

**Joel 3:1-21**  
**The Day of the Lord: When God Invades**

**I. Structure**

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

**II. 3:1-21 — Judgment on the Nations**

**A. 1-8 — Yahweh's argument with the Nations**

1. **1-3** — At the time of their restoration from their enemies, a time when they are restored from captivity and its devastation (see 3:7), Yahweh will call up the nations for judgment. The wrath of God is no longer directed toward Judah, but it is directed to the nations. We know that God's wrath is not capricious, it is a necessary response to what has happened to His people. So He calls the nations down to the valley of Jehoshaphat, which literally means, "Yahweh Judges." This is often associated with the valley of Jezreel, located in the northern portion of Israel. What is Yahweh's accusation against the nations? What is implied by His statement that they "have traded a boy for a prostitute, and have sold a girl for wine and have drunk it"?
2. **4** — Why would Joel mention Tyre, Sidon, and Philistia? (1) Clearly they did something, but maybe there are no other references to their wrongs in Scripture. (2) In light of Obadiah, they may have kicked Israel while they were down, so to speak. (3) Joel may have intentionally included these names to demonstrate that all nations, both small and great, would be brought to judgment.

Regardless, Yahweh is calling them out and promising them that he will return their payment on their own head quickly (note the emphasis in the verse).

3. **5-6** — Yahweh is beginning to build His case against the nations by listing their wrongs. First, it's material things that are taken away, then it's the people themselves that are taken away. Garrett suggests that this was a form of "ethnic cleansing."<sup>1</sup>
4. **7-8<sup>2</sup>** — That Yahweh is going to bring back His people from the place they were sold shows His sovereign power. He is going to bring them back, then use them to return payment on Tyre, Sidon, and Philistia. Yahweh will bring them back by stirring "them up." This is the same language used in 3:9 and 12 of the opposing army.

---

<sup>1</sup> Ibid, 384.

<sup>2</sup> Who are the Sabeans? The Sabeans were Arabian traders, who some connect with the Queen of Sheba.

Understanding that the Day of the LORD is in view, we see God dealing with people in this verse according to their relationship to Him — He is restoring His people and bringing judgment on those who have rejected Him.

## **B. 9-16 — Yahweh commands the nations to prepare for judgment**

1. **9-12 — His command to the nations.** Yahweh is calling the nations to come and stand before Him. What do you observe in this passage about this call? They are to come to the valley of “Yahweh judges.” Did they have a choice? Could they have resisted the call? Yahweh calls them to prepare for battle, but would there actually be a fight? Would they have a chance to win?

What we find then, is that all are commanded to come; the warrior’s, the farmers, even those who are weak are called to come by a call they cannot resist, to fight a battle they cannot win.

An irony is presented in this section as we consider the army in chapter 2. In chapter 2 Israel faced an army that was invincible unless they sought repentance. Now, this army is going to face an invincible judge who does not even need to engage in battle with them to bring them to nothing, for he is sitting to judge.

Earlier in the book we saw Yahweh using a foreign army to lead His people back to Himself, now He is bringing judgment on that army.

### **2. 13-16 — Judgment realized**

**13** — What points is Joel making with these three metaphors? After Israel’s repentance, Yahweh was promising them that the vats shall overflow with win and oil. That referred to agricultural blessing. Now it refers to judgment in response to sin. Joel has used metaphors that did mean blessing for Israel earlier in the book and turned them to mean blessing in a different sense — blessing for Israel by judging the nations.<sup>3</sup> These metaphors point to the need for immediate judgment and provide a picture of what that judgment will look like (cutting down people like wheat, people being trampled like grapes, and blood flowing like the wine overflowing the vats<sup>4</sup>).

**14-15** — This is the Day of the Lord. The imagery in verse 15 should take us back to 2:10, a sure sign that the Day of the Lord is in view. McComiskey brings clarity to these verses when he writes, “Many preachers have appealed to verse 14 for an evangelistic thrust; their audiences are addressed as ‘multitudes in the Valley of Decision’ who must decide their fate. There is a problem with that use of this passage: in Joel the hordes do not gather to make a decision, but to hear one; they will not be deciding their fate, for God has already decreed it. The time for decision is now past.”<sup>5</sup>

**16** — On the Day of the Lord Yahweh will come with all His power to deal with people. This verse

---

<sup>3</sup> Garrett, 391.

<sup>4</sup> Chisholm, 65.

<sup>5</sup> McComiskey, 309.

pictures for us the two responses that Yahweh will make. The earth and the heavens will shake, but all those who are His people will be safe for He is their refuge.

### **C. 17-21 — There is hope for Judah**

**17** — As a result of Yahweh’s judgment of the nations His people will understand that He is their God. Having seen His many blessings and the judgment on all the surrounding nations, Israel will have no choice but to see that Yahweh is the true God. Additionally, that Yahweh will dwell in Zion provides the people with comfort knowing that He is dwelling with them.

Joel says that foreigners will no longer be able to pass through the city. What does Joel mean? There are two ways to take this. Either this should be translated that foreign armies will no longer invade it (so NET), or that it will be a holy place and sojourners will not be able to pass through.

**18** — The book began with an infestation of locust, devastation of crops and drought. Now it ends with an overflow of Yahweh’s blessing with all that the people could need.

**19-21** — In contrast to the blessing that Judah will receive because of the presence of Yahweh, Egypt and Edom will become desolate. As a demonstration of the greatness of Yahweh in contrast to the other gods of the land, His people will flourish while others wither.

Once again, Joel reminds the people that Yahweh dwells with them. The presence of Yahweh guarantees that all their needs will be provided for, that they will be protected them from all their enemies, and that they will be able to remain forever.

**III. Summary** - In a final display of His power Yahweh is going to invade and right all wrongs. The nations, who abused His people, will be punished. His people, who have come in repentance, will find mercy. But more than that they will have His Spirit poured out on them and will forever enjoy the benefits of His presence.

### **IV. Application**

- A. How do we bridge this passage to our context and apply it to our lives?
- B. What does this passage teach us about the character of God?
- C. Where do you stand with God?