

# The Day of the Lord

## An Expository "Journey" Through the Prophecy of Joel

### 11- The Valley of Decision and the Magnificence of Jesus- Part 2

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November 22, 2020

#### Joel 3

**1** "For behold, in those days and at that time, When I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem,

**2** I will gather all the nations And bring them down to the valley of Jehoshaphat. Then 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.

**3** "They have also cast lots for My people, Traded a boy for a harlot And sold a girl for wine that they may drink.

**4** "Moreover, what are you to Me, O Tyre, Sidon and all the regions of Philistia? Are you rendering Me a recompense? But if you do recompense Me, swiftly and speedily I will return your recompense on your head.

**5** "Since you have taken My silver and My gold, brought My precious treasures to your temples,

**6** and sold the sons of Judah and Jerusalem to the Greeks in order to remove them far from their territory,

**7** behold, I am going to arouse them from the place where you have sold them, and return your recompense on your head.

**8** "Also I will sell your sons and your daughters into the hand of the sons of Judah, and they will sell them to the Sabeans, to a distant nation," for the Lord has spoken.

**9** Proclaim this among the nations: Prepare a war; rouse the mighty men! Let all the soldiers draw near, let them come up!

**10** Beat your plowshares into swords And your pruning hooks into spears; Let the weak say, "I am a mighty man."

**11** Hasten and come, all you surrounding nations, And gather yourselves there. Bring down, O Lord, Your mighty ones.

- 12** Let the nations be aroused 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. Come, tread, for the wine press is full; The vats overflow, for their wickedness is great.
- 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 moon grow dark And the stars lose their brightness.
- 16** The Lord roars from Zion And utters His voice from Jerusalem, And the heavens and the earth tremble. But the Lord is a refuge for His people And a stronghold to the sons of Israel.
- 17** Then you will know that I am the Lord your God, Dwelling in Zion, My holy mountain. So Jerusalem will be holy, And strangers will pass through it no more.
- 18** And in that day 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 the Lord To water the valley of Shittim.
- 19** Egypt will become a waste, And Edom will become a desolate wilderness, Because of the violence done to the sons of Judah, In whose land they have shed innocent blood.
- 20** But Judah will be inhabited forever And Jerusalem for all generations.
- 21** And I will avenge their blood which I have not avenged, For the Lord dwells in Zion.

To the Glory of God

Now we are coming to the conclusion of my effort to understand what God the Holy Spirit moved on the Prophet Joel to prophesy- some 800-900 years before Jesus was born. And I'm always sad when I come to the end of a Book- primarily because I don't think I did a very good job and wish I had said so much more.

But if God is pleased, next week- Elder Jeff Bradley will herald the glorious Gospel from this Pulpit. And then, Lord willing, on the first Lord's Day of December- I will begin an expositional "journey" through the **Epistle of James**.

And with God's Permission- my plan is to preach in **James** for the first two weeks of December, and then preach on the Incarnation on December 20. And then on December 27, I'll preach the final Lord's Day of 2020 in **James** again.

Now I won't be finished- but as is my custom, I'm going to take a short "vacation" from **James' Epistle** to begin the new year of 2021 by preaching about

why the biblical Gospel is so important; and to give you all some good, solid information about several of the *perversions* of the Gospel that we need to be aware of- so that you all will be equipped to not be deceived by what is being peddled in our day and *masquerading* as the Gospel.

And I think that will take us into late February or early March- where I'll pick back up in **James**. And once I finish **James**- I'm going to begin a verse-by-verse "journey" through the **Gospel of Matthew**- which should take us several years, if the Lord should tarry. And at that point- I will have preached in or through several Books:

- The Gospel of John
- 1,2,3 John
- Jude
- Hebrews
- Romans
- Luke
- Ruth
- Malachi
- First 3 Chapters of Genesis
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Chapter of Titus
- 1&2 Peter
- Joel
- James
- Matthew

... and God has allowed me the great privilege of Teaching several very important Subjects such as:

What does the Bible Teach about:

- Alcohol
- Baptism
- Marriage, Divorce, and Re-Marriage
- Manhood and Womanhood
- Abortion and Contraception
- Human Sexuality
- Formal Church Membership
- Church Discipline
- Continuationism Versus Cessationism
- God the Holy Spirit

- Sanctification
- Prayer
- Fasting
- Jesus, the Christ
- The Beatitudes
- Hell
- The Doctrines of Grace

... and including the Radio Broadcasts, God has enabled me to produce over 65,000 pages of Teaching since Hurricane Katrina (9/05)!<sup>1</sup>

Now I say all this to God's Glory. Those of you who know my background know that I was a jock. I didn't enjoy reading- and studying was out of the question. My natural brother was the one with all the brains. He was the academic and the intellectual. I would rather just throw the ball; and laugh; and run; and yell real loud.

But, even though it wasn't my fault- God chose to save me at a young age. And before I was 18 years old, when I first read what the Apostle Paul wrote in **Galatians 6:14:**

**But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.**

... I determined for that to be true in my life. So, for me to sit and read and study and conjugate verbs and diagram sentences all day long- is truly a sovereign Act of God.

So, somebody will eventually take all of my labor; and they will edit it very nicely; and put it into book form; and it will be used by God to encourage and to help and to edify God's people- way after I am finished here and with the Lord in Glory.

Now we've already covered a lot of ground- but I have found that it is helpful, sometimes, to try to step back and get the big picture of what a particular Book of the Bible is talking about. There is so much information here in Joel- that we run the risk of losing our way- sort of like the saying, "*We can't see the forest for the trees*". So, let's step back and look at Joel and his Prophecy here in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Chapter.

First of all, Joel is a Prophet of God. So, Joel is one of only a handful of men that God used to write down infallible and inerrant Words that were used by God to formulate the Old Testament. The writer of Hebrews opened his Epistle by saying this:

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<sup>1</sup> Excluding times of sickness and injury- I average 83 pages per week.

## **Hebrews 1:1**

**God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways,**

So, Joel is one of those Prophets that verse 1 is talking about. Joel and the other Old Testament Prophets were the “agency” or the “vehicle” *in* whom; and *by* whom; and *through* whom- God Almighty spoke to the Fathers of our Faith.

And what Joel had in God; and the anointing he enjoyed; and the unction through which his Words flowed; and his understanding and wisdom that was included in his Words- was powerful and holy and true. But it was also incomplete. And that is why the writer of **Hebrews** wrote verse 2.

## **Hebrews 1:2**

**in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.**

So, Jesus is *better* than Joel. And one of the main reasons Jesus is better- is because Jesus is NOT a Prophet. Jesus is a SON. And this is the magnificence of Jesus. So, even though God used Joel *mightily*- he was a sinner saved by Grace. But Jesus is God Almighty in human flesh. And so, Jesus never sinned. And that means that Jesus never needed Grace. And the writer of **Hebrews** says here that Jesus is both the vehicle through which God made all things AND He is the One, Who will inherit all things. And this is what the Apostle Paul meant when he said in **Romans 11:33-36**:

**33** Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!  
How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!

**34** For *WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, OR WHO BECAME HIS COUNSELOR?*

**35** Or *WHO HAS FIRST GIVEN TO HIM THAT IT MIGHT BE PAID BACK TO HIM AGAIN?*

**36** For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him *be* the glory forever. Amen.

And so, what Jesus speaks today through the 27 Books of the New Testament is infinitely *better* than *everything* that Joel spoke in his one Book. And yet, Joel wrote about Jesus in this Book. And Joel saw Jesus in His Glory. But he saw Jesus afar off- at a distance; in signs; and in symbols; and in shadows.

And so, as we read this 3<sup>rd</sup> Chapter one last time- we see images and types. We see things visible that represent things that are invisible. We see natural things that represent spiritual things. We see earthly things that represent heavenly things; and we see things that are temporary that represent things that are eternal.

Now last time I told you that in Joel we have an Old Testament Prophet that predicts the future- using Old Covenant language and terminology. So, we have a man, who lived every moment of his life under the inferior Old Covenant- speaking about the glories of the New Covenant- with an Old Covenant mentality. And that is why we know that his Prophecy is symbolic of something else.

So, for example, when Joel prophesies about Israel- he is referring to the Church. When he prophesies about the Jews- he is referring to the redeemed. And when he prophesies about the nations of the world being judged in the Valley of Decision- he is referring to the unrepentant peoples of the world- falling under the Damnation of God.

Now the flow of the **Book of Joel** is the very same flow that Salvation brings to each truly saved person- *individually*. But it is also referring to how the Spirit of the living God flows in the Church as well. And so, Chapter 1 is the great Judgment of God in judging His Own people- the Church- FIRST.

So, the locust invasion of Chapter 1 refers to how the Spirit of God comes to each individual, who is truly saved- and the Church at large- and cleanses them from Sin. So, the stripping of every green leaf in Israel by the locusts is symbolic of the sovereign Act of God in stripping away every vestige of remaining Sin; and Worldliness; and Compromise in the lives of God's people and in the Church.

And in Chapter 2- as the stripping of the Spirit brings about deep, serious, and real Repentance; and a genuine Mourning over Sin (represented by the fasting and the weeping between the porch and the altar), the Promise of God is that there will be, not only Forgiveness- but God will use that time of stripping to bring about two very radical things:

1. The end of the Old Covenant
2. The beginning of the New Covenant

... and that is signified by Joel's Prophecy of a powerful infilling of the Holy Spirit in each chosen sinner.

Now keep in mind that what makes the New Covenant better than the Old- is NOT merely because it is "new". The Old Covenant was forever replaced by the New because of the *superiority* of the New.

Remember- the Old Covenant was between God and Man. And so, God said, "*If you do this... I'll bless you.*" But then He also said, "*If you do NOT do this... then I'll will damn you!*" But inherent in the Old Covenant is that God left

the keeping of the Covenant- the “doing of it” (Obedience/Righteousness)- up to human will-power and human choice and human determination. And the result was that NOBODY obeyed the Covenant (perfectly) and EVERYONE had broken the Covenant.

Now that isn't the opinion of a near-sighted; flat-footed; poe-dunk Preacher on John Clark Road, who doesn't have a day of Seminary under his belt. That is what God Himself said in **Jeremiah 31:31&32**:

**31 "Behold, days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah,**

**32 not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the Lord.**

So, what makes the New Covenant so infinitely *superior* to the Old- is because the New Covenant was made between God the Father; and God the Son; and God the Holy Spirit. So, the New Covenant is between God and God and God- with Man being simply the *recipient* of all the Work that God alone has done- sovereignly.

So, before time began- God the Father and God the Son and God the Holy Spirit entered into a Covenant with one another- so that, at the time appointed of the Father (after the auspices of the Old Covenant were finished) each Person of the Trinity would act- according to their own individual “personalities”- to bring about the *finality* of God's Will in Salvation- which is the ultimate Praise of the Glory of God's Grace in saving unworthy sinners (**Ephesians 1:6a**).

So, God the Father chose to “set His Love” upon certain sinners- to display or show His Grace in them. And the Father decreed that- BEFORE He created anything.<sup>2</sup>

And at the Incarnation- God Himself took on flesh and became Man. And as Man- Jesus was tempted in all points- yet He never sinned. Ever. And God the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ- the Darling of the Trinity- obeyed His Father's Will- *perfectly*. He was *perfectly* led by God the Holy Spirit. And Jesus honored God in all things- with complete Delight.

And in so doing- Jesus earned the Righteousness that the Law promised to those who obeyed. And as the perfect High Priest Jesus offered the perfect Sacrifice- the ONLY Sacrifice that had the Power to actually take away the Sins of those that God the Father chose to save. And as the Propitiation- Jesus absorbed ALL of God's just Wrath against ALL of the Sins of all of God's people. And He

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<sup>2</sup> Because the New Covenant was ALWAYS God's Will- God began to implement the New Covenant BEFORE the First or the Old Covenant was given.

became a Curse for us. And Jesus died with those Sins and with that Judgment of God against Him. And three days later Jesus rose from the dead, by the Glory of the Father- WITHOUT SIN- to SIT DOWN at the Right Hand of the Majesty on High- to make continual Intercession for those God chose to save.

And God the Holy Spirit went out into the world to find and to effectually drag all of those elected sinners to Jesus. And God the Spirit entered into those people- BEFORE they were saved; and BEFORE they wanted Him; and BEFORE they asked for Him- and all by Himself- God the Holy Spirit sovereignly gave those chosen rebels- new, spiritual Life- in the Miracle of the New Birth.

And God the Holy Spirit gave them eyes that could see the Glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ. And He gave them new ears that could hear the glorious Gospel. And God the Spirit took out of these people a stony hard heart. And He gave them a soft heart of flesh that was both able and willing to believe.

And as these dirty sinful wicked rebels saw the great contrast between the pristine Beauty and the perfect Righteousness of the risen Lamb- and their own black hearts- they were granted the Gift of being truly convicted. And in that state- they knew they needed a Savior- or they would perish. And in their broken, trembling desperation- they cried out to God for a Mercy they haven't earned; and a Grace they don't deserve. And they were visited with a serious and eternal hatred of their own Sin.

And because Jesus loved His Father- He heard their cry. And Jesus received all those that the Father gave to Him. And He didn't turn any of them away- *regardless* of how sinful they were and *regardless* of how dirty and filthy they were.

And God the Son washed each one with His Own Blood. And God the Father took the perfect Righteousness of Jesus and He *imputed* or *credited* that Righteousness to these repentant sinners- through the Agency of Faith alone. And then God *adopted* these justified saints into His Own Family.

And all of that is utterly fantastic. And Heaven will reverberate throughout all of Eternity with the praises of the Redeemed for all that God has done for us. BUT if God did every bit of that- and then left it up to each one of us- to actually "walk out" the New Covenant- hear me- we would NOT be any better off than they were under the Old Covenant! If God sovereignly accomplished all that I just said- but then left it up to human will-power and human determination; and human effort to *continue* to walk as saved people- then we would NOT have anything better than they had under the Old Covenant.

So, in His Goodness- God did one thing more. Not only did God the Father choose and predestinate each one of us for Salvation; not only did God the Son come and live and die and rise again- so that every single soul that God chose would be saved; And not only did God the Spirit infill our bodies to open our eyes



and unstop our ears and give us a heart that could believe- But God also promised here in **Joel 2**- to come inside the bodies of individual believers- and REMAIN!

And by doing for us what He did NOT do for any of those who operated under the Old Covenant- God accomplished in us- what could NEVER be accomplished in them.

So, what **Joel 2:28-32** promises is that God the Holy Spirit will radically, and supernaturally, and miraculously, and eternally transformed our hearts; and our minds; and our wills- so that we would LOVE Him. And it is in, by, and through this Gift of Love- that God Himself obeys God- through us! Look at **Philippians 2:12**:

**So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling;**

Okay, here is the Apostle Paul telling us to do something. He is telling people, who have already been saved- to “Work”

**... work out your salvation with fear and trembling;**

Okay, so I need to make my mind up; and put forth a lot of effort; and utilize the gifts of human will-power; and human discipline; and human determination to “work out” my Salvation, right? WRONG! That is an Old Covenant mentality. Look at the very next verse:

**Philippians 2:13**

**for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for *His* good pleasure.**

God Himself is at Work inside of every believer to give us what we so desperately need: The Will or the Desire to obey God; and the Power to obey God. So, God the Spirit dwells inside every believer to give them what NOBODY who lived under the Old Covenant had- a new heart. Look what the Prophet Ezekiel said

**Ezekiel 36:23-27**

**I will vindicate the holiness of My great name which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst. Then the nations will know that I am the Lord," declares the Lord God, "when I prove Myself holy among you in their sight. For I will take you from the nations, gather you**

**from all the lands and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.**

If God sovereignly did all the great things for us that we read about in the New Covenant- but then left it up to us to actually walk out our Obedience- we would have the very *same* problem that they had under the Old Covenant. A bad heart. So, what makes the New Covenant so infinitely *superior*- is that God doesn't leave ANYTHING up to us. And in giving us a new heart (by putting His Spirit in us)- God Himself actually obeys God- through us!

And this is why saved people *keep on* believing. We *keep on* repenting. We *keep on* striving. We *keep on* trusting. We *keep on* changing. We *keep on* hoping. And we *keep on* loving Jesus- more and more as we behold Him in His Glory!

And this is also why God gets all the Glory for our Obedience- even though we work so hard at it. All of our efforts are merely frail human *responses* to the Work that God has already done; and that He *continues* to do- *in* us and *through* us. And all of that came forth- in, by, and through the radical new way in which God's people would relate to God the Holy Spirit- when the New Covenant replaced the Old. And that is what Joel was predicting or promising (on God's behalf) in the last four verses of **Joel 2**.

So, now in **Joel 3**- we see the culmination of all things. God has already judged His Own people and purified His Church. He has already promised the dawn of the New Covenant in, by, and through the radical new way in which God the Holy Spirit will dwell inside the bodies of all of God's elect. And that means that the Old Covenant will now fade away. And now we see the final Judgment of all of those, who refused to repent; and who took pleasure in things that have been made and that are passing away; and who would not delight themselves in the Lord.

So, the first six verses of Chapter 3 give God's Charge against the heathen nations of the world. And this is *symbolic* of all of the unbelievers- from every nation- *including* Israel. And the point of concern is that they have attacked God's people; and divided the land. And the most prominent feature is God's *repeated* emphasis upon "My people" and "My land." We read,  
**... On behalf of My people... And they have divided up My land. They have also cast lots for My people...**

Then God *expanded* His Divine Indictment against all those who

*refuse* to believe and put their trust in Jesus:

### **Joel 3:5&6**

**Since you have taken My silver and My gold, brought My precious treasures to your temples, and sold the sons of Judah and Jerusalem to the Greeks in order to remove them far from their territory,**

Now, under the Old Covenant- the Temple in Jerusalem actually had gold and silver in it. And that natural gold and silver *symbolized* the great Treasure and Value and Worth of Jesus under the infinitely superior New Covenant. So, as the people from every walk of life see Value in almost anything EXCEPT the risen Christ- Who is the Treasure of the Universe- God's Wrath abides on them.

We must understand that the people God saves- are His by Redemption. And Redemption is through the Agency of the New Birth. And the New Birth is a sovereign Act of God the Holy Spirit. And as the New Covenant brought forth the New Birth- natural birth; and ethnicity; and nationality; and bloodline; and social status; and financial position; and political connections became entirely *irrelevant!*

In **Joel 2:29**- the Prophet gave the Promise of God (Prophecy)- that in the New Covenant brought about through the Life, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus- God the Spirit will dwell inside the most *insignificant* people on earth- slaves. And by using that image- it represents how what mattered the *most* under the First Covenant (Jewish ethnicity) doesn't matter at all under the New. And that throws the door wide open to the only kind of people who will be saved:

**... Whoever calls on the Name of the Lord will be saved (Joel 2:32b)**

So, the emphasis about Salvation in the New Covenant is no longer on Jews or Gentiles. It isn't on Men or Women. It isn't on the rich or the poor. It isn't on the weak or the strong. It isn't on the educated or the uneducated. It isn't on the cultured or the uncultured. It isn't on the young or the old. And the emphasis isn't on the politically

connected or the ones who aren't political at all. No, the emphasis about Salvation in the New Covenant- is solely on those who believe. Nobody can be saved unless they believe- even if they have some of the other qualities that mattered under the Old Covenant. Only those who believe will be saved. But ALL who believe will be saved!

But the problem is that no lost person believes. No lost person has the capacity to believe. We lost that ability in the Fall. So, the one thing that allows for Salvation- we don't have. And we can't gin it up. We can't fake it or manufacture Belief (Faith). We can't rub the two sticks of our own will-power and

our own choices together to produce Belief/Faith. Faith must be given by God. It must be granted by the Almighty. Because Faith or Belief is a Gift of God. And this is what Paul meant when he said,

### **Ephesians 2:8&9**

**For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is the gift of God*; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.**

Here the Apostle taught that Salvation was “by” the Grace of God- meaning that Salvation is *initiated* by God’s Grace. Salvation is NOT initiated by human choice or human decision. Salvation is initiated by God’s Grace when the Spirit of God comes to the elected sinner to bring about the Miracle of the New Birth.

Then the Apostle said that Salvation was “through” Faith or Belief. But then notice the qualifier. Paul went onto describe the Faith that Salvation is “through”:

**... and that not of yourselves, *it is the gift of God* ...**

So, the Faith that Salvation is “through” is NOT inherent in the human being- prior to God the Holy Spirit coming inside. God has to “infuse” or “give” or “grant” this “Saving Faith” to the individual. And this is what the Prophet Ezekiel saw when he said,

**... I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.**

... and this is what Joel meant when he said,

### **Joel 2:28-32**

**It will come about after this That I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; And your sons and daughters will prophesy, Your old men will dream dreams, Your young men will see visions. Even on the male and female servants I will pour out My Spirit in those days. I will display wonders in the sky and on the earth, Blood, fire and columns of smoke. The sun will be turned into darkness And the moon into blood Before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. And it will come about that whoever calls on the name of the Lord Will be delivered...**

So, through the New Covenant (brought about in, by, and through Jesus) God sovereignly grants or gives the Gift of Faith to those He chose to save. And

so, Salvation comes to those who are gifted with Saving Faith- *regardless* of how sinful they have been. Salvation comes to those who are empowered to cry out to God for Mercy- *regardless* of how dirty they are. And Joel says that Salvation comes to those who are enabled to call upon the Name of the Lord!

And those who are saved- through that sovereign Act of God alone- ALWAYS have our High Priest to work on their behalf- before; during; and after Salvation. So, the High Priest, Who offers the perfect Sacrifice (Jesus) in order to forgive Sin and make us Righteous- is the SAME High Priest, Who *continually* intercedes for us at the Right Hand of the Majesty on High- AFTER we are saved!

And 282 years ago, as he heard his brother John preach this- Charles Wesley wrote the song that Brother Andy brought to us last week. And part of that song says,

Long my imprisoned spirit lay,  
Fast bound in Sin and nature's Night.  
Thine Eye diffused a quick'ning Ray:  
I woke—the dungeon flamed with Light!  
My chains fell off, my heart was free,  
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.<sup>3</sup>

The next section of **Joel 3** is a “Divine Challenge”, and an ironic one at that. In these verses God *challenges* the nations that have made war on His people- to turn their plows into swords; and their pruning hooks into spears; and marshal their forces to do battle against Him in the Valley of Jehoshaphat.

And there are three great Ironies in this Challenge. First, the Challenge to beat their plows into swords; and their pruning hooks into spears- is the exact *opposite* of the Promise that God made through the Prophet Isaiah about how things will be after Jesus comes back:

#### **Isaiah 2:4**

**And He will judge between the nations, And will render decisions for many peoples; And they will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, And never again will they learn war.**

... and to underscore its importance- God repeats this Promise in **Micah 4:3:**

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<sup>3</sup> Charles Wesley; “*And Can It Be That I Should Gain?*” 1738.

**And He will judge between many peoples And render decisions for mighty, distant nations. Then they will hammer their swords into plowshares And their spears into pruning hooks; Nation will not lift up sword against nation, And never again will they train for war.**

The second Irony is the obvious one: Human beings gathering together to wage battle against Almighty God! This illustrates the *insanity* of Sin. Man fighting against God- isn't smart; it isn't intelligent- it is suicide! No man can hope to win against God! And yet, year after year; decade after decade- people from every walk of life continue to try to live according to the dictates of their own hearts- thinking they can live in a Universe that God created; breath air that God created; and have their heart beat- at God's allowance- and ignore the One Who grants it all- and get away with it!

It isn't hard to hear the Laughter of God as Joel utters these words, because **Psalm 2** tells us *explicitly* that God laughs at such silly rebellion:

**Why are the nations in an uproar And the peoples devising a vain thing? The kings of the earth take their stand And the rulers take counsel together Against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying, Let us tear their fetters apart And cast away their cords from us! He who sits in the heavens laughs, The Lord scoffs at them.**

This is how God describes the ongoing Rebellion of the human race. The lost from every nation- including lost Jews- regard God as their enemy. And they see His rightful Rule over them- as harsh and oppressive. So, the single most important ingredient is missing from every single lost person. They do not LOVE God. They do not DELIGHT in God. They do not ENJOY God. And they do not find the fullness of their own SATISFACTION in God. And so, they play with shiny trinkets; and they embrace things that have been made; and they worship things that can't give them what they so desperately need and want.

So, from Adam until this morning- lost people live their lives for one overriding Purpose: *To cast off God's Rule over their lives*. They live for one Goal: *To be answerable to no one*. They *despise* the Lordship Demands that Jesus makes on their very existence. And so, they fashion their tools into weapons; and they gather their arms and their warriors; and they march defiantly- out to do battle against God. What idiocy!

And what is God's reaction to this act of Treason? Does the Owner and Creator of the Universe cower in fear? Does He tremble at their numbers? Does the Almighty retreat to hide behind His heavenly barricades? Does He capitulate?

No- He laughs! And so, we should hear this Laughter as God mocking them. And that Laughter should make us tremble.

So, this is God's picture of the Final Judgment: Men and Women- who cannot believe- marching out to wage war against the One Who is Absolute and Eternal. And God laughs at them- as His frightening Justice is administered; and as His Judgment falls on the ungodly.

The third Irony is illustrated in the image God uses to describe His Judgment. It is the image of God trampling out the grapes of His terrible Wrath:

### **Joel 3:13**

**Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe.  
Come, tread, for the wine press is full;  
The vats overflow,  
for their wickedness is great.**

But what is so ironic about this? Because normally, the time of the Harvest was the most joyous occasion of the year. At Harvest Time the grain was gathered in; and the grapes were thrown into the wine vats- so that new wine could be made. And this was an image of great Joy and Celebration. The hard work of the long hot summer was over. The fruit of their labor would now grace the tables of the people of God throughout the harsh winter.

So, normally, at the Harvest Time- the air would be filled with Joy and Celebration. And Harvest Festivals and great Celebrations were common. But here in **Joel 3:13**- there is Sorrow and Damnation. And that tells us that there will be no Joy and no Celebration- when the Lord Christ comes to tread out the winepress of God's Wrath against those, who *refused* to find Pleasure in God. Here is what the Apostle John saw:

### **The Revelation 14:14-20**

**Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and sitting on the cloud *was* one like a son of man, having a golden crown on His head and a sharp sickle in His hand. And another angel came out of the temple, crying out with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, "Put in your sickle and reap, for the hour to reap has come, because the harvest of the earth is ripe." Then He who sat on the cloud swung His sickle over the earth, and the earth was reaped. And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, and he also had a sharp sickle. Then another angel, the one who has power over fire, came out from the altar; and he called with a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, "Put in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters from the vine of the earth, because her grapes are ripe." So the angel swung his sickle to the**

earth and gathered *the clusters from* the vine of the earth, and threw them into the great wine press of the wrath of God. And the wine press was trodden outside the city, and blood came out from the wine press, up to the horses' bridles, for a distance of two hundred miles.

Now as we ponder this great Irony- do we dare to exclude what is close to us? So, even though we shudder- we must also remember, dear friends, that the United States of America is among those nations that are challenged by God to appear in the Valley of Jehoshaphat on that day. And God will laugh at our nation too. Because ALL unbelievers- of EVERY stripe and color and status- from EVERY nation will die in that Valley on that day.

And that means that all of our unsaved friends will die. All of our unsaved political leaders will die. All of our favorite sports stars and favorite Hollywood actors, who are lost- will die. All of the lost business owners and all the high- tech billionaires, who have the audacity to doubt the existence of God- will die. And all of our unsaved family members- will also go out to wage war against God; and they will all die on that day. Is that not Cause for us to weep between the porch and the altar- and beg God for the souls of our families?

Now beginning in verse 14 there is a description of “multitudes in the valley of decision.” And as I told you last time- that phrase has been used thousands of times in evangelistic meetings to portray people needing to “make decisions” for Christ. The Evangelist will say, “*You stand tonight in the valley of decision, and you need to decide for Christ.*”

But this is not the kind of Decision in Joel’s thinking. This is NOT the decision of the evangelistic meeting. It is the Decision of the Court in Heaven. And the One making the Decision is not the one who has rejected Jesus- but the Jesus they have rejected. So, this is God’s Decision- a sovereign Decision that will determine people’s destinies forever.

And when we think of about the Division between the lost and the saved- we must not forget Jesus Sermon on the Mount of Olives- just before His arrest and crucifixion. In that Sermon Jesus borrowed language from this very chapter of **Joel** (“**the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light,**” **Matthew 24:29; Joel 3:15; cf. Isaiah 13:10; 34:4**) and He elaborated on the Judgment of God- *warning* His hearers to flee from it- by going into the safety of Salvation in Himself.

And to underscore the seriousness of this “Day of Judgment”- Jesus told three different Parables:

1. The ten virgins
2. The talents



### 3. The sheep and the goats

... and while these vary in certain details- the Message is the same. In each one- there is a sudden appearance of the Master- Who *always* catches the people involved by surprise. And in each one- there is a radical Separation:

- The five wise from the five foolish virgins
- The ones who used their master's talents wisely from the one who did not
- The sheep from the goats

...and in each Parable- there is the utter surprise on the part of those who receive Punishment:

- ✓ The foolish virgins are *astounded* that the Master will not admit them to the wedding banquet.
- ✓ The wicked steward is *amazed* that the Master is not satisfied with his lack of performance.
- ✓ The goats ask Jesus, "*Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help You?*"

And as we tremble at those Parables- we think of many people today. They have despised the Grace of God; refuse to find Joy in Jesus; and yet honestly think they are heading for Heaven. The level of deception is truly frightening. Look at what the Apostle Paul infallibly wrote about this in **Romans 2:5-11**:

**But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who *WILL RENDER TO EACH PERSON ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS*: to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation. *There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek, but glory and honor and peace to everyone who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For there is no partiality with God.***

The fascinating thing about the Lost- is that they despise the very thing (the ONLY thing) that God has graciously given to lead them to Repentance: the "Kindness of God" (**Romans 2:4b**)

Yet as certain as the outcome is for those who refuse to bow- it is just that certain for those, who have been gifted by God, to be able and willing to believe. Look again at **Joel 3:16&17**:

**16** The Lord roars from Zion And utters His voice from Jerusalem, And the heavens and the earth tremble. But the Lord is a refuge for His people And a stronghold to the sons of Israel.

**17** Then you will know that I am the Lord your God, Dwelling in Zion, My holy mountain. So Jerusalem will be holy, And strangers will pass through it no more.

And all of this symbolizes the Beauty of Holiness; the Glory of God's Grace in Salvation; and the eternality of Jesus' Church. Because, for every single soul that is granted with the ability to repent and trust in Jesus:

**... the Lord is a refuge for His people ...**

And, finally, using Old Covenant language- Joel sees the *culmination* of all History: when Jesus returns; and the saved are gathered in; and all the tares are forcefully removed from God's Kingdom and cast into the Furnace- and Righteousness reigns supreme:

**Joel 3:18-21**

**18** And in that day 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 the Lord To water the valley of Shittim.

**19** Egypt will become a waste, And Edom will become a desolate wilderness, Because of the violence done to the sons of Judah, In whose land they have shed innocent blood.

**20** But Judah will be inhabited forever And Jerusalem for all generations.

**21** And I will avenge their blood which I have not avenged, For the Lord dwells in Zion.

This is NOT the 1,000 year Millennial Reign of Jesus on the earth. This has nothing to do with a reconstituted nation of Israel. This is the EVERLASTING Kingdom- that will NEVER end- that we call, "Heaven". And "Judah" and "Jerusalem" and "Zion" all *symbolize* the eternal, spiritual, and eternal abode in Heaven- in the very Presence of God- for all of those who were blessed to have

their eyes unveiled- so they could see the Glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ; and who loved what they saw; and who were changed into what they saw.

The Bible tells us that the Wrath of God is as a consuming Fire. Nevertheless, it will not touch those- who are covered by the Lord Jesus Christ. Why? Because there is eternal Refuge in Him. But it is in Him alone. So, what Jerusalem promised- but could not deliver; what Judah promised- but could not deliver; what Zion promised- but could not deliver- Jesus promised and Jesus delivered!

We must remember that the full fury of God's Wrath is revealed at two points in history:

1. At the Final Judgment- described by Joel and other biblical writers
2. The Cross of Jesus- where it has *already* been poured out for those who put their Hope and Trust in Him

... and if you wait until the Final Judgment- you will face it alone; and you will wage war against God; and God will laugh at you; and you will die in the Valley; and you will scream in agony throughout the eons of time.

But if you are so blessed to be gifted by God to be able to know that you are lost; to know that you are deserving of eternal Damnation; and to know that unless Jesus grants you Mercy- you're doomed; if you are so graced by God to be able and willing to take refuge in Jesus- that Judgment has *already* been taken for you by the Lamb, Who is blessed forever- and you will live in unspeakable Joy- while the others burn.

Amen. Let's pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.

