

Joel 2:31

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come.

Analysis

The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood (Hebrew hashemesh yehafekh lechoshekh vehayare'ach ledam, הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ יִהְיֶה לְחֹשֶׁךְ וַהַיָּרֵא אֶחָד לַדָּם)—Joel describes cosmic catastrophe preceding the Day of the LORD. The verb hafakh (הִפָּךְ, "be turned/changed") indicates transformation or reversal—these celestial bodies won't merely dim but fundamentally change character. The sun becoming choshekh (חֹשֶׁךְ, darkness) echoes the ninth plague on Egypt (Exodus 10:21-23) and foreshadows Christ's crucifixion when "there was darkness over all the earth" (Luke 23:44). The moon becoming dam (דָּם, blood) suggests a red appearance, possibly from atmospheric disturbances, dust, or divine miracle.

Before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come (Hebrew lifnei bo yom-YHWH hagadol vehanora, לִפְנֵי בּוֹא יוֹם־יְהוָה הַגָּדוֹל וְהַנּוֹרָא)—these cosmic signs precede and announce the climactic Day of the LORD. Lifnei (לִפְנֵי, "before") indicates these aren't the Day itself but warning signs. Gadol (גָּדוֹל, "great") describes magnitude and significance. Nora (נּוֹרָא, "terrible/awesome/fearful") conveys the terrifying nature of God's judgment—this isn't celebration but dread for the unrepentant.

Jesus referenced these signs in the Olivet Discourse: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken" (Matthew 24:29). Peter quoted Joel 2:28-32 at Pentecost (Acts 2:16-21),

applying it to the last days inaugurated by Christ's resurrection and ascension. The signs began at the cross (darkness, earthquake) and continue through church history, culminating in final cosmic dissolution before Christ's return. Revelation 6:12 describes these events: "And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood."

Historical Context

"The Day of the LORD" (yom-YHWH) is a central prophetic theme appearing throughout Scripture. Originally, Israel expected it as the day God would judge their enemies and vindicate His people. Prophets shocked listeners by declaring that unfaithful Israel would first face judgment (Amos 5:18-20, Zephaniah 1:14-18). The Day has both near and far fulfillments—historical judgments (Babylonian conquest, Roman destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70) and ultimate eschatological judgment at Christ's return. Each historical fulfillment previews and guarantees the final Day when Christ returns to judge the living and dead (2 Thessalonians 1:7-10, 2 Peter 3:10-13, Revelation 19-20).

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How do cosmic signs preceding judgment demonstrate both God's mercy (warning before judgment) and His power (controlling creation)?
2. What does calling the Day "great and terrible" teach about the dual nature of Christ's return—deliverance for believers, judgment for unbelievers?

3. How should certainty of Christ's return and cosmic judgment shape your priorities, evangelism, and holiness?

Interlinear Text

הַשֶּׁשׁ הַשֶּׁשׁ	יִהְיֶה	לְחֹשֶׁךְ	וְהַיָּרֵחַ	לְדָם	לִפְנֵי
The sun	shall be turned	into darkness	and the moon	into blood	before
H8121	H2015	H2822	H3394	H1818	H6440

וְיָבֹא	יּוֹם	יְהוָה	הַגָּדוֹל	וְהַיּוֹרָא:
come	day	of the LORD	the great	and the terrible
H935	H3117	H3068	H1419	H3372

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 24:29 (Darkness): Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:

Malachi 4:1 (References Lord): For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.

Malachi 4:5 (References Lord): Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD:

Joel 3:15 (Darkness): The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining.

Joel 2:10 (Darkness): 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:

Luke 21:25 (Parallel theme): And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring;

Joel 3:1 (Parallel theme): For, behold, in those days, and in that time, when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem,

Matthew 27:45 (Darkness): Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour.

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