

# **Lessons from a Minor Prophet: Joel**

## **The Eschatological Day of the Lord Part 2**

*Joel 2:28-3:21*

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# The Eschatological Day of the Lord

## Part 2

### Scripture

Today we are concluding a sermon series that I am calling, “Lessons from a Minor Prophet: Joel.”

The Prophet Joel was perhaps the earliest of the Old Testament’s writing prophets (writing in the eighth, or perhaps even in the ninth century BC). The people in Joel’s day had just experienced a massive attack of locusts. This was followed by an extremely severe drought. The resulting devastation crippled the economy and caused incredible suffering, not only for the people, but even for the land and the animals.

God led Joel to use the locust plague as the backdrop for his message to his people. In the first chapter of Joel, he urged the people to pay attention to what God was saying to them through their contemporary circumstances. Joel identified the locust plague as the “day of the Lord.” The “day of the Lord” in Scripture is a day of judgment and blessing. It could refer to either a contemporary day, an impending day, or the future day of the Lord (also known as the eschatological day of the Lord).

In Joel’s day, the people of God repented of their sin of spiritual half-heartedness. So, God wonderfully restored his people because of their genuine repentance.

Moreover, as we shall see today, God explained—through Joel—the sequence of events that will happen surrounding the day of the Lord, that great and ultimate day of God’s judgment for sinners and blessing for his people.

Let’s read about the eschatological day of the Lord in Joel 2:28-3:21:

<sup>28</sup> “And it shall come to pass afterward,  
that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh;  
your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,  
your old men shall dream dreams,  
and your young men shall see visions.  
<sup>29</sup> Even on the male and female servants  
in those days I will pour out my Spirit.

<sup>30</sup> “And I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. <sup>31</sup> The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. <sup>32</sup> And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the Lord has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the Lord calls.

<sup>3:1</sup> “For behold, in those days and at that time, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, <sup>2</sup> I will gather all the nations and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat. And I will enter into judgment with them there, on behalf of my people and my heritage Israel, because they have scattered them among the nations and have divided up my land, <sup>3</sup> and have cast lots for my people, and have traded a boy for a prostitute, and have sold a girl for wine and have drunk it.

<sup>4</sup> “What are you to me, O Tyre and Sidon, and all the regions of Philistia? Are you paying me back for something? If you are paying me back, I will return your payment on your own head swiftly and speedily. <sup>5</sup> For you have taken my silver and my gold, and have carried my rich treasures into your temples. <sup>6</sup> You have sold the people of Judah and Jerusalem to the Greeks in order to remove them far from their own border. <sup>7</sup> Behold, I will

stir them up from the place to which you have sold them, and I will return your payment on your own head. <sup>8</sup> I will sell your sons and your daughters into the hand of the people of Judah, and they will sell them to the Sabeans, to a nation far away, for the Lord has spoken.”

<sup>9</sup> Proclaim this among the nations:

Consecrate for war;  
stir up the mighty men.

Let all the men of war draw near;  
let them come up.

<sup>10</sup> Beat your plowshares into swords,  
and your pruning hooks into spears;  
let the weak say, “I am a warrior.”

<sup>11</sup> Hasten and come,  
all you surrounding nations,  
and gather yourselves there.

Bring down your warriors, O Lord.

<sup>12</sup> Let the nations stir themselves up  
and come up to the Valley of  
Jehoshaphat;  
for there I will sit to judge  
all the surrounding nations.

<sup>13</sup> Put in the sickle,  
for the harvest is ripe.

Go in, tread,  
for the winepress is full.

The vats overflow,  
for their evil is great.

<sup>14</sup> Multitudes, multitudes,  
in the valley of decision!

For the day of the Lord is near  
in the valley of decision.

<sup>15</sup> The sun and the moon are darkened,  
and the stars withdraw their shining.

<sup>16</sup> The Lord roars from Zion,

and utters his voice from Jerusalem,  
and the heavens and the earth quake.  
But the Lord is a refuge to his people,  
a stronghold to the people of Israel.

<sup>17</sup> “So you shall know that I am the Lord  
your God,  
who dwells in Zion, my holy mountain.  
And Jerusalem shall be holy,  
and strangers shall never again pass  
through it.

<sup>18</sup> “And in that day  
the mountains shall drip sweet wine,  
and the hills shall flow with milk,  
and all the streambeds of Judah  
shall flow with water;  
and a fountain shall come forth from  
the house of the Lord  
and water the Valley of Shittim.

<sup>19</sup> “Egypt shall become a desolation  
and Edom a desolate wilderness,  
for the violence done to the people of Judah,  
because they have shed innocent blood  
in their land.

<sup>20</sup> But Judah shall be inhabited forever,  
and Jerusalem to all generations.

<sup>21</sup> I will avenge their blood,  
blood I have not avenged,  
for the Lord dwells in Zion.” (Joel 2:28-  
3:21)

## Introduction

Martha E. Garrett tells the story of her daughter’s station wagon that coughed and choked all the way to the Christian

bookstore in the mall. While they stood at the bookstore counter, Martha's daughter Connie moaned, "I'm not sure we can make it home in the station wagon. If only Dave had driven the station wagon and left the Dodge Spirit for us!"

At that moment Connie glanced outside the store and happened to see her husband, Dave, rush by on his way to the restaurant next door.

"Dave! Dave!" she called. "Help! We need the Spirit."

The clerk came to the counter at that moment. Thinking she had just overheard a devout and desperate prayer, her eyes opened wide—until Connie and Dave exchanged car keys.<sup>1</sup>

That humorous story illustrates that often there is a confusion about the Spirit—and I mean the Holy Spirit.

Interestingly, Joel wrote about the Holy Spirit in his book. But, what is even more interesting is that Joel did not write about the First Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. However, he did write about the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, a day known as the day of the Lord.

## Lesson

Joel 2:28-3:21 gives us the sequence of events that will happen surrounding the day of the Lord.

Let's use the following outline:

1. Before the Day of the Lord, the Spirit Is Poured Out (2:28-32)
2. On the Day of the Lord, Judgment Is Poured Out (3:1-16)
3. After the Day of the Lord, Blessing Is Poured Out (3:17-21)

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<sup>1</sup> See <https://www.preachingtoday.com/illustrations/1997/december/2746.html>.

## I. Before the Day of the Lord, the Spirit Is Poured Out (2:28-32)

First, before the day of the Lord, the Spirit is poured out. James Montgomery Boice writes in his commentary regarding this section of Joel's prophecy:

It is hard to handle prophecy. This is because the prophecies often seem obscure to us; and even if their meaning is clear, we cannot always be sure to what period of history the words apply. To confuse matters further, the Bible itself sometimes takes the prophecies in more than one way. They can be applied to a current event in Israel, for example; but they can also be referred to a future Day of the Lord.

While recognizing this, we know nevertheless that many Old Testament prophecies are interpreted to us by the New Testament, so that, whatever our problems may be with other passages, these at least are certain. Of these clear passages, none is more certain than Joel 2:28–32, a passage interpreted by the apostle Peter as applying to the events at Pentecost.<sup>2</sup>

Prior to Jesus' ascension into heaven, he told his disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4-5). On the Day of Pentecost, fifty days after Jesus' resurrection, while the disciples were waiting together in Jerusalem, suddenly, Acts 2:2–4 says, "there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the

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<sup>2</sup> James Montgomery Boice, *The Minor Prophets: An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002), 143.

Spirit gave them utterance.”

When the people of Jerusalem heard the sound, they came to investigate, and Peter preached the first sermon after the resurrection and ascension of Christ to the assembled crowd. The people of Jerusalem, who were “from every nation under heaven” (Acts 2:5) thought that the disciples were drunk because the people of Jerusalem heard the disciples speaking to each of them in their own language. So, Peter stated that the disciples were not drunk, as they supposed, but instead interpreted the pouring out of God’s Spirit as the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy. “But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel,” said Peter, and then quoting Joel 2:28-32 in full he continued, “And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy. And I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke; the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day. And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Acts 2:16–21).

Clearly, then, Peter interpreted what happened on the Day of Pentecost as the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy. There is much that could be said, but let me just say this. Joel’s prophecy was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit was poured out on all believers. They began to speak and witness to others about the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. A new era was inaugurated.

Dr. Boice makes the fascinating observation that “in each



of nine cases [in the book of Actos] in which it is said that the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit, the consequence of that filling was a witness to Jesus Christ.”<sup>3</sup> So, the clear and distinguishing mark of a person being filled with the Holy Spirit is witnessing to the person and work of Jesus Christ. It is in this sense that the words spoken by Joel that “your sons and your daughters shall prophesy” must be taken. Prophecy in this sense means “to forthtell” rather than “to foretell.”

So, the Holy Spirit was poured out on believers on the Day of Pentecost. And ever since that day, the Holy Spirit has been poured out on people who are then enabled to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. The evidence of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit is repentance and faith, and this is followed by witnessing to the person and work of Jesus Christ.

So, before the day of the Lord, the Spirit is poured out on all those who become believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

## II. On the Day of the Lord, Judgment Is Poured Out (3:1-16)

Second, on the day of the Lord, judgment is poured out.

Judgment is poured out on unbelievers. I want to look at the setting of the judgment, and the summons to the judgment.

### A. *The Setting for the Judgment (3:1-8)*

First, look at the setting for the judgment.

On that great and final day of the Lord, Joel said in Joel 3:1-2, **“For behold, in those days and at that time, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, I will gather**

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<sup>3</sup> James Montgomery Boice, *The Minor Prophets: An Expository Commentary*, 148.

**all the nations and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat. And I will enter into judgment with them there, on behalf of my people and my heritage Israel, because they have scattered them among the nations and have divided up my land....**” It appears that there will be several fulfillments: first, in the return of the Jews after the exile; second, in the redemption brought by Jesus Christ at his coming; and third, it will reach its climax in that great and final day of the Lord when the curse for sin is totally removed from God’s people and judgment will be poured out on unbelievers.

God’s judgment on unbelievers, Joel says, will take place in **the Valley of Jehoshaphat**. O. Palmer Robertson writes, “The phrase literally means, ‘the valley where the Lord will judge.’ No particular place in Palestine is known as the ‘Valley of Jehoshaphat.’”<sup>4</sup> However, it is clear that on that great and final day of the Lord, there will be a judgment on unbelievers where the Lord will judge them in a place known as **the Valley of Jehoshaphat**.

*B. The Summons to the Judgment (3:9-16)*

And second, look at the summons to the judgment.

God issues a summons to all the unbelieving nations of people to come for judgment. It comes in the form of a call for a holy war. God does not summons unbelievers to judgment when they believe themselves to be adequately prepared to defend themselves. In fact, God is mocking them by encouraging them to take up arms against him. He says in verses 9-11, **“Proclaim this among the nations: Consecrate for**

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<sup>4</sup> O. Palmer Robertson, *Prophet of the Coming Day of the Lord: The Message of Joel*, Welwyn Commentary Series (Darlington, England: Evangelical Press, 1995), 100–101.

**war; stir up the mighty men. Let all the men of war draw near; let them come up. Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruning hooks into spears; let the weak say, 'I am a warrior.' Hasten and come, all you surrounding nations, and gather yourselves there."**

God then uses the imagery of harvesting as the setting for the final judgment. He knows when the season is ready to harvest the judgment of unbelievers. He says in verses 12-13, **"Let the nations stir themselves up and come up to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; for there I will sit to judge all the surrounding nations. Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Go in, tread, for the winepress is full. The vats overflow, for their evil is great."**

And then God says in verse 14, **"Multitudes, multitudes, in the valley of decision! For the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision."** Many an evangelist has used this verse to urge sinners—supposedly in the "valley of decision" regarding their eternal destiny—to repent and turn to the Lord. But that is not what God is saying! No, it is too late for the multitudes to turn to the Lord in repentance. As Dr. Boice says, "This is not the decision of the evangelistic meeting. It is the decision of the court, and the one making the decision is not the one who has rejected Christ but the Christ he or she has rejected. This is God's decision, a decision that will determine people's destinies forever."<sup>5</sup>

For those who will experience the judgment of God on the day of the Lord, **"the sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining. The Lord roars from Zion, and utters his voice from Jerusalem, and the heavens and the earth quake"** (3:15-16a).

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<sup>5</sup> James Montgomery Boice, *The Minor Prophets: An Expository Commentary*, 156.

But, for those who have repented of their sin and trusted in the person and work of Jesus Christ, God says in verse 16b, **“But the Lord is a refuge to his people, a stronghold to the people of Israel.”**

So, on the day of the Lord, judgment is poured out on unbelievers. There will be no second chance for them to turn to Jesus in faith and repentance.

### **III. After the Day of the Lord, Blessing Is Poured Out (3:17-21)**

And third, after the day of the Lord, blessing is poured out.

Joel mentions four blessings that will be poured out on believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

#### *A. There Will Be a Holy City (3:17)*

First, there will be a holy city.

God says in verse 17, **“So you shall know that I am the Lord your God, who dwells in Zion, my holy mountain. And Jerusalem shall be holy, and strangers shall never again pass through it.”** After the day of the Lord, God will inaugurate a new heaven and a new earth. It will be astonishingly splendid. Moreover, there will be a new Jerusalem, as one of the angels showed John in Revelation 21:10–14, 22-27:

And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. It had a great, high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates

twelve angels, and on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed—on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.... And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s book of life.

*B. There Will Be a Restored Land (3:18-19)*

Second, there will be a restored land.

Not only will there be a new Jerusalem, the land will be restored to what it is like in the Garden of Eden. Joel wrote in verse 18, **“And in that day the mountains shall drip sweet wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the streambeds of Judah shall flow with water; and a fountain shall come forth from the house of the Lord and water the Valley of Shittim.”**

In contrast, because of the way that Egypt and Edom treated the people of God throughout the centuries, they will be desolate as punishment for their treatment of God’s people. Joel wrote in verse 19, **“Egypt shall become a desolation and Edom a desolate wilderness, for the violence done to the people of Judah, because they have shed innocent blood in their land.”**

C. *There Will Be a Cleansed People (3:20-21a)*

Third, there will be a cleansed people.

God says that he will put in the holy city and restored land inhabitants who shall live there forever. Joel writes in verse 20, **“But Judah shall be inhabited forever, and Jerusalem to all generations.”** They will be able to live there because they have been cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ.

Moreover, God reiterates that he will deliver judgment for those believers who have died as a result of persecution. Joel writes in verse 21a, **“I will avenge their blood, blood I have not avenged.”**

D. *There Will Be a Glorious King (3:21b)*

And fourth, there will be a glorious king.

Joel writes in verse 21b, **“... for the Lord dwells in Zion.”** What a wonderful way to close a book! God himself will live in the midst of his saved people in Zion, that is, in the new Jerusalem. There will now finally be eternal peace and harmony, and no more sin and suffering for the people of God. They will also be in a vital, personal, and *visible* relationship with the Lord their God.

## Conclusion

In view of what we have learned in Joel 2:28-3:21, let us live our lives in light of the ultimate day of the Lord.

Let me close with a word from Dr. Robertson:

Joel has taken the message of the Lord full cycle. Judgment begins with the house of God, starting now in this life. Repentance presents the hope of restoration for God's people.

Restoration of the years the locust has eaten staggers the imagination, and is exceeded only by the outpouring of God's Spirit on all flesh. Once the Spirit has been poured out, the way is clear for the arrival of the final Day of Judgement, the last manifestation of the Day of the Lord. On that one day, the wicked will be utterly destroyed and the righteous will stand vindicated forever in his presence. This message presents great hope for God's people, while also sending forth a warning to all the nations of the earth, a warning that must be heeded.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> O. Palmer Robertson, *Prophet of the Coming Day of the Lord: The Message of Joel*, 114–115.

## **Mission Statement**

The Mission Statement of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church is:

*To bring people to Jesus Christ  
and membership in his church family,  
develop them to Christlike maturity,  
equip them for their ministry in the church  
and life mission in the world,  
in order to magnify God's name.*

## **Sermons by Rev. Freddy Fritz**

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