

At the end of history..

Joel chapter 3 is a vision of all the judgements of history beginning with Joel's own day ^{☞1} but also going on to the end of history. Tyre and Sidon sold Israelites into slavery; they came from Joel's own times.

^{☞1} see 3:4,6

1. The judgements of God often come in the form of upheavals among the nations

1. The judgements of God often come in the form of upheavals among the nations. It may be in the form of war or political crisis of some kind.

'Proclaim this among the nations:

Prepare for war!

Rouse the warriors!

Let all the fighting men draw near and attack. (3:9)

Beat your ploughshares into swords

and your pruning hooks into spears.

Let the weakling say,

"I am strong!"

(3:10)

Come quickly, all you nations from every side, and assemble there.

Bring down your warriors, O LORD!' (3:11)

• Wars

• **God controls everything that happens among the nations of the world**

Here is a summons to the nations to get ready for war. Often the judgements of God come in this form. Behind these events God is the Lord of history. He controls everything that happens among the nations of the world. Often He allows things to happen in such a way that it brings judgements into the nations.

"Let the nations be roused:

let them advance into the Valley of Jehoshaphat, for there I will sit

to judge all the nations on every side." (3:12)

A judge always 'sits' in a courtroom. We have here a picture of God's sitting in judgement and showing His hatred of sin. Every judgement that takes place in history gives a little foretaste of the final outpouring of God's wrath at the end of the world.

God is a holy God. He hates sin. The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all ungodliness. Jesus had to come because the wrath of God is being revealed in history against all sin.

2. The judgements of God come when sin has reached its fullness.

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"Swing the sickle, for the harvest is ripe."

(3:13)

• Like a ripening crop

God's judgement comes when evil has been allowed to come to a head. (Genesis 15:16 says 'The sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure'.) It is like a crop growing. When sin is full-grown then God steps in some way. This is how the judgements of God work in history.

"Come, trample the grapes, for the winepress is full and the vats overflow – so great is wickedness!"

(3:13)

3. The judgements of God are very terrible.

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*'Multitudes, multitudes
in the valley of [God's] decision!'* (3:14)

The 'valley of decision' is the envisaged valley of God's judgement against sin. Joel refers to the great numbers that are involved. In this vision he sees that eventually even the universe is included.

*'For the day of the LORD is near
in the valley of [God's] decision. (3:14)
The sun and the moon will be darkened,
and the stars no longer shine.'* (3:15)

• **Final judgement involves the universe**

When God finally judges even the universe is involved. The chapter is a vision of all the judgements of God. He refers to Tyre and Sidon but also to the end of the world.

*'The LORD will roar from Zion
and thunder from Jerusalem;
the earth and the sky will tremble.'* (3:16)

The picture is that of a lion ('The LORD will roar...'). God hates sin. He is like a roaring lion against sin.

4. In the midst of the judgement there is salvation.

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*'But the LORD will be a refuge for His people,
a stronghold for the people of Israel.'* (3:16)

God always provides salvation in the midst of judgement. When His wrath is roaring against sin, He provides a provision for rescue. There was an ark in the midst of the flood. There were rescuing angels at the time of the judgement of Sodom and Gomorrah. There was the passover lamb when Egypt was judged. So here also in the midst of judgement a salvation is provided. Jesus is the salvation in the midst of judgement. Even now as judgements fall among the nations, there is a saviour in the midst. In the Old Testament they looked forward to salvation amidst judgement. The refuge is for 'His people' – those who will turn around in faith.

• **A saviour for those who will turn around in faith**

*"Then you will know that I,
the LORD your God,
dwell in Zion, My holy hill;
never again will strangers invade her. (3:17)
In that day the mountains will drip new wine,
and the hills will flow with milk;
all the ravines of Judah will run with water.
A fountain will flow out of the LORD's house
and will water the valley of acacias. (3:18)
But Egypt will be desolate,
Edom a desert waste,
because of violence done to the people of Judah,
in whose land they shed innocent blood.'" (3:19)*

• **A new world**

These verses describe God's coming salvation. There comes a new world ('the mountains drip new wine'). This is God's final salvation.

• **A new Jerusalem**

There comes into being a new Jerusalem ('Zion, My holy hill'). We are not to think of this in political terms. It comes in Old Testament language but it refers to a 'Jerusalem' in which there is no sin. It cannot be touched by sinful people outside of God's people ('never again will strangers invade her'). The New Testament tells us of the 'new Jerusalem' where all believers are, and there is no sin.

• **A new world**

It includes physical restoration. 'In that day the mountains will drip new wine, and the hills will flow with milk; all the ravines of Judah will run with water'. The ultimate hope is a new earth ^{□1}. After God's final judgement day the old world is burned up and there comes into being a new world altogether, in which there is righteousness. The very territory of the universe is restored.

□1 2 Peter 3:13

• **A flourishing sinless world**

'A fountain will flow out of the LORD's house; and will water the valley of acacias'. Earlier we had the valley of Jehoshaphat – the valley of judgement. Now it is the valley of acacias – a beautiful tree. This is a picture of a flourishing world in which sin has been dealt with.

• **All enemies put down**

God's enemies are judged. Egypt will be a desolation, Edom a desert waste. 'Edom' stands for God's enemies. Joel thinks in terms of his own day. He thinks of the equivalent of Edom in the final judgement day. It must be taken spiritually. The ultimate vision is that all enemies are put down. God is eternally with His people. Judgement comes 'because of violence done to God's people' and then God is with His people. All of their sins are forgiven.

• **God dwelling with His people**

"Judah will be inhabited for ever and Jerusalem through all generations. (3:20) Their bloodguilt, which I have not pardoned, I will pardon." The LORD dwells in Zion! (3:21)

In Old Testament days this was true of the earthly Jerusalem. In the final state, the Zion is a heavenly Zion, God dwelling with His people for ever.

• **Jesus – Lord among his people forever**

So this vision is a vision of all that God will do in judgement beginning with Joel's day and going on till the end of the world. It all takes place through Jesus. It was Jesus who was the salvation in Jerusalem. It is Jesus who will be the **LORD** dwelling among His people for ever!

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