

Text: Joel (entire book)

Although I was not present last week to collect my teaching materials for this quarter's lessons, I was fortunately able to find the text to be covered online. We are going to begin by covering parts of Chapters 1 and 2 out of order, as this will allow us to consider the themes of the book more efficiently.

God Brings Wrath in Retribution for Sin

1The word of the LORD that came to Joel, the son of Pethuel:

2Hear this, O elders,

And listen, all inhabitants of the land

Has anything like this happened in your days

Or in your fathers' days?

3Tell your sons about it,

And let your sons tell their sons,

And their sons the next generation.

4What the gnawing locust has left, the swarming locust has eaten;

And what the swarming locust has left, the creeping locust has eaten;

And what the creeping locust has left, the stripping locust has eaten.

5Awake, drunkards, and weep;

And wail, all you wine drinkers,

On account of the sweet wine

That is cut off from your mouth.

6For a nation has invaded my land,

Mighty and without number;

Its teeth are the teeth of a lion,

And it has the fangs of a lioness.

7It has made my vine a waste

And my fig tree splinters.

It has stripped them bare and cast them away;

Their branches have become white.

8Wail like a virgin girded with sackcloth

For the bridegroom of her youth.

9The grain offering and the drink offering are cut off

From the house of the LORD

The priests mourn,

The ministers of the LORD.

10The field is ruined,

The land mourns;

For the grain is ruined,

The new wine dries up,

Fresh oil fails.

11Be ashamed, O farmers,

Wail, O vinedressers,

For the wheat and the barley;

Because the harvest of the field is destroyed.

12The vine dries up

And the fig tree fails;

The pomegranate, the palm also, and the apple tree,

All the trees of the field dry up

Indeed, rejoicing dries up

From the sons of men.

13Gird yourselves with sackcloth

And lament, O priests;

Wail, O ministers of the altar!

Come, spend the night in sackcloth

O ministers of my God,

*For the grain offering and the drink offering
Are withheld from the house of your God. (Joel 1:1-13)*

- 1 Blow a trumpet in Zion,
And sound an alarm on My holy mountain!
Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble,
For the day of the LORD is coming;
Surely it is near,*
- 2 A day of darkness and gloom,
A day of clouds and thick darkness
As the dawn is spread over the mountains,
So there is a great and mighty people;
There has never been anything like it,
Nor will there be again after it
To the years of many generations.*
- 3 A fire consumes before them
And behind them a flame burns
The land is like the garden of Eden before them
But a desolate wilderness behind them,
And nothing at all escapes them.*
- 4 Their appearance is like the appearance of horses;
And like war horses, so they run.*
- 5 With a noise as of chariots
They leap on the tops of the mountains,
Like the crackling of a flame of fire consuming the stubble,
Like a mighty people arranged for battle.*
- 6 Before them the people are in anguish;
All faces turn pale.*
- 7 They run like mighty men,
They climb the wall like soldiers;
And they each march in line,
Nor do they deviate from their paths.*
- 8 They do not crowd each other,
They march everyone in his path;
When they burst through the defenses,
They do not break ranks.*
- 9 They rush on the city,
They run on the wall;
They climb into the houses,
They enter through the windows like a thief.*
- 10 Before them the earth quakes,
The heavens tremble,
The sun and the moon grow dark
And the stars lose their brightness.*
- 11 The LORD utters His voice before His army;
Surely His camp is very great,
For strong is he who carries out His word
The day of the LORD is indeed great and very awesome,
And who can endure it? (Joel 2:1-11)*

Clearly this book was written during or immediately following a devastating plague of locusts which was visited upon the people of Judah. Some ascribe a metaphorical or double meaning to parts or all of these passages, suggesting that the "locusts" might be the armies of Assyria, Babylon, Greece, or Rome. In any case, the Jews had clearly abandoned fidelity to God and to His Law, and He declared that He would visit wrath upon them. In so doing, the consequences of sin in general, and of willful defiance of God in particular, are demonstrated. God is unchanging, and is very much still in the business of meting out punishment for those nations that persist in sinful ways, and of chastising His elect people (Christians) when they fall into sin. Because of this, I fear for the future of America.

**17 Then to Adam He said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat from it';
Cursed is the ground because of you;**

**In toil you will eat of it
All the days of your life.
18"Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you;
And you will eat the plants of the field;
19By the sweat of your face
You will eat bread,
Till you return to the ground,
Because from it you were taken;
For you are dust,
And to dust you shall return." (Genesis 3:17-19)**

**6FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES,
AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES." (Hebrews 12:6)**

The Proper Response to the Outpouring of God's Wrath, and How God Receives Such a Response

*14Consecrate a fast,
Proclaim a solemn assembly;
Gather the elders
And all the inhabitants of the land
To the house of the LORD your God,
And cry out to the LORD.
15Alas for the day!
For the day of the LORD is near,
And it will come as destruction from the Almighty.
16Has not food been cut off before our eyes,
Gladness and joy from the house of our God?
17The seeds shrivel under their clods;
The storehouses are desolate,
The barns are torn down,
For the grain is dried up.
18How the beasts groan!
The herds of cattle wander aimlessly
Because there is no pasture for them;
Even the flocks of sheep suffer.
19To You, O LORD, I cry;
For fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness
And the flame has burned up all the trees of the field.
20Even the beasts of the field pant for You;
For the water brooks are dried up
And fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness. (Joel 1:14-20)*

*12"Yet even now," declares the LORD,
"Return to Me with all your heart,
And with fasting, weeping and mourning;
13And rend your heart and not your garments "
Now return to the LORD your God,
For He is gracious and compassionate,
Slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness
And relenting of evil.
14Who knows whether He will not turn and relent
And leave a blessing behind Him,
Even a grain offering and a drink offering
For the LORD your God?
15Blow a trumpet in Zion,
Consecrate a fast, proclaim a solemn assembly,
16Gather the people, sanctify the congregation,
Assemble the elders,
Gather the children and the nursing infants
Let the bridegroom come out of his room
And the bride out of her bridal chamber.*

*17Let the priests, the LORD'S ministers,
Weep between the porch and the altar,
And let them say, "Spare Your people, O LORD,
And do not make Your inheritance a reproach,
A byword among the nations
Why should they among the peoples say,
"Where is their God?" (Joel 2:12-17)*

Here the LORD indicates the proper response to an outpouring of His wrath: we are to respond not only by outward remorse (we are to *rend [our hearts] and not [our] garments*), but by real, true, Biblical repentance. On an individual basis, this is how we are saved. The Gospel is essentially this: "Cry to God for mercy, confess Him as Lord and God, and He will grant mercy, faith, and life."

38Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38)

12For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him; 13for "WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED." (Romans 10:12-13)

God also calls for repentance on a national level. The Jews were called upon repeatedly to do this, though perhaps the most dramatic instance of this in Scripture occurred not in Israel, but in Assyria, when Jonah preached to the people of Nineveh and they repented and were spared. This is the type of repentance required of us if America is to be spared the fate of so many sinful nations that preceded us.

13"If I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or if I command the locust to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among My people, 14and My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land. (2 Chronicles 7:13-14)

4Then Jonah began to go through the city one day's walk; and he cried out and said, "Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown." 5Then the people of Nineveh believed in God; and they called a fast and put on sackcloth from the greatest to the least of them. 6When the word reached the king of Nineveh, he arose from his throne, laid aside his robe from him, covered himself with sackcloth and sat on the ashes. 7He issued a proclamation and it said, "In Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles: Do not let man, beast, herd, or flock taste a thing. Do not let them eat or drink water. 8"But both man and beast must be covered with sackcloth; and let men call on God earnestly that each may turn from his wicked way and from the violence which is in his hands. 9"Who knows, God may turn and relent and withdraw His burning anger so that we will not perish." 10When God saw their deeds, that they turned from their wicked way, then God relented concerning the calamity which He had declared He would bring upon them. And He did not do it. (Jonah 3:4-10)

*18Then the LORD will be zealous for His land
And will have pity on His people.
19The LORD will answer and say to His people,
"Behold, I am going to send you grain, new wine and oil,
And you will be satisfied in full with them;
And I will never again make you a reproach among the nations.
20"But I will remove the northern army far from you,
And I will drive it into a parched and desolate land,
And its vanguard into the eastern sea,
And its rear guard into the western sea
And its stench will arise and its foul smell will come up,
For it has done great things."
21Do not fear, O land, rejoice and be glad,
For the LORD has done great things.
22Do not fear, beasts of the field,
For the pastures of the wilderness have turned green,
For the tree has borne its fruit,
The fig tree and the vine have yielded in full.
23So rejoice, O sons of Zion,
And be glad in the LORD your God;
For He has given you the early rain for your vindication
And He has poured down for you the rain,
The early and latter rain as before.*

24*The threshing floors will be full of grain,
And the vats will overflow with the new wine and oil.*
25*"Then I will make up to you for the years
That the swarming locust has eaten,
The creeping locust, the stripping locust and the gnawing locust,
My great army which I sent among you.*
26*"You will have plenty to eat and be satisfied
And praise the name of the LORD your God,
Who has dealt wondrously with you;
Then My people will never be put to shame.*
27*"Thus you will know that I am in the midst of Israel,
And that I am the LORD your God,
And there is no other;
And My people will never be put to shame. (Joel 2:18-27)*

The result of true repentance is always forgiveness. We can rejoice in the fact that when we respond to sin with confession and repentance, we can expect forgiveness, and the resumption of God's blessing and favor.

9If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)

19And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:19)

The Day of the LORD, and the Outpouring of His Spirit

28*"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.*
29*"Even on the male and female servants
I will pour out My Spirit in those days.*
30*"I will display wonders in the sky and on the earth,
Blood, fire and columns of smoke.*
31*"The sun will be turned into darkness
And the moon into blood
Before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes.*
32*"And it will come about that whoever calls on the name of the LORD
Will be delivered;
For on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem
There will be those who escape,
As the LORD has said,
Even among the survivors whom the LORD calls. (Joel 2:28-32)*

This prophecy, containing the promise of the Holy Spirit and salvation was fulfilled at least in part on the Day of Pentecost, when **tongues of fire** appeared upon the Apostles, they preached powerfully, and 3,000 people were saved.

1When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. 2And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. 4And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance. 5Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men from every nation under heaven. 6And when this sound occurred, the crowd came together, and were bewildered because each one of them was hearing them speak in his own language. 7They were amazed and astonished, saying, "Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans? 8" And how is it that we each hear them in our own language to which we were born? 9" Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, 11Cretans and Arabs--we hear them in our own tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God." 12And they all continued in amazement and great perplexity, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" 13But others were mocking and saying, "They are full of sweet wine."

14But Peter, taking his stand with the eleven, raised his voice and declared to them: "Men of Judea and all you who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you and give heed to my words. **15**"For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only the third hour of the day; **16**but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel:

17'AND IT SHALL BE IN THE LAST DAYS,' God says,

**'THAT I WILL POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT ON ALL MANKIND;
AND YOUR SONS AND YOUR DAUGHTERS SHALL PROPHECY,
AND YOUR YOUNG MEN SHALL SEE VISIONS,
AND YOUR OLD MEN SHALL DREAM DREAMS;**

18EVEN ON MY BONDSLAVES, BOTH MEN AND WOMEN,

I WILL IN THOSE DAYS POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT

And they shall prophesy.

19'AND I WILL GRANT WONDERS IN THE SKY ABOVE

AND SIGNS ON THE EARTH BELOW,

BLOOD, AND FIRE, AND VAPOR OF SMOKE.

20'THE SUN WILL BE TURNED INTO DARKNESS

AND THE MOON INTO BLOOD,

BEFORE THE GREAT AND GLORIOUS DAY OF THE LORD SHALL COME.

21'AND IT SHALL BE THAT EVERYONE WHO CALLS ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED.' (Acts 2:1-21)

Although the part about *wonders in the sky and on the earth*, etc. may indicate the Second Coming of Christ, it is possible that this refers to the events surrounding the Crucifixion. Since Peter seemed to indicate that this prophecy had been entirely fulfilled, perhaps *the great and awesome day of the LORD* refers to the time when Christ purchased and obtained salvation for all that believe, and not only to the consummation of His reign at the end of the age.

45Now from the sixth hour darkness fell upon all the land until the ninth hour. **46**About the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "ELI, ELI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?" that is, "MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?" **47**And some of those who were standing there, when they heard it, began saying, "This man is calling for Elijah."

48Immediately one of them ran, and taking a sponge, he filled it with sour wine and put it on a reed, and gave Him a drink.

49But the rest of them said, "Let us see whether Elijah will come to save Him." **50**And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. **51**And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth shook and the rocks were split. **52**The tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; **53**and coming out of the tombs after His resurrection they entered the holy city and appeared to many. (Matthew 27:45-53)

God Will Judge the Nations

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. (Joel 3:1-17)

God is GOD, and he sets up nations and brings them down for the fulfillment of His good purposes. In the case of Israel, he repeatedly rose up pagan nations to use in chastising them, but ultimately these nations, which did not acknowledge the LORD as God, were destroyed. At the end of days, God will bring all that deny Him (notice that He calls them to destruction, and they come—such is His power) to judgment and punish them.

11And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. 12His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself. 13He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. 14And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. 15From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. 16And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS." 17Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and he cried out with a loud voice, saying to all the birds which fly in midheaven, "Come, assemble for the great supper of God, 18so that you may eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of commanders and the flesh of mighty men and the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them and the flesh of all men, both free men and slaves, and small and great." 19And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies assembled to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. 20And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone. 21And the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh. (Revelation 19:11-21)

The Blessing of God's People

18And 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.
 19Egypt 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.

20But Judah will be inhabited forever
And Jerusalem for all generations.
21And I will avenge their blood which I have not avenged,
For the LORD dwells in Zion. (Joel 3:18-21)

After the Judgment, God's "Spiritual Israel," those called and elected to salvation in Jesus Christ, will dwell forever in the "New Jerusalem." Thank God that all that call upon Him for salvation will inhabit this glorious Kingdom!

1Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. 2And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. 3And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, 4and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away." 5And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new " And He said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true." 6Then He said to me, "It is done I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost. 7"He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son. 8"But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." 9Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke with me, saying, "Come here, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." 10And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, 11having the glory of God Her brilliance was like a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper. 12It had a great and high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and names were written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel. 13There were three gates on the east and three gates on the north and three gates on the south and three gates on the west. 14And the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. 15The one who spoke with me had a gold measuring rod to measure the city, and its gates and its wall. 16The city is laid out as a square, and its length is as great as the width; and he measured the city with the rod, fifteen hundred miles; its length and width and height are equal. 17And he measured its wall, seventy-two yards, according to human measurements, which are also angelic measurements. 18The material of the wall was jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass. 19The foundation stones of the city wall were adorned with every kind of precious stone The first foundation stone was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald; 20the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoprasi; the eleventh, jacinth; the twelfth, amethyst. 21 And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one of the gates was a single pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass. 22I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. 23And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb. 24The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. 25In the daytime (for there will be no night there) its gates will never be closed; 26and they will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it; 27and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life. (Revelation 21:1-27)