

Message #5

Joel 3:1-17

Not long ago I saw a heart-wrenching scene on the news. A person had gone to work on a typical day and when he got home his house had been completely destroyed by fire. Imagine the shock to this person who drove home from work. He had no idea until he got home that this fire had destroyed his home. The individual was crying while looking at his former home that was now nothing but ashes. He was stunned; he was shocked; he was distraught.

There is coming a day when the whole world is going to be shocked by what God will do. It will leave the world stunned. It will leave the world in a state of mourning and most in the world will literally be burning. That point is clearly developed in this book of Joel.

I think most people in the world have some sense that something is going on that is very unusual. There are racial tensions like never before. There are terrorist threats like never before. There are unusual cosmological occurrences like never before.

GOD IS GOING TO JUDGE ISRAEL AND THE NATIONS WITH ONE FINAL JUDGMENT THAT WILL END WITH ISRAEL COMPLETELY RESTORED AND GOD-MOCKING, ISRAEL-HATING NATIONS COMPLETELY DESTROYED.

This book of Joel says God's judgment is coming. God's judgment is coming against everyone. It will be a shocking day. It will be a very negative day for some and ultimately a very positive day for others. **The Day of the Lord judgment is a great mixture of ferocious judgment and amazing grace.**

Now there are three main prophetic parts to this section of Scripture:

PROPHETIC PART #1 – God predicts what His judgment will do for Israel. **3:1**

We may certainly see that this judgment has not yet occurred because when it does, things for Israel will be amazing. The fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem will be restored by God Himself. This national restoration of Israel will be a sign of judgment against the rest of the world.

Now the time when this will happen will be “in those days, at that time.” This dates this to a time when all of these events take place, which obviously have not happened yet.

PROPHETIC PART #2 – God predicts what His judgment will do for the nations. **3:2-8**

The prophet Zephaniah said, “Indeed, My decision is to gather the nations, to assemble kingdoms, to pour out on them My indignations, All my burning anger; for all the earth will be devoured by the fire of My Zeal” (Zephaniah 3:8). Obadiah said, “For the day of the LORD draws near on all the nations” (Ob. 15) and he says those nations will “become as if they never existed” (Ob. 16).

When Jesus Christ was on earth, He specifically predicted in Matthew 25:31ff. that when He returned, He would gather the nations for judgment. We refer to this as the judgment of the nations. He makes it clear from this text that the basis for judgment is how those nations treated Israel.

In **Joel 3:2-3**, God makes it very clear that He will gather the nations up, just as Jesus predicted, and judge them all on the basis of how they treated Israel.

S. Lewis Johnson once said that he read an old Encyclopedia Britannica that said the great conquerors of the world (Alexander, Caesar, Napoleon) have all treated the Jews well (*Joel 3:1-14*, p. 2). Certainly that would well fit with what God told Abraham that He would bless those who bless him and curse those who curse him (Gen. 12:3).

What this text says is that God will judge the nations in the “**valley of Jehoshaphat**” and the specific basis for this judgment will be how those nations treated God’s inheritance, Israel.

Jehoshaphat was Israel’s king from about 873-848 B.C.. He was in the Davidic line and was Solomon’s son (I Chron. 3:10). His name means “Jehovah judges.” In II Chronicles 20, three major powers came against Jehoshaphat (Ammonites, Moabites and Edomites) and Jehoshaphat turned to the Lord and God caused the nations to destroy themselves in the valley in front of the wilderness of Jeruel (II Chron. 20:16). **This is a reminder to Israel of what God did and where He did it. When God’s people turn to God, He is capable of great deliverances.**

Now the exact location of this valley is a subject of speculation and debate. It is most often suggested that this is “the Valley of Jezreel extending from Mount Carmel past Megiddo and on to Bet Shean and the Jordan River” (Duane Garrett, *Joel*, p. 380).

This is the only place in the Bible that specifically names the site or the place where this judgment will occur. Zechariah predicts that when Jesus Christ returns and puts his feet on the Mount of Olives, there will be a major split in the middle of the mountain and a major valley will be formed (Zech. 14:4). **We may assume that this valley will be in some close proximity to Jerusalem. Notice carefully God will judge “all the nations.” All nations will be in Israel for a specific judgment in regard to how nations treated Israel.**

Now there are some very clear statements as to the basis for this judgment:

(Judgment Basis #1) - This judgment will be based on how the nations scattered Israel’s people.
3:2a

In A.D. 70, Rome went to Jerusalem and destroyed it and Israel has been scattered out of her land ever since. She is scattered to the four corners of the earth—north, south, east and west. This scattering is due to a judgment of God, but also a re-gathering will be due to a judgment of God against the nations who scattered them.

This is a very unique mystery of the sovereignty of God. God can use nations and individuals to do negative things against His own people as a judgment, but He also will still hold those nations and individuals accountable for doing those negative things.

(Judgment Basis #2) - This judgment will be based on how the nations divided Israel's land.
3:2b

Now most people do not realize that the only Person who has the right to divide Israel's land for Israel is God. In Joshua 13-21, God Himself parceled out this land for Israel and **no one else has the right to divide it up differently**. Tampering with Israel's land is a horrible sin.

Now we are of the opinion that although this certainly is true today, Israel's land has been divided for the most part by the Arabs and Palestinians, this has reference to what the Antichrist will do in the Tribulation. We may recall that Daniel predicts the Antichrist will "parcel out land for a price" (Dan. 11:39).

(Judgment Basis #3) - This judgment will be based on how the nations treated Israel's people.
3:3a

The casting of lots for the refugees of Israel was associated with the "horrors that accompany capture of a city by a foreign army" (*Ibid.*, p. 380).

(Judgment Basis #4) - This judgment will be based on how the nations treated Israel's boys.
3:3b

God monitors how people treat His boys and girls and those who demean them or hurt them will answer to Him at the day of judgment. When a military would conquer an Israeli city, the soldiers would take a little boy and trade him for a night with a prostitute.

(Judgment Basis #5) - This judgment will be based on how the nations treated Israel's girls.
3:3e

Little girls were sold for wine. This is how little these people thought of Israelite life. They would literally trade a little girl for some wine to drink and just forget about the little girl.

God says no one gets away with harming my children.

Often times in Biblical prophecy, God will use some immediate judgment as a basis for our understanding of future judgment.

Now in **verses 4-8**, God specifically targets two main cities, Tyre and Sidon, and he also targets one main area "all the regions of Philistia" for a very specific, direct, recompense judgment. These are specifically targeted areas that will experience the full brunt of the wrath of God in a very unusual way during the Tribulation.

In the case of Tyre, God did literally completely destroy it. Nebuchadnezzar, in 573 B.C., broke down the main gate of Tyre and destroyed the mainland city. It has been rebuilt and both Tyre and Sidon were and are both rich commercial port cities. Sidon is about 25 miles north of Tyre, and these cities dominated deep sea fishing, commercial trade and shipping. Both are in existence today and one reason why God has obviously permitted them to exist is for future judgment (See Isaiah 23).

According to **verses 5-6**, what these areas were held accountable for was stealing God's silver and gold and selling Israel's children to the Greeks so they could take over the land. When we went through the book of Amos, we may recall that there was a literal slave trade market for Jewish sons and daughters.

We know from the book of Daniel that Nebuchadnezzar came to Jerusalem (586 B.C.) and took the items made of gold and silver to Babylon and put them in their false temples. We also know that he took captive and deported many of the young people (Dan. 1:1-4). This same kind of thing also happened when Titus went into Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and destroyed the city. It will also happen again when the Antichrist does even worse.

Now it would appear to me from this context that God has kept the record of what these specific people and these specific geographical areas have done against Israel and He will specifically target them for very specific judgment during the Day of the Lord judgments. To paraphrase one of the great Bible scholars, Charles Feinberg, little do nations realize the wrath they will eventually incur for the way they treated Israel (Thomas Finley, *Joel*, p. 86).

PROPHETIC PART #3 – God predicts how His judgment is to be proclaimed. 3:9-17

Now this judgment was to be proclaimed among the nations. The fact is as we proclaim a book like Joel and broadcast it on radio or internet we are doing exactly what God wants done.

God wants the following things proclaimed:

Judgment Proclamation #1 - Prepare for war. 3:9-12a

Here is where all the nations are headed—to war against God. **God will sovereignly call all the nations to go to war against Him.** He will cause all soldiers to want to go to battle and fight against God. In fact, the nations will actually think God is calling them to do battle, when in fact He is calling them to their own doom.

They will turn everything into a weapon for war. Plows will be turned into swords and pruning hooks will be turned into spears. The point is the people will turn everything they own into a weapon for war. Remember in the Tribulation things are very primitive again, due to the Tribulation judgments.

Weak people and weak nations will have a sense that they are mighty people. They will feel strong and good about themselves, which is all part of the programming of God. They will actually believe they can win this war. God will give them a false sense of security. Here is what is so interesting about the word “Prepare for war.” In Hebrew the word “prepare” is qadesh that literally means “Sanctify a war.” So the people will think they are fighting a “holy war.” This is a Holy war. It is a Holy war that is designed to completely destroy the nations.

This is a very sober fact to face about the sovereignty of God. **God is able to cause people to think things that are not true so that they will do what He wants them to do in leading them to their own destruction.**

A great illustration of this very point is seen from the life of Adolph Hitler. Hitler said, “I believe that I act today in unison with the Almighty Creator’s intention by fighting the Jews. I do battle for the Lord.” Adolph Hitler actually believed in his very disturbed brain that he was doing God’s will in killing Jews. He was doing just the opposite of the will of God and ultimately, God shut his brain down by causing Hitler to put a bullet in his own head.

Now there are three things we want to observe here. First, Hitler did not read and understand the Bible because if he did, he would have been Israel’s friend, not her enemy. Second, Hitler really believed his view was from God. Third, Hitler is burning in hell and the Germans were eventually toppled.

People believe all kinds of things that they believe are right, but many of those things will put them into hell. Jehovah’s Witnesses, Mormons, and Buddhists all believe they are right and they all believe things contrary to the Word of God and they will all end up in hell.

A wise person will fall down before God and ask God to lead him to truth. Look at the description of what is happening here. Nations surrounding Israel are gathering themselves together and they are aroused and hurrying to get to this valley to fight and there they will come into eternal judgment.

Judgment Proclamation #2 - Prepare to lose. 3:12b-14

Jesus Christ will return and Jesus Christ will judge the nations. **Verse 12 makes it clear that the Lord is coming back not to save, but to judge.** The “mighty ones” in **verse 11** are the angels Jesus Christ will use to gather in the nations. **Verse 13** says when this happens the full brunt of the wrath judgment of God will occur. God’s judgment will be like a wine press in which He tramples and crushes the nations who mocked Him, His Word and His people.

This is not a time period in which people are being asked to trust Christ as Savior. This is a time period when all people are being judged and will be trampled.

As **verse 14** says, multitudes, multitudes of people will be judged in this judgment of the nations.

Notice this is the “valley of decision” for the nations. This is the place and the moment when God will decide eternal fate. This is what we could call “Verdict Valley” for the nations.

I love what one commentator said, this will be “God’s Nuremberg trials” against all the nations for the way they treated Israel. When this judgment occurs, the heavens will go dark—sun, moon, stars (**3:15**). When this happens, the LORD will roar from Zion and will literally, physically be in Jerusalem (**3:16**). The heavens and the earth will tremble and Israel will be honored. This is God’s Kingdom being established on this earth.

This is not the Great White Throne Judgment that will occur at the end of the one-thousand year Millennial reign (Rev. 20:4-15). This is the judgment of all the nations in which God will remove all God-mocking, Israel-hating nations and politicians from existence.

Notice **verse 16**, Jesus Christ will roar as a Lion, the King of Kings, from Jerusalem. When this happens, God’s people will know that God is a refuge for His people. God is a stronghold to the sons of Israel. God’s people have nothing to fear when this judgment hits the nations.

Verse 17 says that when this happens, Israel will know that God is her God. Israel will dwell safely in her land. Jerusalem will be the Holy City of God and no stranger who does not love God and love Israel will ever pass through this city again.

As one commentator said, Jerusalem will never again be defiled by “pagan invaders.”