jesus’ return—Matthew 24:27]

“Yes, but what about Acts 2:19-20 where Peter is quoting Joel 2:30-31 where God says—

Acts 2:19-20 (NKJV)

¹⁹ *I will show wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath: Blood and fire and vapor of smoke.* ²⁰ *The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord.*

- I believe that the Day of the Lord technically begins with the breaking of the first seal which brings the Antichrist into power on the world scene.
- This will then be followed by the next 4 seals that will include: war, famine, pestilence, and death.
- This will be followed by the breaking of the sixth seal—

Revelation 6:12-14 (NKJV)

¹² I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. ¹³ And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind. ¹⁴ Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place.

Now it is true that in both Acts 2 and Joel 2 God prophesied that cosmic disturbances would occur before the coming of the great and awesome **Day of the Lord**.

These cosmic disturbances don't happen until the sixth seal is broken (sometime during the second half of the 7-year Tribulation Period).

And yet I'm claiming the 'Day of the Lord' has *already* begun with the opening of the first seal and confirmed by the testimony of the unbelievers who cried out in v.17—

Revelation 6:17 (NKJV)

¹⁷ **For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"**

Once more, the Greek in Revelation 6:17 says, "*For the great day of His wrath has already come...*" not "*is about the start.*"

In other words, it has already begun with the first 5 seals—the 'earth-dwellers' are only now (with the breaking of the sixth seal) forced to admit that what has been going on is not 'climate change' or any other natural disaster—it is the judgment of God!

But Jesus told us that the final 7-year period we call the Tribulation Period will be divided into two halves.

He told us that the final 7-year period will start with *tribulation* (beginnings of birth pangs—Matthew 24:4-8) and be followed by *great tribulation* (the pangs of hard labor—Matthew 24:9-14)—culminating in the return of Christ and the birth of the Kingdom Age (Matthew 24:29-30).

Even so, the Day of the Lord will begin with *lesser* Day of the Lord judgments (first 5 seals) and will progress into great and awesome Day of the Lord judgments during the second half of the Tribulation Period which is also called the Great Tribulation.

Acts 2:20 (NKJV)

²⁰ ***The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD.***

That is how you can have Scriptures talking about the Day of the Lord being already in progress but then they talk about the great and awesome Day of the Lord judgments about to begin.

Malachi 4:5 (NKJV)

⁵ **Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.**

I believe that Elijah the prophet will be one of the Two Witnesses in Revelation 11 (Moses will be the other).

The ministry of the Two Witnesses has to take place before the '*great and dreadful*' Day of the Lord begins (the second half of the Tribulation Period consisting of great cataclysmic judgments that we call the 'Great Tribulation Period')—which Malachi 4:5 is telling us.

Which means their ministry will take place during the first half of the Tribulation Period (1260 days—Revelation 11:3).

→ **Listen:** Explanation of how after the Rapture every believer on planet earth is gone, and because God never leaves Himself without a witness—He immediately sends the Two Witnesses.

Yet as we study their ministry, we will clearly see that they are instruments of God’s judgment on the earth during that time as well.

So, their ministry will be a part of the Day of the Lord judgment but still be conducted before the coming of the ‘*great and dreadful Day of the Lord.*’ (Malachi 4:5 and Acts 2:20)

If you would like to know more about what it means to be a Jesus-follower— please, reach out to us. It would be our greatest privilege to lead you into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

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