

Joel 2:18-27
The Day of the Lord: When God Invades

I. Structure

- A. 1A - Judgment on Israel: When locust invade (1:2-20)
 - 1. 1-14 - The people are called to mourn
 - 2. 15-20 - Lamentation
- B. 1B - Judgment on Israel: Invading Army (2:1-11)
- C. 1C - Transition/Repentance (2:12-17)
- D. 1B²/2A - Yahweh Relents/Judgment on Nations (2:18-20)**
- E. 1A²/2B - Yahweh Restores/Locust plague reversed (2:21-27)**
- F. 2B² - Grace (2:28-32)
- G. 2A² - Judgment on Nations (3:1-21)

II. 2:18-27 — Yahweh Relents and Restores

A. 18-20 — Yahweh Relents

18 — Did Israel Repent? Up to this point in the book, Joel is looking forward. He is calling the people to respond by mourning, weeping, being ashamed and more to the disaster of the locust plague. In chapter 2 they are called to repent because of the army that is coming. These are significant future events, and an important call on their lives to repent.

The topic of repentance in 2:12-17 explains what they need to do, but there is no indication that they do it. This is what makes verse 18 all the more intriguing. The actions of Yahweh in these verses assumes that repentance has already taken place. It brings us into the present as Yahweh responds to the current events.

What does it mean that Yahweh is “jealous for his land”? Garrett writes this, “Yahweh is zealous for the nation in the sense that he identifies himself with it, protects it, and upholds the covenant.”¹ Repentance was based on the character of God, now we see that character in action. He is having pity on His people because He is merciful.²

19 — In response to His jealousy of the land and his pity on His people, Yahweh is going to restore their crops and will no longer make them a reproach to the nations.

“Behold, I am sending to you grain, wine, and oil, and you will be satisfied.” In the previous section, this was one of the hopes in their repentance. That God would “leave a blessing behind him, a grain offering and a drink offering” (v. 14). This trio of “grain, wine, and oil” was the loss seen earlier (1:10).

“And I will no more make you a reproach among the nations.” This was the last part of their request to Yahweh in verse 17. Yahweh is promising them that the nations will no longer view them as a reproach, because He will once again bless them. By this, He is protecting His own honor.

¹ Garrett, 351.

² NASB has a different translation, saying that God “*will* be zealous for His land And *will* have pity on His people.” Most translations and commentators argue that the text is best understood as past tense.

20 — This verse is difficult and it is easy to miss the main point in the midst of the many questions we might have. What we need to remember is that God is relenting from the disaster He had promised. He is turning the army away from His people.

1. **Who is the “northerner”?** Scripture repeatedly sees the term “northerner” used to describe an army coming from the North (Isaiah 14:31; 41:25; Zeph 2:6-7; 2:13). Conversely, locust plagues come from the South further affirming the fact that the army in view is a human army. Consequently this is connected to the army found in 2:1-11.³
2. **What happened to this army?** Clearly it was banished, separated, and drowned.⁴ There are a lot of questions circling around this verse, one being “when did this happen?” It’s easy to get hung up on the wrong questions and points, for what we need to take away from this verse is that Yahweh is relenting from the disaster that He had promised.
3. **What does “For he has done great things” mean?** First we need to determine who is the antecedent of “he”? There are two views on this verse. First, if the army is the antecedent to “he” it is a negative statement that could be translated like “he has acted great.”⁵ In other words, the army was acting in arrogance and pride. The second option is to take it positively, assuming that Yahweh is the antecedent as in verse 21.

B. 21-27 — Yahweh Restores

1. 21-22 — Fear Not

21 — Why would Yahweh tell the land to no longer fear? What fears might the land have? Instead of fearing, the land is called to be glad and rejoice. This celebration is a response to the great things that Yahweh has done. Keeping the context in mind, what great things has Yahweh done?

22 — Why would he call the animals to no longer fear? Consider what we have covered in the book so far, is there another passage where we see the beasts responding to the food supply? The “for” in this passage tells us that the reason fear is no longer needed is because the pastures are now green! Additionally, we saw in verse 1:7 that the trees were stripped bare and there was no bark on them. Now Yahweh has healed the trees and they are in full bloom, bearing fruit.

2. 23-25 — Be Glad

23⁶ — With an imperative the people are called to be glad. The basis of their rejoicing is found in what Yahweh is doing. It would appear that there had been a drought in Israel and Judah. And so, that there is going to be all the necessary rains to grow crops should bring rejoicing. The early rain prepared the soil for the planting and the late rain helped swell the plants for harvest.⁷

³ It should be mentioned that some would argue that this verse is lumping the locust army and the apocalyptic army together.

⁴ Scott, 259.

⁵ Garrett, 356.

⁶ There is a lot of discussion around the phrase “the early rain.” It is possible that it’s ambiguous, and intended to carry a double meaning. The second meaning would be “teacher of righteousness.” The Hebrew wording would allow for both, but the translation “the early rain” is chosen and preferred because of the context.

⁷ Dillard, 290.

24 — The blessings will abound and overflow. They will take in a large harvest and have plenty of wine and oil to make offerings before the LORD. In 1:10 and 1:13 we see the absence of these items. Now they can bring offerings again to the LORD.

25 — In this verse we see that the effects of the locust plague had lasted years. The effect on the people must have been devastating, as they had no control over the land becoming fertile and full of crops again. **What are the implications of this, “My great army, which I sent among you?”**

3. **26-27 — Yahweh in their midst**

26 — Yahweh will provide for them so that they have plenty and are satisfied. The result of all that Yahweh has done for them should be to praise Him in return.

That the people shall never be put to shame again, continues from what has already be said in verses 17 and 19.

27 — This verse will lead us into next weeks conversation about 2:28-32. The text literally reads, “You shall know that I, I am in the midst of Israel.” Yahweh is stating His presence with His people, a presence that means that the people will never again have to worry about being put to shame.

What exactly does that mean? The blessing they are experiencing are a result of their repentance. Yahweh was willing to restore and bless them, but they still had to come in repentance. Chisholm says that this may be implicitly conditional, as they are still under the old covenant. Essentially, each generation would have to maintain loyalty to Yahweh for this promise to be true.⁸ However, the fullness of this promise would not be realized until the new covenant, when they would no longer be put to shame because of their sin — Christ’s death having sufficiently covered that sin.

III. **Summary** — Yahweh responds to the repentance of His people with blessing. He relents from sending his army to them and instead restores them to a place of great blessing. All those that were impacted before by the locust plague and famine are now blessed (e.g. the land, animals, people). Whereas before Yahweh was uncreating everything, now he is recreating and blessing.

IV. Application

- A. **How do we bridge this passage to our context and apply it to our lives?**
- B. **Since we are not under the old covenant, how might our blessings differ from the ones listed here?**
- C. **What does this passage show us about the character of God?**
- D. **What do we learn about God when we see that He is directly behind all that Has taken place in Joel?**

⁸ Chisholm, 61-62.