



THE LOOKOUT

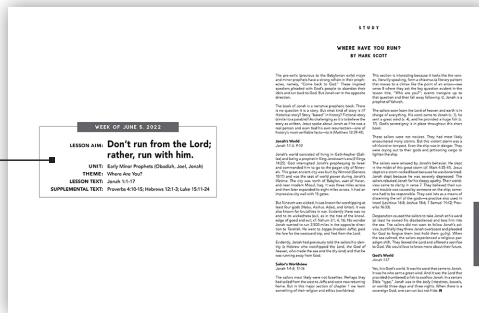
JUNE 2022

Unit: Early Minor Prophets (Obadiah, Joel, Jonah) Theme: Where Are You?

Overview: Sometimes they are just called “the Twelve,” the minor prophets (minor in size, not in inspiration) who the hound of heaven uses to pursue his people. Obadiah (845 BC) is the tale of two mountains (Mount Edom and Mount Zion). Joel (835 BC) shows how a locust plague can help bring about genuine repentance. Jonah (755 BC) is the struggle of a prejudiced prophet to love the nations as God does. Students will learn where Edom is, where Israel is, and where Jonah is.

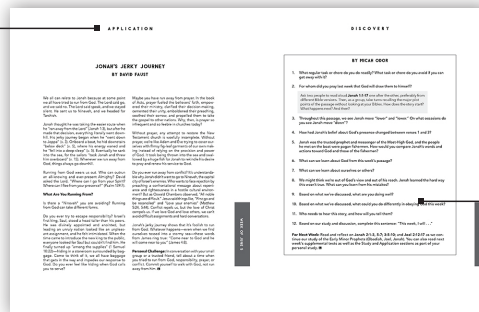
HOW TO USE

Each week has a **lesson aim**, **lesson text**, and **supplemental text**.



Tabs indicate the week of each lesson.

Each week features three sections: **Study**, **Application**, and **Discovery**.



Use the **Discovery** questions to study, discuss, and apply the Scripture passages in a group or class.

WEEK OF JUNE 26, 2022

LESSON AIM: **Call on him, for the day
of the Lord is near.**

UNIT: Early Minor Prophets (Obadiah, Joel, Jonah)

THEME: Where Are You?

LESSON TEXT: Joel 2:28-32; Obadiah 15-17

SUPPLEMENTAL TEXT: Acts 2:17-21; Isaiah 55:6; 2 Peter 3:9-13;
Romans 10:8-13

STUDY

BE READY FOR THE DAY OF THE LORD

BY MARK SCOTT

The flip side of salvation is condemnation. We usually do not like to speak about it, but God's patience does have an end, and we should not presume upon it (Acts 17:30-31; Romans 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9-10). *The day of the Lord* has come, is coming, and will come. It, of course, refers to some kind of judgment by God. James Smith wrote in *The Minor Prophets*, "Every local judgment is a harbinger of that final day when all sinners meet their doom at the judgment bar of God."

The early prophets Joel and Obadiah each had something to say about the day of the Lord. For Joel it was the signal that God was turning a new page in history. The locust plague and the drought were over, and God's kingdom was coming through his Spirit. For Obadiah it was that all nations should take a cue from the defeat of Edom for how they treated God's people.

Be Ready for the Spirit

Joel 2:28-32

And afterward is the start of this passage. After what? After God took away the locust plague and drought. After that, God's people could experience a fresh start and a new beginning. Joel did not tell his immediate audience exactly when this new day would come, but evidently it would unfold in layers.

This passage is quoted almost verbatim in Acts 2:17-21. While it is a good caution to not always borrow freight from the New Testament to interpret the Old Testament, nonetheless some passages are best understood in their prophetic fulfillment (what the scholars call "sensus plenior," meaning the fuller sense). At times what seems piecemeal and fragmentary in predictive prophecy can be abundantly clear when fulfilled.

When the Holy Spirit comes before the day of the Lord, the distinguishing mark will not be gender (as sons and daughters will prophesy), or age (as young and old will receive divine revelations). Cosmic signs (miracles) will break loose, but even those will not be the distinguishing marks. The main thing is that salvation will be available in Jerusalem.

The \$20 million question is, "When?" It might have been that these cosmic signs (wonders in the heavens and on earth, blood, fire, and billows of smoke, the sun turning dark, and the moon becoming blood red) already liter-

ally happened during the days of Joel (none of us were there). It could also have literally happened on the Day of Pentecost (none of us were there either). It could just be figurative language for God turning a new page in history and judging nations (certain Old Testament passages do use language that way). It could refer to a time yet in the future. Or . . . it could refer to the "beginning of the end."

In other words, the fulfillment of it could have started in Joel's day, come down through Pentecost, and ultimately will be fulfilled in the judgment of God at the return of Christ. Having the Holy Spirit makes one prepared for any day of the Lord.

Be Ready for Deliverance

Obadiah 15-17

The book of Obadiah is the shortest prophetic book in the Old Testament. The prophet might have been the first to write his prophecy (maybe 845 BCE—although some would date it way later, e.g., 586 BCE). Obadiah means "servant of Yahweh," and 12 people in the Bible have this name.

His primary concern is the nation of Edom. This nation had its origin during the time of the patriarchs (Genesis 25:30). The children of Esau formed a great nation. But they opposed the Israelites when they came out of Egypt. God punished them more than once for this lack of kindness. Their land mass was large, but they would be made small by God's judgment. They were proud of their place, wealth, alliances, intelligence, and armies (vv. 3-9). They were guilty of harming God's people or being indifferent to them, gloating over the misfortunes of others, and looting the properties of the unfortunate (vv. 10-14).

So *all nations* should learn from Edom. God would pay them back (v. 15). Judgment would come home to roost. They desecrated sacred space (*drank on my holy hill*). Other nations would treat them as if they never existed. On the other hand, God would provide *deliverance*. *Mount Zion* would be a place of salvation, holiness, abundance, unity, victory, and expanse.

The last line of Obadiah is "and the kingdom shall be the Lord's" (v. 21). James Smith wrote, "The rest of prophetic literature is to a certain extent an exposition of the last line of Obadiah." Openness to the kingdom makes one ready for the day of the Lord. ■

APPLICATION

A STORM IS COMING

BY DAVID FAUST

If you pay attention, you can tell when a storm is coming. Dark clouds gather on the horizon and thunder rumbles before the wind and rain arrive. Radar pinpoints the location of an approaching tornado or hurricane. In the winter, forecasters warn when blizzards are on the way.

Four commonsense strategies will enable you to survive an approaching storm: (1) *Prepare ahead*. Don't wait till the wind is already blowing. Decide your survival strategy in advance. (2) *Heed wise warnings*. Stay informed. Don't listen to alarmists who fan hysteria and overdramatize every weather event, but pay attention to reputable meteorologists who warn about dangerous storms. (3) *Find shelter*. Don't stubbornly assume you are exempt from danger. Go to a safe place where you can ride out the storm. (4) *Help others*. Make sure your family, friends, and neighbors are aware of the approaching danger so they can find their way to a safe place, too.

The Storm of God's Judgment

The Old Testament prophets spoke about "the day of the Lord" as a time when God would judge his enemies. "The day of the Lord is near for all nations," warned the prophet Obadiah (v. 15). In the New Testament, the "day of the Lord" refers to an approaching time of reckoning, but it also includes notes of hope, joy, and victory for God's people. It is called,

- the day of the Lord (1 Corinthians 5:5),
- the day of judgment (Matthew 10:15; Romans 2:16),
- the day God visits us (1 Peter 2:12),
- the great day (Jude 6; Revelation 6:17),
- that day (Matthew 7:22; 2 Timothy 4:8),
- the day of Christ (1 Corinthians 1:8; 2 Corinthians 1:14; Philippians 1:6, 10; 2:16),
- or simply "the Day" (1 Corinthians 3:13).

Biblical faith rejects the idea that history merely repeats itself in a pointless, endless cycle. The Lord has

a goal in mind and a purpose to fulfill. The universe is headed toward a climactic end—the consummation of the ages orchestrated by the Lord himself. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. We live in the middle—believing what God has done in the past, trusting him in the present, and looking toward the future with hope.

God's judgment is ahead. The four commonsense strategies mentioned above remind us how to survive the storm. (1) *Prepare*. Don't wait until it's too late. Make sure your soul is right with God. (2) *Heed wise warnings*. Take God's Word seriously. Don't ignore or dismiss what the Bible says. (3) *Find shelter*. The Lord wants to be your safe place—your refuge and strength. (4) *Help others*. Make every effort to ensure that your family, friends, and neighbors know the Lord.

Jesus talked about storms. He told about a wise man who prepared for the wind and rain by building his house on rock while a foolish man built his house on sand. Both houses faced the same kind of storm, but the one with a firm foundation survived while the house built on sand crashed to the ground (Matthew 7:24-27). In that Gospel's very next chapter, Jesus and his disciples survived a furious storm on the Sea of Galilee. Jesus "rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm" (Matthew 8:23-27).

Life brings many storms, and the Lord is the one who can calm them. Whatever lies ahead—including the final judgment—it's safer to go through a storm with Jesus than to be anywhere else without him.

Personal Challenge: How often do you think about the Judgment Day? Jesus said a time is coming when "those who have done what is good will rise to live, and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned" (John 5:28-29). Jesus also said, "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him" (John 3:17). Thank the Lord that because of his grace, you do not have to face condemnation (Romans 8:1). ■

DISCOVERY

BY MICAH ODOR

1. If you could send a message back in time to yourself three years ago, what, if anything, would you have done differently to prepare?
2. What was your "I will . . ." statement last week, and how did you follow through?

Ask two people to read aloud **Joel 2:28-32** one after the other, preferably from different Bible versions. Then ask the same two people to each read **Obadiah 15-17**.

3. What ideas, phrases, or themes were repeated between these two passages?
 - What differences do you see between them?
4. What positive aspects do you see in the descriptions of "the day of the Lord"?
 - What negative aspects do you see?
5. What can we learn about God in this week's passages?
6. What can we learn about ourselves or others?
7. The prophets used "the day of the Lord" to refer both to disastrous national events and a future final Day. In each, there are elements of judgment, destruction, new beginnings, and an end to sin and injustice. But the promise in Joel 2:32 is clear: "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." Where can you see the hand of God at work already, preparing you and saving you?
8. Based on what we've discussed, what are you doing well?
9. Based on what we've discussed, what could you do differently in obeying God this week?
10. Who needs to hear this story, and how will you tell them?
11. What area in your life do you need to "call on the name of the Lord?" Use that for this week's "I will" statement: "This week, I will call on the name of the Lord by . . ."

For Next Week: Read and reflect on **1 Thessalonians 2:1-16** as we begin a new unit on 1 and 2 Thessalonians called "Walk Worthy." You can also read next week's supplemental texts as well as the Study and Application sections as part of your personal study. ■