

Joel Lesson 03

Joel Chapter 3

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Introduction: In chapter 2, Joel foresaw the invasion of Israel in the future by the beast and the pouring out of the Spirit in the last days upon Israel.

Chapter 3 is a continuation of the “day of the LORD.” As the prophet listens to the Lord, he gains a clear understanding of the events during the “day of the LORD.” His focus here is particularly of the events at the height of the Tribulation. Armageddon, the return of Christ, and the judgement of the sheep and goat nations are in view though perhaps not in their precise chronological order. In addition, a glimpse of millennial conditions is presented.

I. God to Regather Israel

Joel 3:1 For, behold, in those days, and in that time, when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem,

Joe 3:2 I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land.

The reference is made to the return of the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem. The context does not lend itself to the later Babylonian captivity of Judah and Jerusalem. The captivity in that day in all likelihood is a reference to the occupation of Jerusalem by the forces of the beast in the latter stages of the tribulation.

The words translated as bring back (shuwb) have the sense of ‘turning back.’ The Lord in that day will deliver Jerusalem from its enemies in preparation for His coming reign.

The only place the “valley of Jehoshaphat” is mentioned in the Bible is here in Joel. One of two possibilities are in view here. One view is that the valley of Jehoshaphat is a reference to the valley of Jezreel adjacent to Mount Megiddo in which the central elements of the battle of Armageddon will take place. The context, particularly in verses 13-16, lends credence to this view.

The other view is that the gathering of all nations to the valley of Jehoshaphat is a reference to the judgment of the sheep and goat nations to which our Lord alluded in Matthew 25:31-41. Verse 12 of this chapter lends credence to this view.

Mat 25:31 When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory:

Mat 25:32 And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats:

Mat 25:33 And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

Mat 25:34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

Mat 25:35 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:

Mat 25:36 Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

Mat 25:37 Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?

Mat 25:38 When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?

Mat 25:39 Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

Mat 25:40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

Mat 25:41 Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:

Historically, it has been thought that a valley adjacent to Jerusalem was at one time called the valley of Jehoshaphat, likely the Kidron Valley. The word translated as plead (shaphat) can have the sense of a judicial hearing and also that Jehovah vows to "judge all the heathen" in verse 12. I lean

toward the position that this ultimately refers to the events in Matthew 25:31.

Joe 3:3 And they have cast lots for my people; and have given a boy for an harlot, and sold a girl for wine, that they might drink.

Joe 3:4 Yea, and what have ye to do with me, O Tyre, and Zidon, and all the coasts of Palestine? will ye render me a recompence? and if ye recompense me, swiftly and speedily will I return your recompence upon your own head;

Joe 3:5 Because ye have taken my silver and my gold, and have carried into your temples my goodly pleasant things:

Joe 3:6 The children also of Judah and the children of Jerusalem have ye sold unto the Grecians, that ye might remove them far from their border.

Joe 3:7 Behold, I will raise them out of the place whither ye have sold them, and will return your recompence upon your own head:

Joe 3:8 And I will sell your sons and your daughters into the hand of the children of Judah, and they shall sell them to the Sabeans, to a people far off: for the LORD hath spoken it.

The prophet Joel cites some of the persecution and cruel injustices the neighboring gentile nations have inflicted upon the Jewish nation during that time. Such abominable practices as paying a prostitute by giving a Jewish boy as a slave or selling a Jewish girl into prostitution or servitude to buy alcohol. Such cruel abuse of the Jewish people will be judged in the day when Jesus Christ sits in judgment over gentile nations.

Muslims from Lebanon and Palestinians from the Gaza strip will likewise be judged in that day. God asked what they had to do with Him, Jehovah God of the Jews? The answer is clear. Muslims have had nothing but hatred for the Jewish people and disdain for their God. As they had swiftly recompensed trouble to Israel, so their judgment will return upon them swiftly. Though gentile nations have abused the Jews through the centuries and even as we speak, their comeuppance awaits them. The Hatred of Israel is long and bitter. Anti-Semitism is nothing new. During the day of the LORD, God will judge the nations of the world for their enmity and cruelty to the Jewish people.

A clear prophecy of the final restoration of Jews and Israel to their land is here foretold. In that day, Israel will be exalted, and her enemies will be judged forever. As hostile Arab and Muslim neighbors have sought to sell Jewish boys

and girls into slavery over the centuries, the day is coming when the tables will be turned. The Sabeans refer to ancient Arabs. The greater point is how that the enemies of Israel will face some of the same treatment they have inflicted against Jews through the centuries.

II. Joel Was to Proclaim Warning Even unto the Gentiles

Joe 3:9 Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles; Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up:

Joe 3:10 Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruninghooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong.

Joe 3:11 Assemble yourselves, and come, all ye heathen, and gather yourselves together round about: thither cause thy mighty ones to come down, O LORD.

In the final days of the Tribulation, God will providentially draw all nations against Israel militarily under the influence of the antichrist. See Revelation 14:14 and 19:19.

Rev 14:14 And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle.

Rev 19:19 And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army.

One might only speculate upon the motive at that time perpetrated by Satan to draw the united nations of the world against Israel. It is quite conceivable that with the restraining influence of the Holy Spirit removed in that day, their motive will be raw anti-Semitism. Perhaps the motive will be more sophisticated such as punishing a nation which will not cooperate with the nations united and led by the Antichrist.

Some have suggested that in as much as Israel in that day will have returned to blood sacrifices in their rebuilt Temple, the prevailing animal rights philosophy might motivate punitive actions against them. Others have suggested that Israel

in that day will unleash nuclear weapons against a hostile neighbor making itself a major threat among the nations led by the antichrist. Another theory is that the devil will blame the rapture upon UFOs and that they are about to do battle with the forces of the earth in the land of Israel.

Another variation of that theme is that Israel somehow or other is in alliance with the UFOs and therefore must be eradicated. In any event, and through whatever motive, the nations of the world will providentially be drawn to Israel to fight once and for all to eradicate the Jews.

Joe 3:12 Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of

Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about.

Joe 3:13 Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the press is full, the fats overflow; for their wickedness is great.

Joe 3:14 Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision.

In the greater scope of end time events, the judgement of the sheep and goat nations referred to in Matthew 25 follows immediately after Armageddon. See comments for Joel 3:1-8 and Matthew 25:31.

In verse 13, the events here seem to be a clear parallel to Revelation 14:14-20. See also Isaiah 63:3 and Jeremiah 25:30.

Rev 14:14 And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle.

Rev 14:15 And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe.

Rev 14:16 And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped.

Rev 14:17 And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle.

Rev 14:18 And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth;

for her grapes are fully ripe.

Rev 14:19 And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.

Rev 14:20 And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.

Isa 63:3 I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment.

Jer 25:30 Therefore prophesy thou against them all these words, and say unto them, The LORD shall roar from on high, and utter his voice from his holy habitation; he shall mightily roar upon his habitation; he shall give a shout, as they that tread the grapes, against all the inhabitants of the earth.

This is the culmination of the battle of Armageddon when Jesus Christ returns and directly destroys the forces of the world under the leadership of the antichrist. The analogies of a sickle being used to harvest ripened grapes and then casting them into a wine press find clear parallels in the passages noted above.

Whether in verse 14 this refers to Armageddon or the following judgement in the valley of Jehoshaphat, there is an awesome and ominous tone, "Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision." The word translated as decision (charuwts) has reference to a threshing tool. One might conclude this is a reference to God's chastisement at Armageddon.

It may be a reference to how the wheat is separated from the chaff in the judgement to immediately follow at the valley of Jehoshaphat. We are of the opinion, it refers to the latter.

Albert Barnes in his commentary made this comment about the multitudes in the valley of decision.

The prophet continues, as in amazement at the great throng assembling upon one another, “multitudes, multitudes, in the valley of decision,” as though, whichever way he looked, there were yet more of these “tumultuous masses,” so that there was nothing beside them. It was one living, surging, boiling, sea: throngs upon throngs, mere throngs! . The word rendered “multitudes” suggests, besides, the thought of the hum and din of these masses thronging onward, blindly, to their own destruction.

III. Sun and Moon to be Darkened

Joe 3:15 The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining.

Joe 3:16 The LORD also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the LORD will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel.

This seems to parallel other signs which will take place immediately prior to Christ's return in glory at the end of the Tribulation and specifically at Armageddon. See Joel 2:31, Matthew 24: 27-30, perhaps also Revelation 16:10.

Mat 24:27 For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

Mat 24:28 For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.

Mat 24:29 Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:

Mat 24:30 And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

The Lord roaring out of Zion likely refers to His return as described in Revelation 19. Zion can refer to not only Jerusalem, but is a metaphor

for heaven itself. In that day, He will, among other things, deliver Israel from the fierce persecution of the antichrist and his forces. He in fact will become the hope of Israel and their strength. In that day, Jesus Christ will return in power and great glory as well as in military might. See Revelation 19:11.

Rev 19:11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.

Rev 19:12 His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself.

Rev 19:13 And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God.

In the midst of all of these terrifying and cataclysmic events, nevertheless “the LORD will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel.” During this time, Israel will be largely converted to Christ and providentially protected and preserved, enabling them to endure to the end of the Tribulation.

Joe 3:17 So shall ye know that I am the LORD your God dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain: then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more.

Joe 3:18 And it shall come to pass in that day, that the mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come forth of the house of the LORD, and shall water the valley of Shittim.

Millennial conditions immediately begin to sprout and blossom after Christ’s return. There no doubt is parallel to events spoken of in Psalm 46:4, Ezekiel 47:1, and Zechariah 14:8.

Eze 47:1 Afterward he brought me again unto the door of the house; and, behold, waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward: for the forefront of the house stood toward the east, and the waters came

down from under from the right side of the house, at the south side of the altar.

The valley of Shittim is south and west of Jerusalem and likely refers to the millennial river described in Ezekiel 47.

Joe 3:19 Egypt shall be a desolation, and Edom shall be a desolate wilderness, for the violence against the children of Judah, because they have shed innocent blood in their land.

Joe 3:20 But Judah shall dwell for ever, and Jerusalem from generation to generation.

Egypt shall be a desolation, and Edom shall be a desolate wilderness, for the violence against the children of Judah, because they have shed innocent blood in their land. Reference is made to how even in the Millennium, God's chastening and judgment will prevail against those nations which abused Israel down through the centuries.

In verse 20, we find that the hope of Israel from the time of Joel onward is how that God will providentially restore and promote Israel amongst the nations. This will only take place after their Messiah returns and so establishes His throne.

Joel 3:21 For I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed: for the LORD dwelleth in Zion.

Perhaps this a spiritual reference to how God in that day will cleanse Israel spiritually. See Zechariah 13:1.

Zec 13:1 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.

Jesus Christ will reside and reign from Zion in that day. Zion, of course, is a name of Jerusalem. Here we find the end of the prophecy of Joel.

John Gill made these comments about verse 21.

For I will cleanse their blood *which I have not cleansed*,... Which some understand, as the Lord inflicts further punishments on the, enemies of his people, for shedding their innocent blood; and that he will not expiate their sins, nor hold them guiltless, or suffer them to go unpunished; but rather this is to be interpreted in a way of grace and mercy, as a benefit bestowed on Judah and Jerusalem, who are the immediate antecedents to the relative here; and in the words a reason is given why they should dwell safely and peaceably for ever, because the Lord will justify them from their sins; forgive their iniquities; cleanse them from all their pollution, signified by blood; of which grace they will have had no application made to them till this time; but now all their guilt and faith will be removed; and particularly God will forgive, and declare to be forgiven their sin of crucifying Christ; whose blood they had imprecated upon themselves and their children, and which has remained on them; but now will be removed, with all the sad effects of it.

Though this may also refer to the conversion of the Gentiles, and the pardon of their sins, and the sanctification of their persons, in such places and parts of the world, where such blessings of grace have not been bestowed in times past for many ages, if ever;

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Prov 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

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