**Joel 2:18-32**

**The Place of the Passage**

Because of God’s love for his people and even for creation itself, he promises to restore and refresh his people by defeating and removing the invading army. In the wake of this deliverance, God will again bless the people and the land, restoring to them what they have lost. The primary blessings, though, will be reconciliation with God, removal of their shame, and the coming of the Holy Spirit[1](https://www.esv.org/#joel-amos-and-obadiah-week-3-the-lord-had-pity-on-his-people-fn1) upon all who call on the name of the Lord.

**The Big Picture**

This passage anticipates the coming salvation in which God will defeat the enemies of his people and pour out his Spirit into their hearts.

**Joel 2:18-32**

**The Land Restored**

**18** Then the Lord became jealous for his land  
    and had pity on his people.

**19** 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.

**20** “I will remove the northerner far from you,  
    and drive him into a parched and desolate land,  
his vanguard 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.

**21** “Fear not, O land;  
    be glad and rejoice,  
    for the Lord has done great things!

**22** 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.

**23** “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.

**24** “The threshing floors shall be full of grain;  
    the vats shall overflow with wine and oil.

**25** 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.

**26** “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.

**27** 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.

**The Lord Will Pour Out His Spirit**

**28** “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.

**29** Even on the male and female servants  
    in those days I will pour out my Spirit.

**30** “And I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke.

### **31** The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood,

### before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes.

### **32** And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the Lord has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the Lord calls.

**Truth for Today**

**JEALOUS GOD.** Jealousy or envy in the sense of wanting something that we do not have and that belongs to others is, of course, condemned by Scripture (e.g., Ex. 20:17 and Gal. 5:20–21). However, to be jealous for something that belongs exclusively to us is a godly form of jealousy, especially when that which belongs to us is being threatened by another. A husband shows godly jealousy when another man makes advances toward his wife (Prov. 6:32–35). The apostle Paul shows godly jealousy when false teachers threaten to lead the church astray (2 Cor. 11:1–6). It is in this sense that God is jealous for his people and for the land he gave them. When God’s people give to false gods the worship that belongs to the Lord alone, he is jealous (Ex. 20:4–6), and when foreign armies invade the land God gave to his people, he is jealous (Joel 2:18; Zech. 1:14–17).

**THE PRESENCE OF GOD.**The presence of God with his people was visibly demonstrated to Israel through a cloud and fire. For example, when God led his people out of Egypt, he led them with fire at night and a cloud during the day (Ex. 13:17–22); when God met with Moses on Mount Sinai, the Lord’s presence was demonstrated visibly by fire and smoke (Ex. 19:16–20); and once the Tent of Meeting (and later, the temple) was built, God’s presence among his people was shown by cloud and fire (Ex. 40:34–38; 1 Kings 8:10–11). But a day was coming, Joel promised, when the presence of God would dwell within his people (Joel 2:28–32). Indeed, after the resurrection and ascension[3](https://www.esv.org/#joel-amos-and-obadiah-week-3-the-lord-had-pity-on-his-people-fn3) of Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit came upon all God’s people (Acts 2; see especially vv. 17–21, which quote Joel 2:28–32), and we, the people of God, have become the new temple of the Lord’s presence (1 Cor. 6:19–20).

**CREATION GROANING.** When Adam and Eve disobeyed God in the garden of Eden, one of the effects of their sin was the cursing of creation. Because of the sin of our first parents, thorns and thistles infest the ground and work becomes laborious and difficult (see Gen. 3:17–19 and the note on those verses in the *ESV Study Bible*, page 56). Additionally, creation constantly suffers from the sin of humankind: our overuse, misuse, and abuse of God’s good creation. For this reason, creation eagerly awaits the return of Jesus Christ and the removal of sin and its effects from the world (Rom. 8:19–25).

**THE UNIVERSAL OFFER OF SALVATION.** Perhaps the best-known verse in the Bible, John 3:16, promises that “whoever believes” in Jesus will have eternal life, and in our passage this week, Joel promises salvation to “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord.” The good news of the gospel, the free gift of salvation, is to be offered to everyone. Accordingly, Jesus sends out his disciples by telling them to make disciples of “all nations” (Matt. 28:19); Paul notes that God “commands all people everywhere to repent” (Acts 17:30–31), and the Bible ends with an invitation to everyone who thirsts to come to the water of life (Rev. 22:17). Furthermore, each of these passages pertains to God’s people inviting others to “the water of life.” Just as Jesus sent out his disciples, so he sends us out to offer to all people this glorious salvation in the name of the Lord (see 2 Cor. 5:11–21).

**THE PARTICULAR RESPONSE FOR SALVATION.** Even though the offer of salvation is to be given to everyone, not everyone will respond to it. Our sins have so corrupted us that the apostle Paul refers to us as “dead” in our sins (Eph. 2:1). What can a dead person do? Nothing! Not even respond to the offer of salvation. Therefore, God must first make us alive in Christ (Eph. 2:4–5) so that we can turn to him, believe, and be saved (see John 3:5–8). Accordingly, as Joel notes in our passage this week, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved,” but those who will indeed call, those who escape and are saved, are only “those whom the Lord calls” (Joel 2:32). In other words, only those whom the Lord makes alive and enables to call on the name of the Lord will indeed be saved.

**Joel 3:1-21**

**The Place of the Passage**

After God uses the locust plague of chapter 1 to warn of an invading army of judgment from the north, in chapter 2, his people repent and turn back to him, and the Lord takes pity on them. Now, in light of their restored relationship with God, his people await his judgment upon their enemies. In due time, God takes his seat as judge of the nations and holds court against them, charging them with their crimes and pronouncing the guilty verdict and impending punishment. This judgment of God and vindication of his people promises full restoration of God’s people, and the book of Joel closes with hope, “for the Lord dwells in Zion.”

## The Big Picture

## Although God’s judgment against his enemies and the enemies of his people seems delayed, God’s justice will prevail and his people will be vindicated; until that day, his people hide in him, for he is their refuge and stronghold.

### **Joel 3:1-21**

### **The Lord Judges the Nations**

### **1** “For behold, in those days and at that time, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem,

* “In those days and at that time”: denotes time/occurrence, probably to mean the Final Last Day.
* God is going to restore both Judah and Jerusalem because restoration is part of God’s plan at the Last Day.

**2** 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 heritage Israel, because they have scattered them among the nations and have divided up my land,

* The Day of the Lord is not limited to the people of Israel and Judah, but the whole world.
* Valley of Jehoshaphat: Jehoshaphat was a king of Judah, but what’s interesting is what his name means: Yahweh is Judge or Yahweh Judges. It further implies God’s divine Judgment to all the world at the Last Day.
* Part of the Nation’s judgment is their punishment for how they treated the Israelites/Judahites because they were His people.

**3** 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.

* Describing despicable actions that the nations have done. These were further reasons for their punishment. When a particular nation lose a battle/war, people, specifically children as described in v3, were sold off.

**4** “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.

* Tyre and Sidon were apparently trading hubs for that very despicable act described in v3. God is especially retributive to the orphaned and widowed and therefore will bring justice on the guilty.

**5** For you have taken my silver and my gold, and have carried my rich treasures into your temples.

* God implies that these nation’s crimes were not just against Israel/Judah, but against God himself. This is a truth about Sin that we must never cheapen.
* The sin that we commit against our family/friends/neighbors are against that individual, but more importantly, they are against Almighty God. We may not see it that way, but God is offended for any sin that you do, even if you don’t think it deals with him. Lying to your father or stealing from your mother, is a sin against God.
* He did not create you to be a liar or a thief, but a child of the one true God who worship Him and lives your life in reflection of the Son Jesus Christ.

**6** You have sold the people of Judah and Jerusalem to the Greeks in order to remove them far from their own border.

**7** 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.

* Verse 7-8 is God’s reversal of what has been done in previous verses. The victims themselves will be called upon to be the instruments and avengers of the Lord’s Wrath.

**8** 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.”

(**V9-17**: Joel resumes the theme of V1-3, how the nations are gathered in the courtroom of the Valley of Jehoshaphat. The sentence has been handed down and the Judge orders His agents to ready the scene for the execution. In **V9-12**, God is calling the nations to prepare for a battle, not even knowing that they would be facing against God himself. In **V13-17**, God commands his own army [of angels] as the events unfold.)

**9** 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.

* The nations are summoned to battle. V9-12 describe of this action.
* Consecrate: Warriors were to seek the will of their deity prior to military engagement. Some commentators view this as an ironic statement: the nations are told to consecrate themselves for war, unaware that the Lord of heaven and earth is their adversary.

**10** Beat your plowshares into swords,  
    and your pruning hooks into spears;  
    let the weak say, “I am a warrior.”

* They were to make farming tools into weapons because they were to enter into a holy war.

**11** Hasten and come,  
    all you surrounding nations,  
    and gather yourselves there.  
Bring down your warriors, O Lord.

* God’s warriors are his angels.

**12** 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.

**13** 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.

* The Lord will trample his enemies like grapes.

**14** Multitudes, multitudes,  
    in the valley of decision!  
For the day of the Lord is near  
    in the valley of decision.

**15** The sun and the moon are darkened,  
    and the stars withdraw their shining.

* Darkness, especially of the sun and moon, signify and point to the Last Day of the Lord.

**16** The Lord roars from Zion,  
    and utters his voice from Jerusalem,  
    and the heavens and the earth quake.  
But the Lord is a refuge to his people,  
    a stronghold to the people of Israel.

**The Glorious Future of Judah**

**17** “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.

* Zion: At the Last day, there will be an earthly location of God’s presence in the temple at Jerusalem.
* God has promised a future time when His glory in Judah will not be eclipsed. God’s people will have their hope fulfilled.

V18-21: Joel summarizes the result of the Day of the Lord in V18-21. The land pf Israel will have miraculous fertility and fruitfulness. Enemies will be punished. The Lord will dwell with his people, and they will receive pardon for their sin.

### **18** “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.

### **19** “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.

### **20** But Judah shall be inhabited forever,     and Jerusalem to all generations.

### **21** I will avenge their blood,     blood I have not avenged,     for the Lord dwells in Zion.”

God works in wonderful and mysterious ways. You may be asking yourselves, why God sends in locust to destroy everything, or why God is going to judge the whole nation by going to war with them. Yet, time and time again, we see through God’s character, that he has mercy and grace for all people. In particular, Israel receives this mercy as described in Chapter 1 and 2.

Sin must be punished and will certainly be. But Joel teaches us that the purpose of God’s punishments/justice/retribution is to make known that he alone is God and is to be loved and worshiped and served above all things. Verse 2:27 and 3:17 makes this very clear.

Joel sees a future with two sides: salvation and blessing for those who call on the name of the Lord, but judgment and destruction for the people who go their own way. Whatever the case, God will be known as King of the world, master of the universe, and the one true God at the Last day. Repent of your sin and trust in God to receive his mercy and grace for he is abounding in steadfast love for those who hear his call and come to him. But remain in sin and you will bear the wrath of God who is waging a war against those who are against him.

**Truth for Today**

**KNOW THE LORD**. God’s actions in history for the salvation of his people are ultimately so that we may know that he alone is God and that he alone saves humanity. To “know the Lord,” then, is to know that God is the one who made all things out of nothing, to know that God alone stands as sovereign ruler and judge over all people, and to know that God alone can save us from sin, death, darkness, and all of his and our enemies. For this reason, the Lord says, “Be still, and know that I am God” (Ps. 46:10).

**LIVING WATER**. The Bible often describes our spiritual longings in terms of thirst. For example, Psalm 42 describes our soul’s longing for God in terms of a deer’s thirst for water, and Isaiah 55 invites all who thirst to come to the waters so that “your soul may live” (Isa. 55:3). This same invitation closes the Bible in Revelation 22:17. In fact, just as the first book of the Bible describes the garden of Eden in terms of the rivers that flow in and through it (Gen. 2:10–14), so the book of Revelation describes our future life with God with a picture of the river of life that runs through the new city of God (Rev. 22:1–5). Accordingly, Jesus says, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,[2](https://www.esv.org/#joel-amos-and-obadiah-week-4-the-lord-dwells-in-zion-fn2) for they shall be satisfied” (Matt. 5:6).

**VINDICATION.** God’s people all over the world and all throughout history have suffered persecution for the sake of the gospel. Indeed, Jesus promises such persecution: the world will hate us because the world hates him (John 15:18–25). The Lord does promise deliverance and even vengeance upon his enemies and the enemies of his people, but that vindication can sometimes feel slow in coming. Indeed, we may not ever see such vindication in this life (see Rev. 6:9–11). Nevertheless, the Bible promises that such deliverance and vindication will indeed come in the Lord’s perfect timing. And on that last day, God’s people will be vindicated and his justice against his enemies will be executed.

**WHOSE REVENGE?** When we suffer hurt and harm from others, we can be tempted toward revenge: lex talionis, or “an eye for an eye.” In the Old Testament, retaliation laws were given to the civil authorities, not to individuals, in order to provide appropriate justice and eliminate evil. Furthermore, such laws even guarded against excessive or inappropriate punishment, thereby protecting the perpetrators. Such justice points to the pure and perfect justice of God: “‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord” (Rom. 12:19; compare Deut. 32:35). Accordingly, God’s perfect justice enables us to forgive those who hurt or harm us, because we know that God himself will make all things right—which will include punishing the wicked.