Joel is a book of prophecy. He is considered one of the “minor” prophets. Calling Joel a minor prophet is not done to place this book as less significant than the other prophets. The term “minor” simply indicates, there is less volume of written material. Isaiah and Jeremiah have many chapters; Joel has three chapters.

The initial topic in chapter on was a prophesy that insects were soon to arrive upon the land, to eat the crops of the land. While this may at first appear to be an ecological event, it indicates far more than an environmental plague, to the children of Israel.

The arrival of a locust plague (Joel 1) is expressed to apply also, to the destruction of the country by an invading enemy. While there certainly was a literal invasion of crops and life by locusts, this locust invasion also signified the devastation of Israel by the Chaldeans (Joel 2:17).

Matthew Henry wrote, “God is Lord of hosts, has every creature at his command, and, when he pleases, can humble and mortify a proud, rebellious people, by the weakest and most contemptible creatures.” [Henry, M. Joel Commentary, ch.1]. This is saying that the Lord can bring us “to our knees” today, by something as little in nature as a bug. But there is a deeper literary element to this pest that was afflicting the Israelites. The element is the following: the locusts were a metonym for the Chaldeans.

A metonym is “the substitution of the name of an attribute or adjunct for that of the thing meant” [Oxford American Dictionary]. We use all sorts of metonyms today. “We’re going to have to wait until Washington figures this out” means by metonymy “we will have to be patient until the federal government
comes to a conclusion”. We don’t literally mean Washington, it is symbolic.

So, when considering Joel’s locust prophecy, it is important to know that the Chaldeans were “locusts”. The enemy would invade and devour the people of God because they had turned away from the Lord.

While Joel chapter 1 is primarily about the initial locust, chapter 2 is about, “the day of the Lord”. Joel 1:15 first uses this phrase indicating that the “day of the Lord” would be soon for the “elders” and “all” “inhabitants of the land” (Joel 1:2). Thus, a good question is, “what is the day of the Lord?” Chapter 2 states, “for the Day of the Lord is coming, for it is at hand” (2:1). This shows that the phrase “the Day of the Lord” is about an immediate fulfillment in Joel, and is about future fulfillments, too.

An immediate instance of the Lord’s “day” was the day He decided to destroy the land with locusts. An “at hand” Day (2:1) could also refer to the destruction of Israel in Joel’s time.

However, consider that Joel also says “the Day of the Lord is coming” (2:1). The world has experienced specified days “of the Lord” in the first century, as well as during the time of Joel.

Joel 2:31 says, “the sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord”. Bible students know this to be a prophecy about Acts 2. In Acts 2:8 it states, “how is it that we hear [this sermon] each in our own language...?” The thought line continues with... “so they were all amazed and perplexed saying to one another, ‘whatever could this mean?’”( Acts 2:12). “Peter raised his voice and said... this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel... in the last days says God... I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh... I will show wonders in heaven above and signs
on the earth beneath... before the coming and awesome day of the Lord...

" (Acts 2:14,16,17,19,20). Thus the Day of the Lord prophesied in Joel 2 and fulfilled in Acts 2 equated the Day of the Lord with a Day of salvation. When investigating the prophecies of Joel with fulfillment in the New Testament, we can see that the prophecy related to the inception of the Gospel age (Acts 2). But,

Joel 2:11 says, “for the day of the Lord is very terrible, who can endure it?” So, in this passage we can see where the ultimate “Day” of the Lord will be a vindictive day of destruction.

If one contrasts “awesome”, (Joel 2:31) with “terrible”, (Joel 2:11) one can see where God has appointed a final day, wherein He will destroy those who walk in disobedience to His will.

God clearly has used the phrase “Day of the Lord”, in various Bible books, outside of Joel, to indicate various things. However, as one living under the New Testament time-period is concerned, one needs to make today, a day of salvation. For the Lord will return on a Day appointed by the Father (2 Peter 3:12).

2nd Peter 3:10 says, “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.”

Hopefully this will aid you in understanding some different meanings of the “Lord’s Day” as used in both the old and new testaments. By: J.R. Rosado