

GOD'S JUDGMENT UPON THE GENTILE NATIONS

TEXT: JOEL 3:1-17

Introduction:

1. The theme of Joel is “the day of the LORD.”
2. Chapter 1 concerns the terrible locust plagues, used by the prophet Joel as an illustration of the future day of the LORD.
3. Chapter 2 deals with some of the major events of the day of the LORD, such as the attack of the northern invaders, God’s chastening of the Jews, the repentance of the Jewish remnant, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.
4. Chapter 3 develops in detail the judgment theme, introduced in 2:30, 31 (cf. 3:15, 16).

I. THE TIME OF THE JUDGMENT

II. THE PLACE OF THE JUDGMENT

III. THE BASIS FOR THE JUDGMENT

IV. THE GATHERING OF THE NATIONS TO JUDGMENT

V. THE RESULTS OF THE JUDGMENT

I. THE TIME OF THE JUDGMENT (3:1)

1. This judgment of the Gentiles will take place when the Lord Jesus Christ returns to set up His kingdom (cf. Matthew 25:31-46).
2. Each Gentile will be judged individually, it is not a judgment of entire nations.
3. This is an important and necessary preliminary to the establishment of the millennial kingdom.
4. “When I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem” (Joel 3:1) means, when the Lord reverses the captivity, i.e., causes their captivity to cease.
5. This judgment will take place when Christ comes back to destroy Israel’s enemies at the battle (literally, a “campaign”) of Armageddon (cf. Zech. 14:1-4; II Thess. 1:5-10; Rev. 16:13-16; 19:11-21).
6. God will judge Israel before He judges the Gentile nations (Ezekiel 20:33-44).

II. THE PLACE OF THE JUDGMENT (3:2, 11, 12)

1. “Jehoshaphat” means “the LORD judges.” No one knows exactly where it is located.
2. It is part of the campaign of Armageddon. Zechariah 14:2 and 3 says, “For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle... Then shall the

- LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle.”
3. Jeremiah 25:31 says, “A noise shall come even to the ends of the earth; for the LORD hath a controversy with the nations, He will plead with all flesh; He will give them that are wicked to the sword, saith the LORD.”

III. THE BASIS FOR THE JUDGMENT (3:2-8)

1. The Gentiles have scattered Israel “among the nations” and have parted their land. Notice God calls it “my land” (Joel 3:2; cf. Ezek. 36:1-5).
2. Even today, the Gentile nations are exerting tremendous pressure on Israel to give up more and more of their land.
3. It is true that God used the Gentiles as His rod to chasten backslidden Israel. Isaiah 10:5, 6 says, “O Assyrian (referring to Sennacherib), the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets.”
4. Jeremiah 34:22 says, “Behold, I will command, saith the LORD, and cause them (the Babylonians) to return to this city; and they shall fight against it, and take it, and burn it with fire: and I will make the cities of Judah a desolation without an inhabitant.”
5. The prophet Habakkuk wondered why God allowed the heathen nations to attack Israel (Hab. 1:1-4). The LORD told Habakkuk that He would send the Chaldeans, “that bitter and hasty nation” to punish backslidden Israel (Hab. 1:5-7).
6. But though God used the Gentiles to chasten Israel, that does not excuse them from culpability.
7. The Scofield Study Bible says, “The Gentile nations are permitted to afflict Israel in chastisement for her national sins, but invariably and inevitably retribution falls upon them” (p. 722).
8. The Gentile nations sold God’s people. Note “my people” (Joel 3:3). They did this not only for money, but also for immoral purposes (3:3). They would hire a harlot and then give her a Jewish boy instead of money.
9. They would sell a Jewish girl into slavery for a bottle of wine (3:3).
10. The LORD identifies with His people Israel (3:4-8). This principle also applies to the church (Acts 9:4, 5).
11. The LORD will return their recompense upon their own heads (Joel 3:7).

IV. THE GATHERING OF THE NATIONS TO JUDGMENT (3:9-16)

1. God calls upon the nations to prepare for war (3:9).
2. There will be a “new world order” organized during the tribulation. It will appear very strong, but its feet will be “part of iron and part of clay” (Daniel 2:33). It will all fall apart when the Lord returns.
3. Agricultural tools will be turned into weapons (Joel 3:10).
4. This will be reversed during the millennial kingdom (Isa. 2:4; Micah 4:3).
5. The Gentile nations will boast, “I am strong” (3:10b), but will soon be destroyed (3:11-16).
6. The “mighty ones” (3:11) refer to the angelic hosts. Our Lord said in Matthew 13:39 that “the reapers are the angels.”
7. We see this over and over in both the book of Daniel and in the book of Revelation.
8. Joel 3:12 says, “Let the heathen be wakened,” but they have not been wakened yet. They are in a deep spiritual stupor.
9. Psalm 98:9 says the LORD “cometh to judge the earth: with righteousness shall He judge the world, and the people with equity.”
10. Oftentimes in the Bible, this future judgment is described under the figure of reaping grain and the treading out of grapes (Joel 3:13; cf. Isa. 63:1-4; Rev. 14:14-20; 19:13).
11. The “valley of decision” (Joel 3:14) is not an opportunity for lost people to make a decision. God has already decided (3:13).
12. The darkness of the sun and moon (3:15; cf. 2:10, 30, 31) like the darkness at the crucifixion, demonstrates the awfulness of man’s sin and rebellion, and the severity of God’s judgment.
13. It is a vivid picture of man’s spiritual darkness. “And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil” (John 3:19).
14. So fearful will be the judgment that the LORD “shall roar out of Zion” (Joel 3:16).

V. THE RESULTS OF THE JUDGMENT (3:16, 17)

1. “The heavens and the earth shall shake” (Joel 3:16).
2. Our Lord said when He returns, “the powers of heaven shall be shaken” (Luke 21:26).
3. A repentant remnant will be preserved to enter into the millennial kingdom – “but the LORD will be the hope of His people, and the strength of the children of Israel” (Joel 3:16b).
4. Then they shall know that the Jesus is the LORD (Jehovah) their God dwelling in Zion (3:17).

5. “Then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more” (3:17). Jerusalem will be cleansed of all her wickedness, immorality, unbelief, etc.
6. Zechariah 13:1 says, “In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.”

CONCLUSION:

1. Joel 3:17 says, “and there shall no strangers (Gentiles) pass through her any more.” They will only come to Jerusalem to worship.
2. Zechariah 14:16 says, “And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles.”

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