

Message #6

Joel 3:18-21

Down near Orlando, Florida, there was 27,258 acres that mostly sat in a swamp. Today that swamp land houses 27 themed resort hotels, four theme parks, two water parks, four golf courses, one camping resort and other entertainment venues. This former swamp land draws 52 million people annually. The name of this place is Walt Disney world.

Back around the year 1960, Walt Disney flew over the Orlando area and saw a network of roads and a bunch of swamp. He started buying up land at about \$100 per acre. Walt Disney died in 1966 so he never got to see the finished product. The park opened in 1971. But it was an amazing endeavor to turn swamp land into one of the most visited places in the world.

Over in the Middle East there are millions of acres of land that God has promised to Israel. It is land that stretches from the Nile to the Euphrates, then north to southern Turkey, encompassing the entire coast of the Mediterranean Sea. If you look at that land today, it is worse than what Walt Disney saw in looking at the swamp lands of Florida. It is land that cannot be developed. In fact, as one writer said about Israel's land, you soon realize it is no paradise and "it certainly is not a land designed for comfort and ease."

Yet when we read the Bible, we keep reading of promises that one day God will put Israel in that land and transform it into a land like the Garden of Eden (Joel 2:3). God is in the business of doing things like that.

He is in the business of transforming people who are dirty, filthy and desolate into becoming beautiful tokens of His grace. What God will do for Israel physically and nationally, He does all of the time for individuals personally.

Now this book of Joel has dealt with a critical theme which is "the Day of the LORD." As we have seen the Day of the LORD is compared to a locust plague that will destroy everything. It will be a scary time when God is doing negative things against the world and against Israel. However, the story of the Day of the LORD will not end for Israel on a negative; it will end on a positive.

God intends to turn unprecedented horrors into unprecedented blessings. God has promised that He will turn bad things into beautiful things. God will turn His judgments into His joys.

As Joel brings his prophecy to its conclusion, that is what he wanted Israel to know and that is what God wants us to know. In this passage, Joel moves away from the Judgments of the Tribulation to the blessings of the Millennium.

The primary point is clear to see:

THERE IS COMING A DAY WHEN GOD WILL BLESS THE LAND OF ISRAEL AND THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL, AND HE WILL COMPLETELY DESTROY ALL OF HER ENEMIES.

Now we may observe from **verse 18** that the text says, “and in that day.” That phrase marks a new section of the book and takes us into a future time.

As we have seen, the Day of the Lord will feature judgment against the nations and ultimately deliverance for Israel. When God nationally delivers Israel, He will bring new blessings to Israel and her land like she has never seen before.

The covenant deal God made with Israel is a “land” deal. This is why when you read much of the O.T. you will see an emphasis on Israel and her land. God has promised to give her land. In the end that land will flourish. No matter what it looked like in Joel’s day and no matter what it looks like in our day, in the end, God promises that Israel’s land will flourish.

Now there are four final realities we want to see:

REALITY #1- When Jesus Christ establishes His kingdom on this earth, Israel’s land will flow forth great blessings. **3:18**

Now any reading of any history will show that over time, Israel’s land has been dominated by wars, famines, droughts, heat, insects and Arabs. But in various passages of the Bible we read statements that say this is not how this land will always be.

For example, Isaiah 51:3 says, “Indeed, the LORD will comfort Zion; He will comfort all her waste places and her wilderness He will make like Eden and her desert like the garden of the LORD; Joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and sound of a melody.”

It is predicted in many passages that there will come a day when God will do some amazing physical things for the land of Israel. Everything connected to Israel will be fertile. Everything will grow in amazing abundance.

Joel gives a description of four physical blessings and changes:

Blessing #1 - The mountains will drip with sweet wine. **3:18a**

We may recall that in Joel 1:12 that the vines dried up. When we lived out west, David Levy, from Friends of Israel, came out to our home in Pocatello. Pocatello was in a valley surrounded by two benches, the east bench and the west bench that were part of the Rocky Mountains. Our home was up on the east bench. Now the mountain hills that we lived on were dry, dusty and filled with sage brush. When David Levy was at our home, he said this reminds me a lot of Israel. This is the way the mountains are there.

Now we were in Pocatello for 8 years and if someone would have said these part of the mountains will be producing so many grapes that the mountains will drip with sweet wine, I would have asked you just what mountain range are you looking at because you can't mean where we live.

Joel looked at the mountains of Israel and he said there will come a day when the mountain hills and benches will be so full of grape vines that they will drip with "sweet wine."

Blessing #2 - The hills will flow milk. **3:18b**

If that is not enough, Joel predicts that the hills will be so luxurious that they will flow with milk. Some believe that the cattle will be so well fed that milk production will literally overflow.

We may recall in Joel 1:18, the cows did not have any pasture to eat and when you don't have anything to eat, the milk production ceases. Joel predicts a time is coming in the land of Israel that the cows will have such a rich pasture that the milk production will be incredible.

Blessing #3 - All brooks of Judah will flow with water. **3:18c**

Now the land of Israel has always depended on the early and late rains to supply water. God says when I bless the land I will cause the brooks to produce water. There will be plenty of water and fountains to cause the land to flourish.

Blessing #4 - A spring will flow out of the Temple and water the valley of Shittim. **3:18d**

Now the first thing we would observe is that there will be a Temple standing, which presently is not standing. What stands now is a 58 foot high limestone Wailing Wall. But it is clear from this text that the Temple will be standing when this is fulfilled.

It is interesting that it has been observed that Jerusalem is the only major city in antiquity that has not been built near a great river. Rome was built on the Tiber. Nineveh was built near the Tigris. Babylon was built near the Euphrates. Egyptian cities were built near the Nile. The great city of Kalamazoo was built by the Kalamazoo River. Grand Rapids was built by the Grand River.

Jerusalem does not have a great river. However, during the Millennium that will all change. In fact, Zechariah 14:8 predicts that living waters will flow out of Jerusalem as some continental divide. Half of the water will flow east to the Dead Sea and half will flow west to the Mediterranean Sea. This will continue in summer and winter.

Now the specific blessing of water flowing from "the house of the LORD" is described in Ezekiel 47:1-12.

The water will be at different depth levels (47:3-5); there will be trees on both sides of the river (47:7); this water causes sea water to become fresh water (47:8); this water will give life to every living creature (47:9); this water will contain many fish and many fruit trees (47:10-12).

Now Joel reveals that this Temple river will “water the valley of Shittim.” The word “shittim” is one that refers to acacia trees and evergreens that grow mainly in the valleys around the Dead Sea. Now the valley of Shittim is the valley of acacia trees. Acacia was a small tree shrub that grew in dry land.

Joel is predicting that when God blesses the land, the stream that flows out of the Temple will water the valley that lies between Jerusalem and the Dead Sea.

When God pours out His blessings on a place it refreshes many people.

REALITY #2 – When Jesus Christ establishes His Kingdom on earth, Israel’s enemies will be destroyed. **3:19**

Now it really would not be a blessed land if it had all of these wonderful things in it but still had evil, sinful enemies in the land. In order for Israel to enjoy her land, her enemies must be out of it.

If you have ever lived next door to a bad neighbor, you can relate to this. No matter how nice things are in your yard, you cannot enjoy them when you are living next to a bad neighbor. So God says you need to know what I am going to do to your neighbors and enemies.

In stark contrast to the fertility of Israel, there is the total desolation of all the nations surrounding Israel.

The Egyptians control the land to the south west of Israel, and the Arabs (Edom) control much land that surrounds Israel. What is predicted here is that both of those areas will receive a judgment of God and will end up desolate areas.

More than likely the reason why Edom receives special mention is because her people descended from Esau, Jacob’s brother. There should have been a good relationship between the Jews and the Arabs, but instead there has been perpetual war. In the end, it will be Israel who will win and Edom or the Arabs who will lose.

The main charge Joel presents in **verse 19** has to do with the violence that they have done to the “sons of Judah.” Obadiah specifically mentions this (Obadiah 1, 10-14) and in that context when the Babylonians were butchering the Jews, the Arabs did nothing to help them; in fact, they rejoiced and gloated over their destruction.”

I read an article entitled “Relations between Nazi Germany and the Arab world.” Adolph Hitler described Muhammad as a real provider of spiritual “sustenance.”

He said the people of Islam will always be “closer to us.” Two of the most noted Arab politicians “actively collaborated with the Nazis.” The article said, “The Palestinian Arab and Nazi political leaders said that they had a common cause against International Jewry.”

Many Arabs stood by and actually applauded and even supported the fact that Adolph Hitler was killing Jews. As violence was being done against Israel, many Arabs cheered.

It is clear from the second part of **verse 19** that God has kept track of all of the violence done to the sons of Judah. He has kept track of the innocent blood they have shed. He will pay them back.

REALITY #3 – When Jesus Christ establishes His Kingdom, Israel will be blessed forever.
3:20

What is promised here is everlasting blessing for Israel. There will come a day when the Jews will be blessed and honored for all of time.

When all of this happens, Judah will forever be inhabited by Jews and Jerusalem will be inhabited by Jews for “all generations.”

REALITY #4 – When Jesus Christ establishes His Kingdom, He will avenge Israel in new ways and live in Jerusalem. **3:21**

God is in a special relationship with Israel and when He is actually here on earth, He will do some amazing things for Israel.

Now God says I have an avenging that I have not yet accomplished. It is an avenging against all of the innocent Jewish blood that has been shed. But God says I will avenge. The Day of the LORD will come and Israel will be blessed.

It is intriguing how Joel ends the book “For the LORD dwells in Zion.” Nations need to know this. Politicians need to know this. God monitors Israel and one day “the LORD will dwell in Zion.”

Jesus Christ will come back and literally reign from Jerusalem. His kingdom will come and He will reign.

When all is said and done, God will take a desolate, deserted land and turn it into a Divine Theme Park. The theme will be the God of Israel reigns in Israel and Israel is forever blessed by God.

This book of Joel has taught us several things:

- 1) God has a plan for world history, the nations and Israel and the plan is judgment.
- 2) God invites sinful individuals and nations to turn to Him and call on Him for salvation.
- 3) God will eventually reward and honor Him and honor Israel.
- 4) God will eventually destroy those who mock Him and demean Israel.
- 5) God's judgment will come and the results will be everlasting.

Are you ready for judgment day?