

# Joel 1-3 • The Day of the Lord

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Tonight we're going to be getting into a new book of the Bible. We're in our second book of the minor prophets. So, open your bibles to the book of Joel. It's called a Minor Prophet, but don't think of baseball terms like the majors and the minors. It doesn't mean that they are not as talented.

This is simply a term that is used to describe the size of these last 12 books of the Old Testament that we call the minor prophets. And if you're in Joel chapter one, you'll notice that it begins by saying, *“the word of the Lord that came to Joel, the Son of Pethuel:”* And there are some significant things about this very first verse that I want to talk to you about.

And the first is, we don't know anything about Joel. We know nothing about this, well, we know his father's name was Pethuel, and we don't know anything about Pethuel. So essentially, we don't know anything about Joel. We don't really even know when this was written, because you'll notice that this prophecy doesn't start off with any kind of a dating structure.

By that, we typically would find dates given at the beginning of a prophetic message. Let me go on the screen here and show you an example from Isaiah. You remember this, back when we were going through Isaiah and said,

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## **Isaiah 1:1 (ESV)**

*The vision of Isaiah, the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem (and then he dated it for us and he basically said that during the reigns of) in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, (which covered obviously a pretty good period of time Isaiah was actively ministering prophetically to Judah) kings of Judah.*

But for some reason Joel doesn't do that. Joel doesn't date his prophecy. And that's interesting. It's significant. I think it's significant and I'll tell you why. First of all, the message that Joel is bringing to the people of the land came during a time of difficulty. And the difficulty that he's going to explain as he gets into this, is that they had just recently gone through a terrible drought and

locust infestation in the land and those could be devastating, tremendously devastating.

But what he's going to do during the course of this short book, it's only three chapters long, is he's going to relate that locust infestation to another calamitous event, which is yet in the future, and in fact has not yet come to pass. Joel is going to use what happened in the land to speak of a greater work of the Lord, which he will call "the Day of the Lord."

In fact, he will make reference to it as the Day of the Lord, no fewer than five times. And that term appears in every one of these chapters. This is that very common prophetic element that we've run into many times in our study of the Old Testament called the "Law of Double Reference," meaning that if you see it on the screen there,

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**The Law of Double Reference** is the tendency of Scripture prophecy to sometimes refer to two events or even possibly to two people simultaneously – (But) one (of them is) relevant to the general time of the prophecy (in the time that it is given) and the other is relating to a much farther distant, far-off future (reference).

We've seen this in several books of the Bible. We're going to see it again here in the book of Joel. And the near reference to what Joel is talking about is the locust disaster that had just happened to the people of Israel. The far-off reference, again, is to the Day of the Lord. And by the way, it's interesting that the Day of the Lord as a phrase, as a reference appears in the whole of Scripture, 17 times, five of which are in this short book.

Now there's kind of an amazing sort of a fact, that of those 17 references that five of them would actually be here. But keep in mind something, whenever the Bible talks about the Day of the Lord, it's not talking about a single, 24-hour period, or day. In fact, it really is talking about a season, an event, which takes up a season. It refers to the culmination of God's plan to judge sinful man and to restore the earth, to restore Israel, to bring glory, to rule and reign and all of these things are connected with the second coming of Jesus Christ, which is part of the Day of the Lord.

And so, I want you to keep that in mind. Now as we get into chapter one here in Joel we're going to see how it describes the effects of this very severe locust plague, which had swept through the land and virtually wiped out all of the

vegetation. And of course, in those days, you couldn't just run down to the store and pick up some groceries. What you grew in your field was what you were going to eat, and it was what the animals also ate that you might slaughter and cook. And so, to have something like this happen was hugely devastating, in that particular time.

But once again, Joel is going to reference that locust calamity, with the farther off fulfillment of the Day of the Lord, and that's where that's going to come in. So essentially, I'm just telling you here by way of kind of introduction, that the purpose of this book is to warn God's people about a coming day of judgment, and to encourage them about this gracious God who responds to repentance.

Because here's the point that you need to understand, and this is probably something that will help you understand the whole of the Bible. Whenever we stray from God, whenever we reject God and we worship the gods of this world, we bring upon ourselves, naturally, judgment. Judgment from God comes whenever we stray from worshiping him and Him alone. But that judgment need not happen for anyone, because God has made a provision to make sure that we would never experience His judgment.

And that provision begins with repentance and turning back to God. No one ever, ever has to experience the judgment of God. Nobody has to, I get questions sometimes people get all kind of lathered up and they're like, well, how can you believe in a God that just casts people into hell just because He doesn't like him or whatever. No, no, no, no. You've missed the point.

You've missed the point of the fact that judgment is the natural outcome of His pure and righteous and holy nature. God cannot do other than judge sin. He cannot. You and I, we can look the other way at sin. We can turn a blind eye. We can say, oh, whatever, I'm not going to deal with that. I can brush it under the rug. God can't do that. He cannot deny His nature, which is pure, righteous, and just He cannot, okay?

Sin must be judged. It cannot be otherwise. For God not to judge sin, well, He would not be God. He must. Here's the deal, though. God has given a remedy for mankind so that we never, ever have to experience judgment. And that remedy, of course, begins with repentance, turning to God. And of course, we know the fulfillment of that remedy is that He sent His son to bear our penalty on the cross.

And when we by faith, walk in the confidence of what Jesus did on the cross, judgment is a past issue for us. I don't worry about God's judgment. I've never

lost a minute's sleep worrying about God's judgment because I believe Jesus bore my judgment. I believe with all my heart. I don't have any question about the fact that He bore my judgment. And that is the confidence that we are to have toward Him. And that is laying hold of the remedy that He has given to us, related to these things.

Now getting back to this idea of the Day of the Lord. Before we get into the text there's one other thing that I really need to make you aware of. The Jews looked at the day of the Lord as a good thing. And the reason they did was because they believed that the day of the Lord would herald the coming of Messiah, which of course they were right about that, but they believed that the coming of Messiah would only judge the enemies of Israel and restore them to their glorious kingdom.

And so, they looked forward to the day of the Lord. They would talk about the Day of the Lord, like, oh, the wonderful Day of the Lord. One of the things that God is going to make clear through the course of this prophecy, and He does with every other prophetic books, particularly in the Old Testament, is to make clear to the nation of Israel that it is not something for them to look forward to.

It is, in fact, even for Israel, going to be a time of great testing. In fact, elsewhere in the Bible, it refers to the Day of the Lord as the “time of Jacob's trouble.” And that refers to the great tribulation when there will be terrible, terrible times. And God warned the nation of Israel over and over about those terrible times that would come for Israel, not just the world.

But Israel would enter into a period of judgment as well, during that time. But the Jews were often blind to this. Now, Jesus reiterated the message of the Old Testament prophets and He spoke to the nation of Israel, and He likened, in this law of double reference, the great tribulation with the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70.

And that was another instance of this law of double reference. And He would say things to the Jews like, you better hope that this doesn't happen on the Sabbath. Or, how terrible it will be in those days for nursing mothers, and so forth. And we're talking about when Jesus was making reference to these last days events, which are recorded for us in chapters like Matthew 23 and 24, where He is talking about the end times.

So many Christians read those passages and they think, well, look what He's doing. He's warning us about these terrible things that are going to happen during the tribulation period, obviously, the Church is going through the

tribulation. No, that was for Israel. Those warnings were for Israel, just like they are given here in Joel as well. Even though God moves on eventually and gives them words of encouragement.

So, let's get into Joel chapter one here. We've already read verse one. Moving on to verse two. It says, <sup>2</sup>*“hear this, you elders give ear all inhabitants of the land. Have such a thing ever happened in your days or in the days of your father's?”*

(And he hasn't told us yet what he's even referring to. He says in verse three), <sup>3</sup>*“Tell your children of it, and let your children tell their children, and their children to another generation.”*

And here's what he wants them to retell and to remember.

<sup>4</sup>*“What the cutting locust left, the swarming locust has eaten. What the swarming locust left, the hopping locust has eaten, and what the hopping locust left, the destroying locust has eaten.”*

And so, the Lord is making reference to these four different phases of this locust infestation that comes upon the land and He basically tells them, think about this. Just think about the last time this took place. Can you even remember? Do you even know when this happened? This has so devastated the land, that God wanted them to pay attention to what was happening. Because what was happening was a response of the Lord to the people's disobedience.

And this whole devastating locust invasion that had decimated their crops was what the Lord brought as a response to that disobedience, to that rebellion. And so, He's telling them to look at what's happened and to think about it and to ask them the question, have you ever seen anything like this before? He's calling them this to their remembrance.

I don't know if you've ever seen a locust infestation. I think probably most of you know that a locust is a kind of a grasshopper. They would travel in huge, absolutely huge swarms, and just decimate the vegetation. They'd eat everything in their path, and that meant all the produce of the field, all the stuff that was growing in the vineyards, the groves, and it could be done in a very short period of time.

I'm told that a single swarm of locust could easily cover an area of 460 square miles. One, one swarm. One swarm of locusts. Now, the last time, the last recorded locust swarm in Israel was actually in 1915. And even though

photography was pretty bad, we actually have some pictures. I'll show you one picture on the screen here. This is the sky during a locust swarm in 1915 when it did damage, incredible damage in Israel.

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We don't know if it was worse or whatever from the time of Joel, but the locusts when they are moving in, as a swarm, have been known to literally blot out the sun. On a clear day it looks like a cloudy day because of the locust swarm. And it's just, it's devastating. And the reason the people of Israel are told by God to pay attention to this whole affair is because this is exactly what God had warned them about and told them would happen if they persisted in their rebellion, and their disobedience, and in the worship of other gods.

You might remember that Israel was told when they came into the land, that Joshua was told to take the people of Israel. They were to be in a valley. And then he was going to have some men climb up on the top of a hill on one side of the valley, and some other men climb to the top of the hill on the other side of the valley. And from one side, they were to read from the Scriptures that had been given to Moses, the blessings that would come upon the nation of Israel if they were to keep the covenant.

But on the other mountain, they were to read the curses that would come upon the nation if they were to defy the Lord, rebel against Him and worship other gods. Let me show you on the screen an excerpt from Deuteronomy chapter 28. It says,

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**Deuteronomy 28:38-42 (ESV)**

*You shall carry much seed into the field and shall gather in little for the locust (look at this) shall consume it. (Now, these are the curses if they violate the covenant) You shall plant vineyards and dress them, but you shall neither drink of the wine nor gather the grapes, for the worm shall eat them. You shall have olive trees throughout all your territory, but you shall not anoint yourself with the oil, for your olives shall drop off. You shall father sons and daughters, but they shall not be yours, for they shall go into captivity. The cricket shall possess all your trees and the fruit of your ground.*

Now, this is what God told them ahead of time would happen. Now, on the other side of that equation, He said, if you keep my covenant and walk in obedience and reject the ways of the nations around you, your crops will flourish, and you'll never fail to bring in a bumper crop every year. But if you violate my covenant, this is what's going to happen. And it is exactly what takes place at this time during the Ministry of Joel. So let's read on now verse five. In your text it says,

*<sup>5</sup>Awake, you drunkards, and weep, and wail, all you drinkers of wine, because of the sweet wine, for it is cut off from your mouth. (meaning there's no harvest of grapes. And so he says, he's trying to get their attention here for, he says in verse six), <sup>6</sup>For a nation has come up against my land (And when he refers to a nation here, he's referring to the locust swarm. It's like a whole nation, like a conquering nation. And he says) *powerful and beyond number; its teeth are like lion's teeth, and it has the fangs of a lioness.*"*

All right. But remember, all of this was meant to awaken the people to a place of repentance. So, he begins now to describe the devastation in verse seven. And through 10, he says,

*<sup>7</sup> "It has laid waste my vine and splintered my fig tree; it has stripped off their bark and thrown it down; their branches are made white. <sup>8</sup> Lament like a virgin wearing sackcloth for the bridegroom of her youth. <sup>9</sup> The grain offering and the drink offering are cut off (meaning you can't do them from the house of the Lord because there's no grain or drink to offer to the Lord) *from the house of**

*the Lord. (And he says) The priests mourn, the ministers of the Lord. <sup>10</sup> The fields are destroyed, the ground mourns, because the grain is destroyed, the wine dries up, the oil languishes.”*

*(And so, he says), <sup>11</sup> “Be ashamed, O tillers of the soil; wail, O vinedressers, for the wheat and the barley, because the harvest of the field has perished. <sup>12</sup> The vine dries up; the fig tree languishes. Pomegranate, palm, and apple, all the trees of the field are dried up, and gladness dries up from the children of man.”*

All right, here's where the Lord now begins to exhort them to respond to these things. Notice what He says. He says, put on sackcloth and lament. And that's what they would do during times of mourning. They would take off their nice clothes, their regular clothes, and put on sackcloth, which was itchy and hard to wear and, but it was meant as a sign of grief and mourning and repentance.

He says, <sup>13</sup> “....oh priests; wail, O ministers of the altar. Go in, pass the night in sackcloth, ministers of my God! Because grain offering and drink offering are withheld from the house of your God. <sup>14</sup> Consecrate a fast; call a solemn assembly. Gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land to the house of the Lord your God, (And then look at this last statement), and cry out to the Lord.”

He's telling them to cry out in repentance, in recognition. That these things have happened because of their rebellion, because of their disobedience, because they've rejected the ways of the Lord, they've violated the covenant of God, and they've worshiped other gods. So he's basically saying, return to me. And all these fancy words are simply God's way of saying, come back. Come back.

But I wanted to emphasize those last words of verse 14, because I feel like sometimes we've forgotten how to cry out to the Lord. I mean, I get people pretty regularly asking me what to do about what's going on in their life. And my response is often very much in keeping with this, not necessarily because there's an issue of disobedience in their life, but just because there's a need. To cry out to God. It's like, what are you writing me for? Why are you asking me questions about what to do? Cry out to God.

I saw somebody with a T-shirt. It said - it was really great. It said, “talk to God about it.” I really like that. I think I'm going to get one of those because that is the answer. Talk to God. Cry out to Him. Don't complain to your neighbor. Don't get discouraged and depressed. Cry out to God. We've got to learn how to cry out again. We really do. We need to learn how to cry out.



Now, this is where the Lord is going to begin to talk to them about a day that is to come. He says,

*<sup>15</sup> “Alas for the day! For the day of the Lord is near (Now we know he is talking about something else other than the locust infestation because the locust infestation has already happened. Now He's talking about something that is near, it's coming all right), and as destruction from the Almighty it comes. (And then, it's interesting here, Joel seems to be writing now this final part of the chapter from his own perspective as he's looking out at the land around him. So, as you read these words, think about Joel himself, just looking at the land that's been decimated and observing. He says,)*

*<sup>16</sup> Is not the food cut off before our eyes, joy and gladness from the house of our God? <sup>17</sup> The seed shrivels under the clods; (he says) the storehouses are desolate; the granaries are torn down because the grain has dried up. (And the beasts, he says),*

*<sup>18</sup> “How the beasts groan! The herds of cattle are perplexed because there is no pasture for them; (to graze in and even he says) even the flocks of sheep suffer. <sup>19</sup> To you, O Lord, I call. For fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness, and flame has burned all the trees of the field. <sup>20</sup> Even the beasts of the field pant for you because the water brooks are dried up, and fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness.”*

And so you can kind of see here. That the picture that's being painted for you and me from this first chapter of Joel is a pretty desperate situation for the people of Israel at this time because of their disobedience, because of this locust, and what sounds very much like a drought that went along with it. The people are in desperate straits and they are being told now to cry out to the Lord, to turn back to the Lord and to repent.

Now that the Lord has described all of this devastation, He's going to go on now in chapter two to speak of the future. All right? So now we're going to we've been talking about for Joel, what is the present. Now we're going to talk about the future. Verse 1, chapter 2,

*<sup>2</sup> “Blow a trumpet in Zion; sound an alarm on my holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the Lord is coming;”*

Now we know, again, we're talking about another event. Not the locust swarm, but something the locust swarm points toward, and that is the Day of the Lord.

And as Joel says here through the Lord “*it is near,*” or your Bible if you have a different translation says, “*it is coming.*”

And then the Lord describes this future day to come. He says,

<sup>2</sup> “*a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness!* (Can you see why the Lord likened the Day of the Lord to the locust swarm? As I've already mentioned, when the locusts would come into an area it would blacken the sun. They wouldn't, they literally couldn't even see the sun for all the locusts. But notice how God now describes the day of the Lord. He calls it a day of gloom, a day of darkness. Thick darkness. A day of clouds that will cover the sun. He says) *Like blackness there is spread upon the mountains a great and powerful people; their like has never been before, nor will be again after them through the years of all generations.*”

And that is a phrase that is often used related to the events of the great tribulation. Whenever we're talking about the great tribulation, you can tell that it's referring to that period of time by the fact that the Bible says that it will be a day unlike any other. In other words, there have been bad days in the history of mankind. This one is going to eclipse them all. And so that is one of the things that is consistent with referring to the tribulation. Period. Verse three,

<sup>3</sup> “*Fire devours before them, and behind them a flame burns. The land is like the garden of Eden before them, but behind them a desolate wilderness, and nothing escapes them.*”

Now I want you to notice how Joel is, through the Lord, describing the Day of the Lord. Now this is something the Jews didn't necessarily like to think about and often didn't even apply to themselves, but Joel is making it very clear that the day of the Lord is going to be a day of gloom. It's going to be a terrible day. And he then begins to talk about this enemy that's going to come upon the land just like the locusts and decimate it.

He says, the land is going to look like the Garden of Eden before they get here, but as they pass over the land, it is absolutely going to be a wilderness and they will decimate the land. Now he's talking about the things that are going to lead up to the final battle of Armageddon, because there is going to come against Israel during the end or toward the end of the great tribulation, a huge army that is going to attempt to obliterate Israel from the face of the world. All right?

And God is speaking now about this future battle, which we call the Battle of Armageddon. And it is going to be a terrible time for Israel. Terrible, terrible

time. Now, this is interesting. As we get into verse four, I want you to notice how he describes the appearance of the approaching enemy, because remember, he's talking about a warfare that is still future for us. Imagine what it was like to him.

He's, Joel is what we would consider to be an ancient man. What he knew was ancient warfare. He knew horses and chariots and swords and spears and arrows, right? That's the kind of warfare he would've known. Well, how do you take a man that lived, we're not even sure. Let's say he lived in the seventh, eighth century BC for example, and you begin to show him visions of future warfare that involved things that he can't even imagine in his mind.

Well, I want you to notice the language that he uses. Beginning in verse four, he's talking about this advancing army against Israel.

*<sup>4</sup> Their appearance is like the appearance of horses, and like war horses they run.”*

Now stop there. This is how we know that Joel isn't seeing any kind of warfare that was common in his day. Because you'll notice that he says, their appearance is “like” the appearance of horses. Joel knew what horses looked like, so why didn't he just say their appearance was they, when the horses appeared because they weren't horses. The best he can come up with is that they were like horses. That's his best. Okay?

What he's doing is he's falling back on the “language of resemblance.” It resembled something like a horse, but it wasn't a horse and they moved upon the ground, kind of like horses move upon the ground, but it wasn't horses that were moving. It was just like that, you see? So, what he's doing is he's seeing warfare. The Lord is giving him a vision of future warfare that he can't describe, and so he has to simply use the language of resemblance to come as close as possible. Okay? But I want you to notice how this language of resemblance continues here. Verse 5,

*<sup>5</sup> As with the rumbling of chariots, (in other words, such as is consistent with the rumbling of chariots, he'd probably heard chariots rumble before, and it was something like that. Look at this) they leap on the tops of the mountains, (Now, there's nothing, there's no army back in Joel's day that could leap over the tops of mountains. So, who knows what he's seeing? Maybe he's seeing aircraft that is able to fly over the top. I don't know. We don't know exactly what he's seeing. But he's simply saying that it sounded), “I heard this sound that was like the rumbling of chariots, but they were leaping over the top of the mountains,”*

And he doesn't have any idea how that could even happen. And yet he's seeing it and then he begins to describe the sound of this advancing army. He says, like he says, you know what the crackling of a flame of fire sounds like when it's devouring rubble? That was kind of what I heard. It's the best I can do. There was something about that sound of kindling, rubble being burned, crackling under the fire. He says,

*“<sup>5</sup>..like the crackling of a flame of fire devouring the stubble, like a powerful army drawn up for battle.”*

So, he's hearing roars, sounds, but notice it was “like” it wasn't a powerful army drawn up for battle as far as this specific sound. It was “like” that sound. And next he describes the response of the people. In other words, probably mostly the Jews living in Israel at the time when this enemy approaches, he says in verse six,

*“<sup>6</sup> Before them peoples are in anguish; all faces grow pale.”*

And that's a very simple way of describing their absolute and utter terror at the advancing of these armies because remember, what we are told elsewhere in the Word of God is that the nations, the kingdoms of the world are going to come together in allied forces against Israel. And they're going to do a devastating work before the Lord returns and fights on behalf of Israel, but the people are going to be terrified. Verse 7 says,

*“<sup>7</sup> Like warriors they charge; like soldiers they scale the wall. They march each on his way; they do not swerve from their paths. <sup>8</sup> They do not jostle one another; each marches in his path; they burst through the weapons and are not halted.”*

I want you to notice verses seven and eight there, what does that say to you? What do you hear there when you hear those verses being read? What you hear is an army that is advancing without any issues. Without any problems. People, armies don't advance without problems. Sue and I have actually been watching recently a documentary, several part documentary on World War II and how it began in Europe, and how the United States of America was eventually drawn in at Pearl Harbor and how it literally became World War II.

And one of the last episodes that we watched had to do with the Allied Forces. Canadian, British, American, coming onto the beaches of Normandy at France to try to liberate France from the Nazi occupation that was entrenched there on French soil at the time. And you probably know enough about your history to

know that the battle at Normandy, although a very bloody one, was a successful one, and they were able to push back the Nazi invasion quite a ways into France.

They basically were able to liberate France through that particular battle, but it did not go easily. I mean, they landed soldiers several hundred yards off shore, and they put them in little flotillas. And sometimes they sunk, sometimes their little flotillas sunk, and soldiers died by drowning. Some of the allied soldiers didn't even get into the battle. They drowned in the channel, the English Channel before they even got onto the beaches of Normandy.

Things didn't go well. Things broke down. All sorts of things went wrong. Even though we essentially look at the battle of Normandy as a success in terms of its ultimate, I mean, they kind of overwhelmed the Nazis and pushed them back and liberated France. It didn't go like verses seven and eight because what you read here in these verses is nothing goes wrong. They do not swerve; they do not jostle one another. Everyone marches exactly in his path, and their weapons are not halted in any way.

It's very simple. Things just don't happen that way, but they're going to happen that way now, because the Lord is going to allow a period of judgment to come upon his people Israel during this time. It goes on to say in verse 9 that,

*<sup>9</sup> "They leap upon the city, they run upon the walls, they climb up into the houses, they enter through the windows like a thief."*

And we know that's going to happen. Those allied forces that are coming against Israel, during this battle, are going to make their way into Jerusalem and people are going to be killed and women are going to be raped. And there's going to be some terrible stuff that happens before the coming of the Lord, to push back the enemies. And it goes on to say in verse 10 that,

*<sup>10</sup> The earthquakes before them; (meaning this advancing army) the heavens tremble. The sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining.*

And I want you to notice that, in verse 10. These occurrences of signs and wonders in the heavens are unique to the Day of the Lord. And that is something, and this is not a locust invasion this time. There is going to be cataclysmic events taking place in the heavens, as well as on earth, during this time of the great tribulation. And with all those wonders and signs in the sky

and in the heavens, will come the appearance of the Lord Himself into battle. Look at verse 11. This is the coming of the Lord. It says,

*<sup>11</sup> The Lord utters his voice before his army, for his camp is exceedingly great; (By the way. We're going to be part of that camp. The angels and the saints of God are going to return with Him, and we are going to be part of that camp. And it will be exceedingly great. The Lord utters His voice before His army for His camp is exceedingly great. And it says,) "... he who executes his word is powerful. For the day of the Lord is great and very awesome; (but here is an important question) who can endure it?"*

And that is a word to Israel. That is a word to Israel. Okay? Now that God has described this future judgment, this day of judgment, the Day of the Lord, He once again turns to His people to encourage their proper response to all this.

He says,

*<sup>12</sup> "Yet even now," declares the Lord, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; <sup>13</sup> and rend your hearts and not your garments."*

It was common, it was traditional back in those days for the Jews to, as a sign of grief, to take hold of their clothes and rip them. And that was a sign of mourning, but it became a sign that anybody could do, even if their heart really wasn't in it. And so, God said, I don't want you to rip your clothes. I want you to break your heart. I want you to have a broken heart before me. As David said, "a broken and contrite spirit oh Lord, you will not despise." And that's what God is saying to them. He says,

*<sup>13</sup> ...Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster.*

Guys, I don't know if this is highlighted in your Bible verses 12 and 13, but it should be if you have a Bible and you write in your Bible, which I think is a good idea. It's like, hey, if it gets to the point where you can't read it, get a new one. But the point is, this should be highlighted in your Bible because this is the remedy for judgment, and this is the remedy, whether it's in the Old Testament under the old Covenant or in the New Testament, under the new Covenant.

Return to the Lord. Repent. Return to the Lord. Break your heart. You know. Why? Because He's gracious, and he's merciful, and He's slow to anger, and He is overflowing in steadfast love, and He relents of disaster. God will relent if we

would but return to Him, right? This is a promise from the Lord. Why wouldn't we do it? Why wouldn't we? Why wouldn't we take this remedy for judgment?

See, this is the point that I was making earlier as we just started, Joel. I was saying that whenever there's rebellion against God, there's going to be judgment. There has to be judgment. But God made a remedy. He came up with a remedy. What's the remedy? Return to the Lord. Repent. Go the other way. And don't get weirded out by the word repent. It just means turn around and go the other way. Change of mind. You're going that way. Stop. Go this way.

Go toward the Lord. Return to the Lord. That is what repentance is, and that's the remedy for judgment. And nobody, nobody, and this is important, when people get in your face and they start talking about your judgmental God, you look them back, right square in the eye and you tell them this.

Nobody needs to come under judgment because God has made a way for them to be saved. He has given them a remedy in his Word, and it is repent and turn to the Lord, cry out to Him and you will not come under judgment. You will not. It's as simple as that. I mean, you can take the gospel and build it out of verses 12 and 13 easily. It says in verse 14,

*<sup>14</sup> Who knows whether he will not turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind him, a grain offering and a drink offering for the Lord your God?*

Now, I want you to notice the urgency that is expressed in these following verses.

*<sup>15</sup> "Blow the trumpet in Zion; consecrate a fast; call a solemn assembly;  
<sup>16</sup> gather the people. Consecrate the congregation; assemble the elders;  
gather the children, even nursing infants (Bring them along. You get into, I can't come. I got a baby. Bring the baby. Look what else he says) Let the bridegroom leave his room, and the bride her chamber.*

You know what he's talking about? He's talking about a couple that just got married. They're on their honeymoon. They called it in Jewish, it was the bridal week. He says, you're in the middle of your bridal week. Leave. Come! Come! There's an urgency here to return to the Lord to pay attention. And he says, verse 17,

*<sup>17</sup> Between the vestibule and the altar let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep and say, "Spare your people, O Lord, and make not your heritage a reproach, a byword among the nations. Why should they say among the*

peoples, 'Where is their God?' <sup>18</sup> Then the Lord became jealous for his land and had pity on his people. <sup>19</sup> The Lord answered and said to his people, "Behold, I am sending to you grain, wine, and oil, and you will be satisfied; and I will no more make you a reproach among the nations."

(God's talking about what's going to happen after the battle of Armageddon).

<sup>20</sup> "I will remove the northerner far from you, and drive him into a parched and desolate land, his vanguard<sup>l</sup> into the eastern sea, and his rear guard into the western sea; the stench and foul smell of him will rise, for he has done great things. <sup>21</sup> "Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice, for the Lord has done great things! <sup>22</sup> Fear not, you beasts of the field, for the pastures of the wilderness are green; the tree bears its fruit; the fig tree and vine give their full yield.

<sup>23</sup> "Be glad, O children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God, for he has given the early rain for your vindication; he has poured down for you abundant rain, the early and the latter rain, as before."

<sup>24</sup> "The threshing floors shall be full of grain; the vats shall overflow with wine and oil. <sup>25</sup> I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten, the hopper, the destroyer, and the cutter, my great army, which I sent among you. <sup>26</sup> "You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord your God, who has dealt wondrously with you. And my people shall never again be put to shame.

<sup>27</sup> You shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the Lord your God and there is none else. And my people shall never again be put to shame."

<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."

That sound familiar? That was quoted by Peter. And the beginning of that outpouring took place at Pentecost. The Feast of Pentecost when the believers were gathered. And the Lord poured out his Spirit as we read about in Acts chapter two, but that was the beginning of the outpouring. The final fulfillment comes later.

<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.



By the way, that language there, verses 30 and 31, not at all different from what the Apostle John saw and wrote about in his book that we call The Revelation of Jesus Christ. Let me put this on the screen for you from Roman, or excuse me, Revelation. Chapter 6, it says,

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**Revelation 6:12-13 (ESV)**

*When he opened the sixth seal, I looked, and behold, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood, and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale.*

Very similar language that you can see, because these men are both seeing the same thing. They're both seeing the same thing. Joel is seeing it a long time before. John is seeing it a long time before. But they're seeing the same event, this time of the great tribulation when the heavens are literally shaken. And I want to highlight the first part of verse 32,

*<sup>32</sup> "And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."*

And there's, again, there's the gospel. That's another verse for you to highlight in your Bible. Who can be saved? Everybody who calls on the name of the Lord. Are you sure, pastor? You don't know what I've done. I know what He did. I know what He did. People say that to me all the time. They'll tell me that they doubt their salvation. I say, why do you doubt your salvation? Because of what I've done. There's a promise in the Word of God that all who call upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

So, call upon the name of the Lord, get your eyes off your sin and put them on the Savior. That's the solution by the way. You sit and look at your sin, you're going to be depressed. I mean, you're going to be one depressed puppy. Get your eyes off yourself. That is the trap of Satan. I'm telling you, that is the devil's trap. Get you thinking about yourself. I'm just, I'm such a terrible person. I'm awful. I don't think I can be saved.

You know what that is people? That's self-centeredness that's gone bad. It's all it is. It's self-absorption that has gone negative. It's the opposite of vanity, but it comes from the same root. The root is self-absorption. Whether it's vanity or whether it's self-deploring, self-abasement. It's all tied to self. And never will you walk in the joy of the Lord when self is the focus of your life. Only when

you put Jesus as the focal point of your attention, will you begin to walk in any sort of light. And it shall come to pass. Verse 32 again, “...that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

You know the apostle Paul picked up on this when he wrote, let me show you this, Romans 10. He quoted this:

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**Romans 10:10-13 (ESV)**

*For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. For the Scripture says, “Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.” For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; (we’re all saved the same way) for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. (Here’s a quote from Joel) For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”*

Period. You want to be saved? Call on the name of the Lord. Trust in Him. You will be saved. Period. Exclamation point. He finishes out the chapter saying,

<sup>32</sup> “...For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the Lord has said, and among the survivors (your Bible may say remnant) shall be those whom the Lord calls.”

So, God is going to, even in that terrible destruction of Jerusalem during the tribulation period, there will be those who escape. There will be survivors. There will be a remnant. Chapter three. We're going to do this fairly quickly.

<sup>1</sup> “For behold, in those days and at that time, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, (So you know what Chapter 3’s about don’t you? The restoration. He says,) <sup>2</sup> I will gather all the nations and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat. (Why does he call it the Valley of Jehoshaphat? Well, it's because Jehoshaphat means the Lord, judges, and it's another way of saying the valley of judgment. I'm going to bring, I'm going to gather the nations of the world and I'm going to bring them to the valley of judgment. He's describing the battle of Armageddon).

“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 look at what else that he says they’ve done) and have divided up my land, (Look at that. Yeah. That's even going on in our day. They're still dividing up Israel. And

God says, I'm going to judge them because they divided up that land. God says, I gave them that land. I gave it to them. They had no right to divide it. And God says that will be part of the judgment. He says,)

*<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. (He's talking about the nations of the world. He's bidding them to come.) <sup>10</sup> Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruning hooks into spears; let the weak say, "I am a warrior.*

See, God is calling the enemies of Israel to come and be in battle against. He's saying, arm yourselves. Come to war. Right? Now did you notice the wording there in verse 10, where He says, go ahead and beat your plow shares into swords. In other words, make your farm implements into weapons. Make your pruning hooks into spears. Do you know that's the opposite of what He says to Israel? Look at this on the screen. Isaiah chapter two. Here's what God says to Israel,

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**Isaiah 2:4 (ESV)**

*He shall judge between the nations and shall decide disputes for many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.*

But for now, the Lord calls the enemies of Israel to come forward. He says,

*<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.”*

Did you notice there in verse 13 this judgment, God calls a harvest. It's a harvest. Just like we consider people coming to the Lord a harvest. That judgment is also referred to in those same terms. Verse 14, "*Multitudes, multitudes, in the valley of decision! For the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision.*"

This is a verse that's been misunderstood and misapplied many times throughout the years. It's, this has been a popular verse for evangelists to use. They come to church, they preach the gospel, and they say, hey, we're in the valley of decision here. You may need to make a decision for the Lord. But that's not the kind of decision that's being talked about here.

The word decision here is referring to a judge's verdict. You know how we'll even say today, that judge handed down a decision, or the Supreme Court handed down a decision. That's a verdict. They made it law, and that's what's being said here. This is the valley of decision. Other words, it's the valley of the Lord's verdict of judgment against the people. Verse 15,

*<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 earthquake. But the Lord is a refuge to his people, a stronghold to the people of Israel. (So, there's an inference there in verse 16 of the Lord coming and fighting on their behalf. Now, the Lord begins to describe the conditions of the world during the millennial kingdom, because now we've basically had the battle of Armageddon, and the Lord has fought on behalf of Israel. He's destroyed the nations that come against Israel. So now, what's the world going to be like? Look what it says in verse 17)*

*<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. (And then here's the final summary)*

*<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.”*

So, the book of Joel is God reminding His people that the Day of the Lord is coming. It's not a day for you to look forward to. But it is a day when the Lord will fight for you. And when he destroys your enemies, he will establish Jerusalem as literally the center of the world and will establish his own throne at that time. And we will enter into a 1,000-year period of time on the earth where Jesus will reign a upon the earth. And it will be a time of unprecedented abundance and peace. And it'll be a great time, and we will be there during that time as well. So, the book of Joel, let's pray.

Heavenly Father, we thank you for your Word tonight. We thank you, Lord, that all that is to happen, you have told us ahead of time. You have gone into some pretty incredible prophetic detail, to make us aware of just how your redemptive plan will unfold, particularly in the last days. And Lord, we thank you for that because it gives us hope. Our Lord is Sovereign and in charge and working out the purpose of His will. And Father God, I thank you that you have revealed also to us the remedy for judgment in the person of your Son Jesus Christ.

And I thank you, my Father, God, that as we put our hope and what Jesus did for us on the cross, when He bore that judgment for us, that judgment is now passed. And there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Judgment is passed. We look forward, Lord, to the hope of the fulfillment of all of these things, which will surely come to pass. We thank you and praise you in the name of Jesus our savior, amen.