

• *The Day of the Lord continued*

Joel chapter 3 is a vision of the judgements of God in the history of the world. The people had experienced the judgement of God in a plague of locusts, but they had turned to the Lord and so had experienced His blessing. These events led Joel to talk about the Day of the Lord and the end of the world.

• *Jehoshaphat – a symbolic valley*

Because the chapter is a vision, it has a lot of symbolic language. We read that God enters into judgement and brings the nations down to the 'valley of Jehoshaphat' ¹. There is actually no place called the 'valley of Jehoshaphat'. The word 'Jehoshaphat' means 'the Lord judges'. It is a symbolic valley, a visionary valley. One must not try to read into it particular dates and places. It is a vision of all that God will do. It is a vision of what happens as the Day of the Lord approaches, and the Day of the Lord itself. God judges sins even before the final judgement day. Some of the sins referred to are very local sins. 'Tyre' and 'Sidon' ² were nearby localities in the days of Joel. They were Philistine ports involved in slave-trading where Israelites were being sold as slaves. Joel sees these places being judged. It is a principle of prophecy that the prophets see all that God will do all in one glimpse. They see everything that God will do, all mixed up together.

What is the Day of the Lord? In this vision

(1) **The Day of the Lord is a day when the people of God are restored.**

1. A Day when the people of God are restored

“For behold in those days and in that time, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem...” (3:1)

God works in such a way that He restores His people. We may face terrible opposition. The church may sink to a low level. God may allow enemies to overrun His people. But the vision of the future was that God would restore the fortunes of His people. When God judges, His people are restored. When God deals with sin, at the same time He rescues His people. We should not take this politically. Before Jesus God's people were a nation – Israel. When Jesus came there was a change in the structure of God's people. 'The kingdom of God... will be given to a people who will produce its fruit' ¹. Jerusalem was destroyed. 'Israel' does not refer just to a political entity in the modern world. 'They are not all Israel who are descended from Israel', says Romans 9:6.

• *God's Kingdom people*

¹ Matthew 21:43

Judgement Day is a day when God's people are restored. God has a way of stepping into the history of the world and restoring the fortunes of His people.

(2) **God takes the initiative in judging the nations.**

2. A Day when takes the initiative in judging the nations

“I will gather all the nations and I will bring them down to the valley of Jehoshaphat. And I will enter into judgement with them there...” (3:2)

¹ 3:2

² 3:4

This is a vision of all that God would do in the judgement of the world, beginning with the sins of Tyre and Sidon and going on to the end of the world. God takes the initiative. God is the Lord of history and at any time He can bring the nations into a valley of judgement. He can affect history. He initiates the events ('I will gather...'). It often looks as though the nations are out of control. But God is the Lord of history. He is there and He can bring nations down into the valley of Jehoshaphat. He takes the initiative when He feels like it.

3. A Day when sin against God's people is judged

(3) **Notice what it is that gets judged.** It is sin against God's people. Joel says God comes in judgement

*"...on behalf of My people, Israel My inheritance,
whom they scattered among the nations, and
shared out My land. (3:2)
They cast lots for My people.
They traded a boy for a harlot,
and sold a girl for wine that they might drink." (3:3)*

• Grabbing land

• Slavery

God protects His people, and judges sins against His people. Two things are mentioned. (i) Grabbing land. 'Concerning my inheritance' refers to the land. Philistia and other nations took the inheritance. They would do terrible things to get hold of territory. (ii) Slavery. 'They cast lots for My people'. They would gamble over the slaves. They would sell a boy to use the money. They would sell a girl and use the money for getting wine. The sin was the sin of mistreating people. Certain cities were being used: Tyre ... Sidon . . . Philistia. These were coastal cities where the slaves were sold. These cities will be judged, and the sins will be recompensed. The underlying sin is that of exploiting people. They would capture someone and care nothing of how that person felt. Such sins will be on the agenda in God's judgement. Anyone who treats a person as a thing, as unimportant, as insignificant, is vexing God. When people are exploited, where the poor are mistreated, God gets angry.

4. Behind these sins is resentment against God

(4) **Back behind these sins is resentment against God.**

*"And what are you to Me, O Tyre and Sidon and all the regions of Philistia?
Are you repaying Me for something I have done? If you are paying Me back, I will swiftly and speedily repay you for what you have done." (3:4)*

The Philistines would capture Israelites. Are they doing it because they hate the people of God? Or is it that they are hostile to the God of the Bible? Often behind the ill-treatment that the people of God receive there is hatred of God Himself. 'The servant is not greater than his master'. They treated Jesus badly; they will do the same to His people. You are likely to receive the same treatment as Jesus received. In Old Testament times the nations surrounding Israel hated the God of Israel. The natural man does not like the God of the Bible. Human nature does not submit to God's law and cannot please God. Joel's vision sees that one day all nations will be in this valley of judgement and all of this sin is dealt with.

5. The judgements are very appropriate

(5) The judgements are very appropriate.

“For you took My silver and My gold and carried off My beautiful treasures to your temples.” (3:5)

This seems to be a reference to some invasion of the treasures of Jerusalem.

“You sold the people of Judah and the people of Jerusalem to the Greeks, in order to remove them far from their territory. (3:6)

See, I am going to rouse them out of the places to which you sold them, and I will return on your own heads what you have done. (3:7)

I will sell your sons and daughters to the people of Judah, and they will sell them to the Sabeans, a nation far away”. The LORD has spoken.’ (3:8)

What the enemies of God had done will come back to them. The judgement will be very appropriate. The Philistines will receive back the treatment they gave out to others. God is able to judge in a very appropriate way. They experience the very things they have done. They sold Jewish people to the ‘Greeks’ (the Ionian colonies around the Aegean Sea). In the fourth century they themselves became slaves.

• Salvation for everyone who called on the name of the Lord – Jesus the fulfilment

We must remember Joel 2:32 when Joel reminded us that in the middle of the judgements everyone who called upon the name of the LORD would be saved. There is salvation in the midst of the judgements of God. Jesus is the fulfilment of this prophecy.

	<p>Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His <i>Preaching Through The Bible (PTTB)</i> books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.</p>	
<p><i>These specially reformatted chapters “Slices of Bread” produced by Sovereign World Trust are available in three categories as set out below</i></p>		
<p>Slices for the Nations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For pastors, libraries and colleges in those parts of the world where resources are scarce and unaffordable In the fullness of time the whole series will be made available free of charge Weekly emailings of 3 - 4 Slices or available to download from the <i>Slices</i> web site 	<p>Slices for Sponsors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For those in more prosperous circumstances who can afford to contribute to the development of this material and its distribution with a small monthly donation The same material as Slices for the Nations Weekly emailings of 3 - 4 Slices or by download from the <i>Slices</i> web site 	<p>Slices for Everyone / Slice of the Week</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For those who wish to sample the material or dip into it from time to time, a proportion of the PTTB series is available free of charge Slices for Everyone (as a download) or Slice of the Week (attached to a weekly email) The remainder of the PTTB material is available to Sponsors and those eligible to receive Slices for the Nations
<p>To subscribe please contact: slicesofbread@sovereignworldtrust.org.uk stating which category fits your situation. Further details are at www.slices.org.uk Details of the availability of <i>Preaching Through The Bible</i> books and how they may be purchased can be found on www.ibtr.org.uk</p>		