

Will We Take Him Seriously?

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Preacher: Jim Masters

[0:00] Please take your Bibles and go to the book of Joel. If you're visiting with us, there's a black Bible in the chair in front of you. Kind of underneath there.

And pull that out. If you start there in the Old Testament, the beginning, go to page 648, 649. 648 or 649.

Find page 649, that black Bible. Joel chapter three. So it goes, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel. If you hit Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, you went too far.

Go back. Joel chapter three. We've spent, this is our fourth week in the book of Joel. And so we're finishing that today.

If you notice in your bulletin, Cailin Howe, who's an elder in training, he's actually going to preach next week, next Sunday. And I'm going to critique him. And then maybe do one of these.

[1:09] You've got to have somebody do that, I mean, right? No, he graciously agreed to preach next Sunday. He's going to preach Psalm 63. So, and then, I don't know if you, I don't know if that's in the bulletin, but I'm actually not going to start 2 Corinthians until August.

Because I'm going to do messages and Psalms, and then we're going to be gone in July as my family. And then August when we get back, that's when we'll start 2 Corinthians. Because I want a long period of time.

I don't want to start 2 Corinthians and have to stop. I don't want to do that. So I'll do three messages, three or four messages in Psalms. Preparing myself for 2 Corinthians will be gone in July, and then August will start in 2 Corinthians.

So just kind of, you know, what's going on, you know, what the preaching schedule is. But today, Joel 3, this is exciting. This is like the crescendo, man.

This is cool. This is a great chapter. A great way, especially too, Memorial Day's tomorrow. Notice how Joel says, For behold, chapter 3, verse 1, In those days and at that time, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, I will gather all the nations and bring them down to the valley of Jehoshaphat, and I will enter into judgment with them there on behalf of my people and my inheritance Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and they have divided up my land.

[2:44] They have also cast laws for my people, traded a boy for a harlot, and sold a girl for wine that they may drink. Even more, what are you to me, O Tyre, Sidon, and all the regions of Philistia?

Are you rendering me a recompense? If you do recompense me swiftly and speedily, I will return your recompense on your head. That you've taken my silver, my gold, brought my precious things to your temples, and sold the sons of Judah and Jerusalem to the Greeks in order to remove them from their territory.

Look, I'm going to arouse them from the place where you have sold them, and return your recompense on your head. Also, I will sell your sons and your daughters into the hand of the sons of Judah, and they will sell them to the Sabians to a distant nation, for Yahweh has spoken.

Verse 9, Proclaim this among the nations. Prepare a war. Rouse the mighty men. Let all the soldiers draw near. Let them come up. Beat your plowshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears.

Let the weak say, I am a mighty man. Hasten and come, all you surrounding nations, and gather yourselves there. Bring down, O Yahweh, your mighty ones. Let the nations be aroused and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat, for there I will sit to judge all the surrounding nations.

[4:05] Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come tread, for the winepress is full. The vats overflow, for their wickedness is great. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision.

For the day of Yahweh is near in the valley of decision. The sun and moon grow dark, and the stars lose their brightness. And the Lord roars from Zion, and utters His voice from Jerusalem.

And the heavens and the earth tremble. But Yahweh is a refuge for His people and a stronghold to the sons of Israel. Then you will know that I am Yahweh your God, dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain.

So Jerusalem will be holy, and strangers will pass through it no more. It will come about in that day that the mountains will drip with sweet wine, and the hills will flow with milk, and all the brooks of Judah will flow with water, and a spring will go out from the house of Yahweh to water the valley of Shittim.

Egypt will become a waste. Edom will become a desolate wilderness because of the violence done to the sons of Judah in whose land they have shed and is in blood. But Judah will be inhabited forever, and Jerusalem for all generations.

[5:19] And I will avenge their blood, which I have not avenged. Yahweh dwells in Zion. Amen.

Tomorrow is Memorial Day, a day of remembering the men and women who died while they were serving. And for many, it's a hard day because they remember relatives, loved ones, close friends, and it's a painful day.

My father-in-law, painful day. He lost his cousin. Really close in age, I think a couple years apart, and his cousin was in Vietnam. He saved a bunch of guys, though, when he did this and stepped on a mine or something and he actually blew up, and yet he saved the lives of the guys around him. It's stories like that. Maybe some of you have stories. Cousins or relatives, loved ones that you know that have died or people that you know that they know have died.

And many are faced with a sense of almost wanting vindication for those who have died. And that's when the pain can be very deep, even deeper.

[6:45] Because it's hard. You want vindication. This was not in vain. Right? And as Christians, followers of Jesus, don't we have an even greater sense of vindication?

Of wanting vindication? I mean, don't we cry out to God like Revelation 6, verse 10, how long, oh Lord? Especially when you face suffering, the pain and the afflictions of this life?

I mean, let alone just the persecutions that we face. God sees, God hears, God cares, God knows, and God will act.

You know, we've titled the book of Joel, Take God Seriously, He Judges and Saves. Kind of put a little twist on that for chapter 3.

As you'll notice, the title, He Will Judge, and He Will Save, so, will we take Him seriously? Will we take Him seriously?

[8:06] He will judge. He will save. At the end of the day, when it's all said and done, at the end of time, God will vindicate Himself, and He'll vindicate His people.

Here's a question for you, questions. Will we trust God? Will we remain faithful? Will you, O Christian, pursue godliness because of the bright future laid before us?

Like Peter says. Because of the fact that one day, God will win, and so will you. God will win, and so will you.

Yahweh God promises through Joel to regather His people, restore and bless His land, judge the nations from Zion, and forever be present with His people who will never face hardships or trials again.

People like to study prophecy because they think it's about getting information, trying to figure out what's going to happen in the future. Friends, that's just, that's a minor point.

[9:20] Because what this does, this is a shepherding passage. Because when you are at the end of your rope, and you're thinking, God, why do we even let this happen?

You read Joel 3, and you go, oh, good. It's all going to turn out good in the end.

God's going to win. And so am I. I'm going to take you seriously. I'm going to follow you.

We are going to see Judah and Jerusalem, they're delivered, they're restored, they're avenged, but the nations will be gathered for judgment.

Yahweh will avenge Himself and His people because all are guilty of crimes against His people. So Yahweh will attack the enemies of His people, vindicating them and fighting for their protection.

[10:21] Deliverance and blessing of His people goes together with the judgment and destruction of the nations. That's what we see. Because as He's bringing judgment, as He's bringing about this sentence, this execution, so to speak, as we read, for those who don't know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, He blesses, He restores, He delivers His people.

God is on our side. Because God's very character of justice demands this.

It demands that the injustice of individuals and nations be avenged and that vengeance belongs to the Lord, not to us, not to North Korea, not to the United States.

God will fight for us. God will fight for His people. God will fight for Himself. And this follows the biblical narrative. Or I should say the biblical metanarrative.

So to speak, the story of the Bible. His people face trials and hardships in this life. They suffer. But in the end, God vindicates Himself and His people just like He did with the Son of God.

[11:42] Jesus came and He suffered. He died. He was humbled yet He was exalted, right? And when you put your trust in Jesus Christ, you're saved. But we will face things just like the Son of God did.

We will face suffering but yet Jesus promises and God promises here in Joel chapter 3 that we will be vindicated. We will be delivered.

That's the metanarrative of the Bible. See that Abraham and Joseph with David, with Jeremiah, with Jesus, with Paul. It's all throughout. And since we're on the subject, just a reminder of my eschatological view if you're interested in that.

I do believe Israel has a future. So I'm not an all-millennialist. No millennium. I believe it's in the millennial kingdom. I believe Jesus will come back and then there will be a millennial kingdom, pre-millennial.

That's what that means. And yet, because God has brought the two together, Jew and Gentile, together in Christ, it will not just be for Israel nationally. It will be for the church in total because I believe there's one people of God, not two.

[13:00] But we do know as a fact, when Jesus returns, He will bring His judgment on all people in His justice, the justice of Jesus.

He will judge the nations that have mistreated His people but will deliver those whom He loves. No matter the ethnicity. No matter if you're Hispanic or Palestinian, Israeli or Moroccan, black or white, brown, whichever, it doesn't matter.

You trust Christ Jesus, you're in. You're a part of it and we're one. I really have two points or I should say Joel does.

Judgment in the valley, happiness on the mountain. Those are two points. Judgment in the valley, happiness on the mountain. First point, judgment in the valley, point number one, verses one through sixteen.

In those days He begins and at that time which is the last days, the last of the last days, the final fulfillment, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem.

[14:09] Now quite honestly friends, we could see this when Yahweh restores the national fortunes of Israel. It could be just before the second coming of Jesus, Revelation chapter 19, verse 15 through 21, or some even think it happens just after the millennial kingdom.

It's hard to determine this and maybe Joel's just seeing the whole picture, just everything together and not until later do we see it split up into different parts. But one thing we do know, God always wins.

He will judge and save. This is God's final vindication of Himself and His people. Notice verse two, I will gather all the nations and bring them down to the valley of Jehoshaphat, restoring Israel's fortunes entails summoning the world for a final battle.

It will be a final worldwide judgment upon all nations, but a huge vindication for His people. And the phrase Jehoshaphat means Yahweh judges.

Judgment in the valley. In the valley of Yahweh judges. That's what Jehoshaphat means. The location of this valley is unknown. Nobody knows where it's at.

[15:22] And it's not so much when and where, it's more about who and why. Who God and His people. Why? Because of what the nations have done. Notice, He says, the next part of verse two, I went into judgment with them there on behalf of my people, my inheritance, Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations.

Exiled, deported. Nations like Assyria, Babylon, Rome. This is repeated down through history. The nations pointed out depict all those who have gone against Israel all the way down through the ages.

But it also depicts those who have come against all of God's elect, God's people. Scattered among the nations, notice the next part, end of verse two, they divided up my land.

The land is in connection to His people. You divided my people, you're dividing my land. And then notice, He says in verse three, they've cast lots for my people, traded a boy for a harlot. They sold them into slavery. They traded God's people for momentary, sensual gratification. A boy for a harlot, a girl for wine. I mean, that's even happening today.

[16:40] I'm just, in general, human trafficking, sex trafficking, that's happening with just people in general. Let alone just God's people.

What injustice. But I want to point something out to you. This is still underneath the point, judgment in the valley. I want to point something out to you. What's motivating God to do this?

What's God's motivation? Look at verse two right in the middle. On behalf of my people, my inheritance.

The end of verse two, my land. Notice verse 16, Yahweh is a refuge for His people. Verse 17, you'll know that I am Yahweh, your God.

He prosecutes on behalf of His people. God zealously pursues judgment because He is zealous for us, His people.

[17:51] This is personal, friends. This is God not having a hissy fit. God is not having a temper tantrum. No, He really loves you as one of His own.

He does. This is what's motivating Him. Okay? At least one motivation. Notice what happens in verses four through eight.

He points out in the prophecy Tyre, Sidon, and Philistia. These are nations around Israel that would harass them. Egypt and Edon was another one that included in the list later.

Nations that have harassed Israel down through the ages. Notice He says, are you rendering me a recompense? There in verse four. If you do recompense me swiftly and speedily, I'll return your recompense on your head. They attempted to impoverish Yahweh by raiding and harassing His people.

This was unjustifiable. Another way that God's asking this question is like this. Do you think mistreating my people this way will get back at me for past victories they've had over you?

[19:06] And the answer is no. No way. No. He says, I will speedily and swiftly return your recompense on your head.

God will avenge on behalf of His people for the injustices these nations have done to His people. There's no excuse. Notice He goes into it. Verse five. You've taken my silver, my gold, brought my precious things to your temples.

Stole personal property of royalty and the wealthy. Not necessarily treasures of the temple, of the temple there in Jerusalem, but maybe they got some kickbacks from the big nations like Assyria and Babylon.

Whichever the case, notice they stole and then verse six and sold the sons of Judah and Jerusalem to the Greeks in order to remove them far from their territory.

Not only did you steal from me, you sold my people to the Greeks and not just to sell them so you can get some bling bling but to reduce their power and their influence and their numbers so that they would never be able to return to their land again.

[20:09] That was what your intention was. No excuse. Because as the saying goes, what goes around comes around.

Verse seven. Look, I'm going to rouse them from the place where you have sold them and return your recompense on your head. I will sell your sons and your daughters into the hands of the sons of Judah.

And they will sell them to the Sabians to a distant land. The reversal of the fortunes and what they did to Judah. Judah would now do to them, And notice the end of verse eight.

The certainty that this is going to happen for Yahweh has spoken. You see that? Friends, make no mistake about it.

Make no mistake. Anyone who comes against us as God's people will face major retribution from the Lord. I mean, we read that together, right?

[21:13] In 2 Thessalonians chapter one. If they afflict you, they will face affliction. Our God will not allow injustices to go unpunished.

He will judge. And this is good. Not in the sense of, I'm going to get back at them. No, in the sense of, almost fear. As these people come against us, as disease comes against us, there's almost a fear and awe of God.

God, show them mercy. Because God doesn't mess around. That's why we should take Him seriously, isn't it? And that's the good part is, God will make all these wrongs right. Notice what happens in verses 9 through 11. The theme of gathering the nations resumes. There's a proclamation. Prepare a war. Rouse the mighty men. Let all the nations, they're going to be compelled to fight, but they'll lose.

They can never defeat the Lord God. Notice, farmers and those who are weak are called to come out and do battle. Verse 10, Beat your plowshares and the swords, your pruning hooks and the spears.

[22 : 33] Let the weak say, I am a mighty man. Every available instrument turned into a weapon. Every available individual, even the weak, turned into a warrior. Notice verse 11.

Hasten, come all you surrounding nations. Gather yourselves there. Hasten and come to do battle with Yahweh. their final hurrah. Again, notice, it's like you see this, you kind of go, wow, this kind of looks like Revelation chapter 19.

Oh, wow, wait, it kind of looks like something after the millennial kingdom. It's hard to tell. But what we do see is they will eagerly come to fight against Yahweh and his people.

He summons them to a holy war that will lead to their own defeat. And you see this at the end of verse 11. bring down, oh Yahweh, your mighty ones. You see that? What's God doing here?

Yahweh called together his angelic servants who were responsible to assemble the nations but also be the ones to carry out his execution. He's calling them down.

[23 : 44] It's like a farmer who commands his servants to reap the harvest. So God commands his angels to come.

And notice what it says in verse 12, that the nations be aroused and come to the valley of Jehoshaphat of their own will and yet compelled in obedience to God's providential sovereign control.

all the nations will assemble in the valley of Yahweh judges where he will sit. The judgment begins, the sentence commences, the execution proceeds and notice the three metaphors used.

Verse 13, put in the sickle for the harvest is ripe. This is the harvest time of grain. You know, you have a sickle, it's cutting down the grain.

It's going to cut down the warriors. It's going to cut down the armies. Second metaphor, middle of verse 13, come tread for the wine press is full.

[24 : 49] The wine press, you're smashing down the grapes to make the wine. So it illustrates the major bloodshed that's happening. Third metaphor, the end of verse 13, the vats overflow for their wickedness is great.

The vats symbolize olive harvest that overflows. Their wickedness abounds. And yet, notice he says, Joel sees the masses gathered, he's dumbfounded.

Verse 14, multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision. The valley of Yahweh judges. He will come, he will judge, it will happen.

There is no escape. Do you see this? Because he says, verse 14, for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of Yahweh judges.

The valley of decision. The valley of Jehoshaphat. He will come, he will judge, it will happen.

There's no escape, so that's why the question is, is he on your side?

[26 : 10] Not the, the question is not, are you on his side? The question is, is he on your side?

Notice the final day of this judgment of the unrighteous, the final deliverance of the righteous affects the entire cosmos.

Verse 15, the sun and moon grow dark, the stars use their brightness. The entire universe is convulsing. And then notice verse 16.

Yahweh roars from Zion. Our God is a lion. As the song goes, every knee will bow before the lion. Nations had roared against Yahweh and his people now notice. Yahweh roars in judgment, thundering against him like a lion tearing into his prey.

He roars and they all tremble. This is why it's so important for you if you're here you don't know Jesus Christ to repent and trust Jesus.

[27 : 22] this is the truth. This will happen. Does Jesus know you? Do you know Jesus? Have you trusted Jesus Christ? And yet there's a turn of events at this point because here in verse 16 we move from judgment in the valley to happiness on the mountain.

for the nations his roar creates great panic and fear like it says in Revelation chapter 6 may the rocks fall on us.

He comes to dispense his righteous judgment on other people but for his people for us his people his own his love his very presence and sound of his voice gives us assurance and comfort.

Look at but the Lord Yahweh is a refuge for his people and a stronghold to the sons of Israel.

Friends brethren he is our refuge he is our stronghold though all people are in danger of his amazing justice his people will escape his wrath and find him to be a refuge a safe haven filled with great love.

[28 : 46] He is. Verse 17 then you will know from visible evidence faith becomes sight you will know that I am Yahweh not just any God your God you see that?

He is our God who truly dwells in Zion his holy mountain so Jerusalem will be holy he will truly dwell with us as his people he'll be with us forever Jerusalem will be set apart because Yahweh will dwell there no longer will there be moral or religious defilement should I dare say no longer will there be war war with amongst that city because there will be one king he will reign his name's Jesus he will physically dwell with his people in his beloved city and then notice what happens again happiness on the mountains verse 18 it will come about in that day the mountains will drip with sweet wine the hills will flow with milk and all the brooks of Judah will flow with water the blessings will flow from God's throne the land will enjoy such great abundance so fruitful so abundant mountains will appear to have springs of wine dripping down the cattle will have such amazing land to graze that the milk will flow down no need to worry about a cow kicking you when you're trying to milk the cow as I've heard on Wednesday

I've heard stories you're trying to milk a cow and apparently it's going to kick you you've got to be careful right it won't do that it'll just flow right down that's the picture he's trying to paint for us he restores his close relationship with his people and the blessings will flow down this is a promise to us we're now afflicted is this not good news for us does this not help us to keep going keep down the road of godliness keep down the road of holiness does this not encourage us to do this the brooks all the channels all the waters are filled with water fed by a spring that would go out from the house of god no longer a barren wasteland it says the valley of shittim which it was an arid place that's the Hebrew term for acacia trees it would water even these dry arid places of the wilderness abundance galore and notice

Egypt and Edom are singled out again Israel's enemies they were a perpetual antagonization to Israel verse 19 Egypt will become a waste Edom will become a desolate wilderness interesting too we we looked at this when we studied the book of Exodus Egypt depicts designates all that was evil the world system against God it's turned into a desert because notice Joel continues because of the violence done to the sons of Judah in whose land they've shed innocent blood they've gone against his people they shed innocent blood they will face the judgment of God but then notice he's coming to the climax the crescendo Judah will be inhabited forever Jerusalem for all generations I will avenge their blood which I've not avenged because it's going to happen he says and then the final statement for Yahweh dwells in

Zion and the word dwell here is where you get the word Shekinah so in contrast to Egypt and Edom Judah will enjoy these precious enjoy this future prosperity total security no fear of foreign invasion no fear of exile ever again inhabited forever for all generations God will avenge us as his own yes he will avenge us God is on our side he's with us he'll be close to us so much so it'll be Yahweh's dwelling glory that will once again take up residence with his people Yahweh dwells in Zion and we know this is fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ putting your New Testament glasses on our God will avenge us our God will right all the wrongs done against us our God will dwell with us God always wins and we win with him in the end nothing can stop our mighty

[33 : 56] God nothing and this is good as we read something like this and study a prophetic book like this it helps because we face real tangible questions of life questions like what will be our ultimate fate and the fate of our enemies will our enemies prevail will our enemies get away with their horrible evil you look at the atrocities done throughout the world I mean think about we pray for Mauritania right five six seven thousand people are Christians 3.7 million don't know Christ that's like 3.7 million and of that 3.7 million the population of Clarkdale are Christians that's it can you imagine what something like this does to our believers our brethren and encourages them will our enemies get away with their horrible atrocities does God even care does God even care about the fact that

I'm suffering right now of this disease cancer persecution where is God amid our struggles well I can tell you the final judgment will happen but God's people will prevail those who oppose God his purposes and his people will be severely judged but Yahweh will establish himself forever and Jerusalem giving many good gifts to Israel living safely and we as God's people wait for that great day to come so what gives us such great sustenance security and passion to live a godly life as God's people the guarantee of this judgment and this vindication so Christian be faithful keep keep trusting your God keep being faithful to the Lord Jesus he knows he cares he sees keep that eternal perspective this is why I said at the beginning of the message these end times prophetic apocalyptic type books they're not merely sent to give us info for those who are curious it goes beyond that it brings these books these passages bring pastoral relational assurance and confidence in the midst of trials tribulation afflictions disease sickness and persecution it helps us to keep an eternal perspective because God has the final solution he will avenge himself and his people so will we trust God will we remain faithful will you

Christian pursue godliness because of the bright future laid before you he will judge he will save so will you take him seriously this week driving I don't remember where I heard a song and reminded me of our passage the lyrics go like this our god is a lion the lion of judah he's roaring with power and fighting our battles every knee will bow before him our god is the lamb the lamb that was slain for the sins of the world his blood breaks the chains every knee will bow before the lion and the lamb every knee will bow before the lion and the lamb great are you oh god it's my prayer that we as your people were encouraged because I know there's some here that they have constant pain there's some here that are suffering tremendously there's some here that have faced such persecution as well there's some here that are facing afflictions and relationships and we come to the place where we feel like we can't keep going remind us as Peter says as we read about what's going to happen at the end of the day what sort of people what sort of conduct should we have except being holy and godly that we will keep pressing forward we will run the race with your power uplifting us with your grace sustaining us take this time think and ponder pray be encouraged by what we read here and studied in Joel chapter 3 and after a few moments we'll do our time of giving where you can give monetarily as an expression of worship the attitude of your heart and then we'll sing a few more songs take this time just to think give praise and thanks to God you're taking him seriously and you say to

God God I'm going to take you seriously help me today also and Port you I have been there