

Valley of Judgment

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[0 : 00] So today it's my responsibility to bring our study of Joel to a completion.! How many? I hear a you-hoo-hoo! You liked it.

Our goal is to see how Joel finishes his book, hoping that we will see the divine wrath turned away and find mercy and grace in His goodness to us.

Now we've seen, as it started out, Judah was suffering through a drought and a locust plague because they turned away from God. And God had told them, you follow me and be obedient and I'll bless you and prosper you.

You turn away and follow other gods and you will be cursed and the land will be cursed. And they have turned away. The land has been cursed and they've been cursed as a result of having lost everything that they depended on.

They were seeking to do what pleased them rather than trusting God to provide and to protect them. And they suffered the consequences of the rebellion. And I heard a definition the other day talking about rebellion.

[1 : 22] Definition of sin is simply rebellion. Rebellion against God. Rebellion against God. Choosing to do what you want to do rather than what He as your Lord and Master has told you to do.

Sin. So Joel calls them to turn back and seek the Lord and he prays in his book there, he says that maybe God would turn the situation around and restore the land to its bounty.

But he also, now we get to chapter 3, he says, but you've got to be aware. You've got to be aware. The day is coming. The day is coming when the Lord will pour out His Spirit on His people and deliver those who are calling His name.

And if they don't, that great and terrible day of the Lord is coming where He'll judge those that refuse to repent.

And Joel tells us that there will be a surviving remnant. And we're going to borrow a little bit from last week's sermon.

[2 : 24] It's Joel 2. You want to turn, look at Joel 2.32. And it says, So it happened that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be delivered.

For on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be those who survive, just as the Lord has promised, a remnant of those whom the Lord will call. Now it's interesting, if you didn't hear that, did you hear that first part of that?

So everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be delivered. Do you know where that's found? Obviously in Joel, but somewhere else. Paul quotes it in Romans. Romans 10.13.

He says, All who put their trust and faith in the Lord will be saved. He's quoting Joel. Now he's just taking it out of there. He's not applying it to Jerusalem and to Judah. He's applying it to whom? All believers. Anyone, anybody, that whosoever will, they'll come to the Lord and call on His name. He will deliver them.

[3 : 29] Now, this calling on it is more than just a recitation of prayer or some ritual, you know, coming down the aisle and saying, I want to accept Christ.

It's, as Joel said, it is a rendering, rending rather, a rending of the heart. What's that mean? It means to tear. To tear.

If your heart isn't torn before the Lord in repentance, knowing and admission that you have sinned and failed to be obedient to Him and that He is who He says He is, then you've missed something. You can say all the little, you can pray with me all you want. If it isn't changing your heart, nothing has changed. Your location may have changed.

You may be now in church as opposed to not in church. But as far as the kingdom of heaven is, you need to find yourself with a rent heart.

[4 : 35] See, Paul says in Romans 10, because if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord. He doesn't say confess Jesus as Savior.

He says, confess Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with a heart one believes and thus has righteousness and with a mouth one confesses and thus has salvation.

And salvation is never less than confessing Christ as Lord. And what does Lord mean? It is not just a title. What does it mean? Master.

That's right. Master. Boss. The person in charge. We just sang. King of kings. Lord of Lord. Above all other things that might call for our loyalty and attention.

Many are willing to cry out, save me, but fewer are willing to declare Him as Master or Lord. One counts on mercy for rescue, but the other is surrendering all authority over one's own life to Him and becoming His willing and obedient servant.

[5 : 51] That reminds me of what Paul said in another place. He says, It's not I who live, but Christ who lives in me. The life I now live in Christ, I live by faith in Him, basically, that He's going to be.

And so, Joel proceeds to declare the fate of those who believe and those who do not believe. So, let's look at chapter 3, and I want to tell you something right now. You need two sermons before this one to understand this one.

because this chapter is a mixture, it's Phil's favorite topic, eschatology, which means the study of end times, the end times things.

Joel sort of has a couple sections there, but it's all applied because Joel only knew what? He only knew the context of the Old Testament. He did not know that Christ was, you know, he knew that it was the Messiah coming, but he didn't know Christ.

He didn't know the new life that's found through Christ in faith because of the crucifixion and the resurrection and all that. So, he's only looking at what he knows.

[6 : 59] And what does he know? In this case, he knows Judah and Jerusalem. And so, he's going to speak in terms of Judah and Jerusalem. He's going to speak in terms of the people of Israel or the children of Israel.

Well, let me ask you a question. Who are you? Children of God. Children of God and children of Israel.

See, Abraham was told that his children would be as numerous as the sands, as numerous as the stars. And if you follow that theme through all the Scriptures, you find out that there's only one people of God.

There's only one people of God. They started out being Abraham's family, and then they expanded and they became Israel. But even when they left Egypt, who went with them?

A lot of Egyptians. A lot of foreigners went with them. Were they not included in the camp of Israel? Yes, they were, as long as they put their faith in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

[8 : 06] They were willing to submit to the covenant that God had sworn to. And you follow that through, you go, who was Rahab? She was a good Jewish woman, right?

No. She was a foreigner. What about Ruth? Another foreigner. In fact, out of a despised people, the Moabites, who did everything in their power to harm Israel.

Yet she became part of the family line of Jesus. So, God, from the get-go, has always included all those that would be obedient and put their faith and trust in Him.

Those are the people of God. Those are the citizens of heaven. We are part of the kingdom. And all those people, one day, we're going to get to see all those Old Testament saints. And they're going to go, when they see me, they're going to go, boy, He is a merciful God.

Look what He let in. All right? So, when we look at this, when He talks about this, it looks like it's real narrow, Israel and Judah and Jerusalem, but it's really, it does apply to them directly, but it also is a type that applies to all of God's people, which includes the church today.

[9 : 23] By the way, do you know what they called Israel? Israel was the congregation of God. Guess what the word church means? Ecclesia means?

Congregation. We're the congregation of God. There's no difference. Okay. Let's look at this. All right. Chapter 3, verse 1.

I'm going to read a couple verses. We're not going to read the whole chapter. He says, For look, in those days and at that time, I will return the exiles to Judah and Jerusalem.

Then I will gather all the nations and bring them down to the valley of Jehoshaphat. I will enter into judgment against them there concerning my people Israel, who are my inheritance, whom they scattered among the nations.

So here Joel is looking and he's seeing, literally he's seeing what's happening. The people had been scattered. They do get exiled and they do eventually start being gathered back into Jerusalem.

[10:27] Not all of them, but many of them. But he's actually looking, that's a type. He's looking farther ahead. And he's saying, God says, I'm going to gather all my people together. I'm going to gather them from all over the earth.

Now, some of you might, depending on your idea of the end times, you might think, well, when is that going to happen? And when is God going to gather all of his people?

Right at the very end, right? He's going to gather them together. And eventually, we're going to be, we're going to see the new Jerusalem. So in a sense, we're being gathered. Now, there's some belief that we'll all be gathered, the ones that are living will be gathered and brought to Jerusalem. I don't know. It's all going to pan out, right, Phil? But he's saying, I'm going to gather my people and then I'm going to enter into judgment against the nations. And I think the word nations there probably is more like the Greek word ethne.

People groups, it's not just countries, but it's all the peoples of the earth. He's going to bring them to the valley of Jehoshaphat.

[11:36] You know what Jehoshaphat means? Judgment. They're not sure, no one knows where this valley is. And so, there was a king named Jehoshaphat, but doesn't seem to apply anything to this, give any meaning to this, but the valley of judgment.

A valley of judgment. And why is he going to do this? Well, the end is coming. The great day of the Lord is coming. And he's going to judge the nations.

Now, that's something we also need to realize. Each individual is going to be judged. We're going to stand before the throne. And Jesus is going to say, this one belongs to me. We're going to be sheep on the inside and goats will go to the other side.

But he's also going to judge the nations. How did you as a nation respond to me as king of kings and lord of lords? Some of us are going to have a lot to explain.

Let me find a point. I jumped ahead. When they get to this valley of judgment, they're going to answer for what they've done to God's people, past and present.

[12:53] For all the things that they've done against God's people, they've done against God. Remember Paul on the road to Damascus? And he was blinded by the light and Jesus said to him, what?

Why are you persecuting me? And Paul said, when did I persecute you? And Jesus said, you persecute my people, you're persecuting me.

And that's exactly the same idea here. They say mistreat Christians and in the Old Testament, mistreated the Jews.

God said, you're doing that to me because these are my people. They're holy unto me. They're my possession, my inheritance. You're going to answer for what you're doing to them.

Somebody's going to have to answer. I just saw on the news this morning that a pastor and ten of his flocks were killed by militants in Africa, in Nigeria.

[13:53] Someone's going to answer for that. And it won't be, why did you kill them? It's going to be, why did you do that to me? And they're going to go.

A great and terrible judgment will be coming upon the nations.

And Joel describes it like this. Show me the next picture. There you go. Glenn found this picture for me. Verse 9. Let's read, start there. Proclaim this among the nations.

Prepare for holy war. Call out the warriors. Let all the fighting men approach and attack. Beat your plowshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears. Let the weak say, I am a warrior.

Lend me your aid and come, all you surrounding nations, and gather yourself to that place. And we're going to stop there. That's the message that goes out to the nations. Even the squarmy little guy that maybe even is crippled or something, he's going to be saying, I'm a mighty warrior too.

[15 : 00] Let me go and I'll fight this battle. You notice the reverse. We use, on the United Nations, I think it says on the building somewhere, it says, you know, beat your swords into...

Plowshares. Yeah, plowshares and your whatever, spears into pruning horse. Notice it's the opposite here. People who have been farmers are going to beat their implements, farm implements, into weapons and go and join this battle that God's calling them to.

And I think this is Joel's response. And by the way, it's on this arm, yeah. It says, Lord, send your angels. It says, he says, Joel says, bring down, O Lord, your warriors.

Send your angels. Send your angels. And then it says, let the angels be roused and let them go up to the valley of Jehoshaphat.

For I will sit in judgment on all the surrounding nations. Rush forth for the sickle for the harvest is ripe. Come, stomp the grapes for the wine press is full.

[16 : 06] The vat is over full. Indeed, their evil is great. Crowds, great crowds are in the valley of decision. Now for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision. The sun and moon are darkened.

The stars withhold their brightness. The Lord roars from Zion. From Jerusalem, his voice bellows out. The heavens and the earth shake. But the Lord is a refuge for his people, a stronghold for the citizens of Israel.

See, God is calling the nations to come and gather. He says, there's a holy war happening. Bring your best and show me what you got. And the nations respond.

They will respond. By gathering great armies to war against God and his people. They'll come armed with their best in arrogance and pride.

Thinking they can beat God and his people. That they can overcome the king of kings. Even the weak. The ones not fit to fight are going to, in their arrogance, rise up and say, I'll join this.

[17 : 11] and come to do battle with the Lord. And the Lord will bring his warriors. He will bring his warriors. Legions of angels will confront the nations.

And Christ himself will ride into battle. Now, John describes this part. And I want to read this to you. It's not that picture. Unfortunately, I thought about that later. I really need one.

Jesus on a white horse. Anyway, here it goes. This is John. Book of John. Revelation. Then I saw heaven open and there, and here came a white horse.

The one riding it was called Faithful and True. And with justice he judges and goes to war. His eyes are like a fiery flame and there are many dyed him crowns on his head.

He has a name written on, written that no one knows except himself. He is dressed in clothing dipped in blood and he is called the Word of God. The armies that are in heaven dressed in white, clean, fine linen were following him on white horses.

[18 : 15] From his mouth extends a sharp sword so that he can strike the nations. He will rule them with an iron rod and stomp the winepress of the furious wrath of God.

The all-powerful. He has a name written on his clothing and on his thigh. King of kings and Lord of lords. A sword extends from his mouth so he can strike the nations.

He is the Word of God. The same power that spoke all creation into existence with just a word is going to come and speak judgment on the nations.

And I was remembering one of the Gospels describes the arrest of Jesus that the men come to take him and he speaks to them and they do what? They fall down.

His Word is powerful enough to make people fall down. And in this case he speaks the Word and they're defeated. It's like someone took a sickle and put it to the wheat.

[19 : 21] His Word is going to cause a great harvest of righteousness. there in the valley of decision which is the same place by the way as the valley of judgment.

God will judge those who have pursued evil and sin rather than surrender in faithful trust to Christ. The heavens and the earth will shake the moon and the stars and the sun will be darkened and the Lord will roar from Zion.

But now there is good news. I mean that's the bad news. You don't want to be on that side of the formula. The good news is in this part on this great and terrible day but the Lord is a refuge for His people.

He is a stronghold for the citizens of Israel. He will be our refuge. He will be our stronghold and He will take us all to be with Him forever.

And I think Joel is alluding to sort of a preview of the new earth when he talks about what happens in the last part of his chapter. He says you will be convinced that I am the Lord that I the Lord am your God dwelling on Zion my holy mountain.

[20 : 43] Jerusalem will be holy. Conquering armies will no longer pass through it. On that day the mountains will drip with sweet wine and the hills flow with milk and all the dry stream beds of Judah will flow with water.

A spring will flow out from the temple of God watering the valley of acacia trees. John says in Revelation he says that there will be a river that runs from the throne of God and waters the whole earth and the tree of life will be planted on both sides of it and the people will eat from it.

And there will be no fear no tears no sickness and I can declare I think with certainty that all the Old Testament and the New Testament saints to include those of us that have put our trust in God and in Christ will be together with our God as his people forever and ever.

Amen. Come Lord come let's pray Lord I just pray that we would take this truth that you demand our allegiance and our faith and our trust and our obedience seriously Lord that we wouldn't get caught up playing religious games with you but that we would actually surrender if we have not already done so to you and even more so that Lord every day that we would be willing to say here I am use me send me Lord I know I was thinking this the other day and you heard my thoughts I'm sure what about the one that's not born yet that they won't get a chance if you come now but Lord still in my heart I cry out Lord come come and bring us home to you we know that this world is not our home that we're exiles in a foreign land waiting wandering in the wilderness looking for our Lord and our Master to come and bring us home Lord we need you now we need you now watch over your people we pray in Jesus name