

# Outline of the book of Joel

## Introduction:

Not much is known about Joel other than he is the son of Pethuel. Dating the book of Joel depends upon one's interpretation of God's "*great army*" of locust, canker-worms, caterpillars, and the palmer-worm (cf. Joel 2:25). If this "*great army*" is the Babylonians, then the date would likely be during a similar time of Jeremiah (i.e., 605 to 586 BC). There are hints that the Babylonians may be under consideration in the book itself. Joel refers to God's "*great army*" as a "*nation*" (Joel 1:6) and then again as the "*northern army*" (Joel 2:20). We know that the Babylonian nation is often referred to as the army from the "north" in the writings of the Major Prophets (cf. Jer. 10:22). Then again, if Joel is speaking about a literal insect attack, there is virtually no telling when the book was written (Joel 1:7). Many have concluded, with little evidence, that the book was written as early as 830 BC. We do know that Joel belongs among the books of the Bible. The apostle Peter quotes from Joel 2:28-32 at Acts 2:17ff. The apostle Paul quotes from Joel 2:32 at Romans 10:13. Said quotations from the apostles of Jesus Christ indicate the divine origin of Joel's work.

## Gloomy Days for God's People

Joel chapters 1:1 through 2:11 paint a vivid picture of doom and gloom upon the land and inhabitants of Palestine. God's "*great army*" of locust, canker-worm, caterpillar, and the palmer-worm (whether literal or figurative) cause widespread desolation upon the land. This "*great army*" is well organized and determined to achieve its purpose of desolating the land (cf. Joel 2:4-11). The destruction caused by this army is seen in that grazing fields, grain, new wine, oil, fig, pomegranate, palm, apple, "*and even all the trees of the field are withered*" (Joel 1:8-12). Joel depicts these days as "*darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness...*" (Joel 2:2). A land that has been desolated of all vegetation will surely cause famine to settle in among the inhabitants (Joel 1:15). Joy and laughter is no where to be found (Joel 1:15). Israel faces dark, gloomy, and depressing days. Joel writes, "*for joy is withered away from the sons of men*" (Joel 1:12b).

## The Cause for all the Doom and Gloom

Joel writes, "*turn ye unto me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: and rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto Jehovah your God;*" (Joel 2:12). The prophet's request, by inspiration, for God's people to repent suggests that the cause of all this doom and gloom is their sin. The lesson we learn is no different that that which we learn when studying virtually every book in God's word. That lesson is that God wants man to serve Him not because it is what he has always done, to get gain, or to mechanically worship God without a real interest, but rather God wants man to serve Him because this is truly one's desire to do so. I can certainly "*rend the garments*" in an outward show of humility and sorrow over what has been revealed as wrong in my life, yet no man may see the inward callous heart of apathy. God thereby desires that the man or woman that would serve Him should be torn at heart over his violations of His will. Samuel had instructed Saul to have such a heart at I Samuel 15:22-23. David expressed such true sorrow as recorded in Psalms 51. The prophet Isaiah prescribed such a heart at Isaiah 57:15 and 66:1-2. The apostle Paul spoke of such a humble hearted disposition at II Corinthians 7:10.

## The Blessings and Future Joy for those who Humble themselves to God

Joel delivers a message of hope and happiness to the downtrodden and depressed people who have been devastated and desolated by the northern army. There will come a great day of blessings. God will pour out His Holy Spirit upon men and women, young and old, slave and free (Joel 2:28-29). Those immersed in the Holy Spirit will deliver a soul-saving message through prophesy, dreams, and visions. Peter quotes from these verses in Joel at Acts 2:17-21. Those who recognize the words of revelation as divine help shall "*call*" upon the name of Jehovah God by invoking and appealing to the Lord for help (Joel 2:32). All of humanity needs help in areas of emotional strain, temptation, persecutions, and most importantly the forgiveness of one's sins. Those who so

call upon the name of the Lord shall indeed be saved (Acts 2:21). Joel defines said saved individuals as people “*whom Jehovah doth call*” (Joel 2:32b). While the gospel calls all to obtain salvation, not all hear, believe, and receive it (cf. II Thess. 2:13-14). Those who reject God’s message will be figuratively placed in a wine vat and treaded down by God’s judgments of condemnation (Joel 3:12-13). Those who gladly receive God’s instructions will be filled to complete satisfaction with the Spirit-filled word of God (Joel 3:18; Eph. 3:19; 5:18; Col. 1:9). There will be unity among baptized believers who are forgiven of their sins, and they shall be clean and separate from the ungodly (Joel 3:17, 20). The prophecy of Joel has been fulfilled. Jesus has shed his blood upon the cross that man may be forgiven of his sins (Col. 1:20-22). Those who call upon the name of God today will never be disappointed (cf. Ps. 3:1ff; Acts 2:21; 9:14, 21; 22:16; Rom. 10:12-13; I Cor. 1:2; II Tim. 2:22).

## Outline of Joel

- I. **Joel paints a Picture of Devastation, Desolation, and Depression among the remaining Inhabitants of His Land (1 all):**
  - A. *“The word of Jehovah that came to Joel the son of Pethuel. Hear this, ye old men, and give ear, all ye inhabitants of the land. Hath this been in your days, or in the days of your fathers? Tell ye your children of it, and let your children tell their children, and their children another generation. That which the palmer-worm hath left hath the locust eaten; and that which the locust hath left hath the canker-worm eaten; and that which the canker-worm hath left hath the caterpillar eaten”* (1:1-4).
    1. Joel sets the tone for his prophetic words by describing the current state of the people of God’s land. A great plague of worm, locust, canker-worm, and caterpillar has laid waste the land and the people’s moral.
    2. We have three possible interpretation of the source of destruction. First, the insects could very well be literal (cf. Ezek. 31:14). Secondly, the insects could be figurative; i.e., the Babylonians (cf. Jer. 5:14-18). Lastly, it could be that Joel intends for his listeners to gain a picture of the great overall destruction of Israel and Judah due to their sins. Said destruction will come of sword, famine, and pestilence (cf. Jer. 14:12) (see discussion in the introduction).
    3. What ever the interpretation the outcome is the same. Such widespread devastation has left the land uninhabitable.
  - B. *“Awake, ye drunkards, and weep; and wail, all ye drinkers of wine, because of the sweet wine; for it is cut off from your mouth. For a nation is come up upon my land, strong, and without number; his teeth are the teeth of a lion, and he hath the jawteeth of a lioness. He hath laid my vine waste, and barked my fig-tree: he hath made it clean bare, and cast it away; the branches thereof are made white”* (1:5-7).
    1. Jeremiah speaks of the Babylonian Empire as a devouring lion saying, *“The lion is come up from his thicket, and the destroyer of the Gentiles is on his way; he is gone forth from his place to make thy land desolate; and thy cities shall be laid waste, without an inhabitant”* (Jer. 4:7).
    2. The wording of Joel 1:5-7 would lead one to consider a literal interpretation of the insects; however, the deeper one goes into a study of Joel and the Major Prophets it may not be so clear. Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel had much to say about the destroying armies of Assyria and Babylon saying that Judah would be destroyed by sword, famine, and pestilence. Could it be that the fiery destruction of the land and the striping of the trees could be a figurative look at the devastation caused by Babylon?
    3. The joy of fresh squeezed grape juice (sweet wine) and the more intoxicating wines are gone from the people. Let those addicted to intoxicants weep and wail because it is all gone. With such calamity before them it would seem as though they would “*awake*” out of their drunken stupor and recognize that God was punishing them for their rebellious spirit.
  - C. *“Lament like a virgin girded with sackcloth for the husband of her youth. The meal-offering and the drink-offering are cut off from the house of Jehovah; the priests, Jehovah’s ministers, mourn. The field is laid waste, and the land mourns; for the grain is destroyed, the new wine is dried up, the oil*

*languishes. Be confounded, O ye husbandmen, wail, O ye vinedressers, for the wheat and for the barley; for the harvest of the field is perished. The vine is withered, and the fig-tree languisheth; the pomegranate-tree, the palm-tree also, and the apple-tree, even all the trees of the field are withered: for joy is withered away from the sons of men” (1:8-12).*

1. A very dark and gloomy picture is depicted in the devastation of the vegetation. The sight of all the destroyed trees is enough to make the people lament and mourn over their loss.
  2. The happiness that comes with being recipients of God’s blessings have left the people of God. All hope seems to be lost and so the people are left to pine away in their sorrows over the devastation that they are now experiencing. Jeremiah wrote a lamentation about the loss of Judah’s joy saying, *“The joy of our heart is ceased; our dance is turned into mourning”* (Lam. 5:15; cf. also Isa. 16:10; 24:8; Jer. 48:33).
- D. *“Gird yourselves with sackcloth, and lament, ye priests; wail, ye ministers of the altar; come, lie all night in sackcloth, ye ministers of my God: for the meal-offering and the drink-offering are withholden from the house of your God. Sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly, gather the old men and all the inhabitants of the land unto the house of Jehovah your God, and cry unto Jehovah”* (1:13-14).
1. This was no time for joy or laughter. The land has been desolated and the crops are gone. Starvation settles in and with this comes pestilence and death. Deep dark days of sorrow as each watches their family members and friends die.
  2. With such devastation of the vegetation comes a lack of things to sacrifice unto the Lord. The priests were left mourning in sackcloth because they had nothing wherewith to do their work at the altar.
  3. Joel suggests that the priests call an assembly of the survivors that they may gather at the Lord’s temple fasting and praying.
- E. *“Alas for the day! For the day of Jehovah is at hand, and as destruction from the Almighty shall it come. Is not the food cut off before our eyes, yea, joy and gladness from the house of our God? The seeds rot under their clods; the garners are laid desolate, the barns are broken down; for the grain is withered. How do the beasts groan! The herds of cattle are perplexed, because they have no pature; yea, the flocks of sheep are made desolate”* (1:15-18).
1. Joel now tells us that the source of all this devastation to the land is *“the Almighty.”*
  2. Such widespread desolation to the land has not only affected man but beasts as well. The cattle and sheep have no land to graze. Fire has devoured the fields, insects have denuded all living vegetation, and the Babylonians have devoured many with sword. Starvation and disease settle in and the remaining peoples and beasts cry aloud in misery.
- F. *“O Jehovah, to thee do I cry; for the fire hath devoured the pastures of the wilderness, and the flame hath burned all the trees of the field. Yea, the beasts of the field pant unto thee; for the water brooks are dried up, and the fire hath devoured the pastures of the wilderness”* (1:19-20).
1. Under the strain of hunger and disease Joel cries out unto Jehovah God for relief.
  2. There is; however, no where to run to get relief. There is no water and neither is their grazing grass for the animals. All living things have died or are in the process of dying. The blackness of death is about the land and leaves its inhabitants, along with all those who pass by, in a state of shock (Jer. 18:16; 19:8).

## Chapter 2

### I. A Description of Jehovah’s Destructive Army (2:1-11):

- A. *“Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain; let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of Jehovah cometh, for it is nigh at hand; a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, as the dawn spread upon the mountains; a great people and a strong; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after them, even to the years of many generations”* (2:1-2).

1. Joel calls upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem to sound the alarm in Jerusalem. The “*day of Jehovah cometh.*” The nearness of the event is depicted in the prophet’s instructions to sound the alarm now. The watchers (God’s prophets) upon the wall see the devastation coming and thereby they sound and warn the inhabitants of the city.
  2. Joel uses dramatic language that illustrates to the inhabitants of the land that they are about to experience the greatest darkness and gloomy state that has ever been experienced by man. Such a state of doom will cause the joyous city to wail in pain and agony.
- B.** “*A fire devoureth before them; and behind them a flame burns: the land is as the Garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness; yea, and none hath escaped them*” (2:3).
1. The great insect plague, Babylonian army, or both are depicted as a devouring fire destroying everything in their path.
  2. Those areas before them that resemble the Garden of Eden for beauty are burned and stripped of vegetation to look like a place of desolation. Smoke and ashes are behind them and they spare no one.
  3. Let us recall that the prophet Jeremiah wrote, “*For I have set my face upon this city for evil, and not for good, saith Jehovah: it shall be given into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire*” (Jer. 21:10).
- C.** “*The appearance of them is as the appearance of horses; and as horsemen, so do they run. Like the noise of chariots on the tops of the mountains do they leap, like the noise of a flame of fire that devours the stubble, as a strong people set in battle array. At their presence the peoples are in anguish; all faces are waxed pale. They run like mighty men; they climb the wall like men of war; and they march every one on his ways, and they break not their ranks. Neither doth one thrust another; they march every one in his path; and they burnst through the weapons, and break not off their course*” (2:4-8).
1. The alarm has been sounded. The watchmen have seen with their eyes the power and might of this foe. An army of horsemen is their appearance and their goings has the sound of many chariots and a devouring fire.
  2. When the people under attack see the army their hearts are melted and filled with anguish. The people’s faces are pale for they are sickened at the thought of what they are about to experience.
  3. The devouring army is driven by a purpose of destruction and so they do not break their ranks but rather march in astonishing order that they may achieve their goal.
- D.** “*They leap upon the city; they run upon the wall; they climb up into the houses; they enter in at the windows like a thief. The earth quakes before them; the heavens tremble; the sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining. And Jehovah utters his voice before his army; for his camp is very great; for he is strong that executeth his word; for the day of Jehovah is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?*” (2:9-11).
1. This destructive army that leaves the land and people desolated is now revealed to belong to Jehovah God. Jeremiah had warned Israel that God would fight against them due to their hardened hearts (Jer. 21:5). The Babylonians were to be God’s battle axe in His hand to destroy His rebellious people (cf. Jer. 51:20).
  2. The Lord’s destructive forces have arrived for judgment against the ungodly inhabitants of the land. The destroying army comes upon the city covering and invading it like water that invades a dry sponge by saturation.
- II. Joel Suggest that the People turn their hearts to God before its everlasting too Late (2:12-17):**
- A.** “*Yet even now, saith Jehovah, turn ye unto me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: and rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto Jehovah your God; for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness, and repenteth him of the evil. Who knoweth whether he will not turn and repent, and leave a blessing behind him, even a meal-offering and a drink-offering unto Jehovah your God?*” (2:12-14).
1. Yet even in this time of immediate danger there is yet hope. The people can avert the calamity of utter destruction if only they would turn back unto God “*with all your heart.*” God’s desire

for His people is that they would serve Him because that's what is in their heart to do rather than simply going through the mechanical motions of service.

2. Rending the garments would be a typical reaction to one who was in sorrows; however, such activity did not necessarily mean that there was true sorrow in the heart. The Lord desires Israel to “*rend your heart*” in turning back to Jehovah in repentance. The worshipper of God must truly have a broken or torn heart due to their knowledge of violating the Lord's commands. God has blessed His people with much. Shall the people of God now do works of ingratitude by living in sin? The Lord's requests thereby for His people is that they would earnestly turn to Him in repentance and purpose within their heart to follow His laws to the best of their abilities. Said condition of the heart illustrates the spirit of one who believes in the reality of God, heaven, and hell. Such an individual voluntarily places self under the authoritative commandments of God out of a sense of reverence, fear, and respect for the Almighty. People who earnestly give effort to follow God's precepts and ways are the people that God so desires to serve Him (cf. Phil. 3:13-15) (see study # 1; God's Desire for His People).
  3. Note the fact that God is depicted not only as a destroying force (cf. Joel 2:11) but also a “*gracious and merciful*” God that is “*slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness.*” It takes my rebellion to bring out the anger of God yet if I would only give effort in this life, through faith, to follow His will then He will be gracious and merciful to me when I sin against him (due to the fact that I repent and ask for forgiveness / I'm trying my best to do good).
- B. “*Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly; gather the people, sanctify the assembly, assemble the old men, gather the children, and those that suck the breasts; let the bridegroom go forth from his chamber, and the bride out of her closet. Let the priests, the ministers of Jehovah, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O Jehovah, and give not their heritage to reproach, that the nations should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the peoples, Where is their God?*” (2:15-17).
1. God often speaks through the prophets words that He would like to hear his people say (cf. Hos. 14:1ff). There will be great blessings upon the people of God the day that they blow the trumpet signaling an assembly and the priests pray a fervent prayer on their behalf.
  2. Such a state of mind will move Israel to understand that by their actions they have caused the surrounding nations to not believe that God is. How could a God of any people, so they would say, let all these horrific events occur? Neither the people of God nor the surrounding nations understood that it was the Almighty God who actually brought these calamities upon His own people. Israel had a rebellious spirit that needed correction. The rebellious attitude and consequential punishment has caused the world to say, “*Where is their God.*”

### III. The Blessings that await the repentant Sinner (2:18-27):

- A. “*Then was Jehovah jealous for his land, and had pity on his people. And Jehovah answered and said unto his people, Behold, I will send you grain, and new wine, and oil, and ye shall be satisfied therewith; and I will no more make you a reproach among the nations; but I will remove far off from you the northern army, and will drive it into a land barren and desolate, its forefront into the eastern sea; and its stench shall come up, and its ill savor shall come up, and because it hath done great things*” (2:18-20).
1. When Israel repents of her wickedness and rebellion the merciful and loving God will have pity upon them. The language is prophetic perfect meaning that the prophet speaks as though it already happened. Some of the people would indeed repent and the Lord would turn away his fierce wrath from them. The humble people would once again be blessed with grain, new wine, and oil. Their stomachs would be full and their hearts made glad by the new wine and oil.
  2. Secondly, the swarming “*northern army*” would be removed by the might of God. This verse appears to be proof that a literal locust invasion alone was not the complete meaning of Joel's prophecy at Joel 1:2-4. Some believe that the locusts are still under consideration due to the winds driving them into the various seas. It seems that one must also consider the fact that the Babylonians were often referred to as those of the “*north*” by the prophets (cf. Jer. 1:13-15; 4:6; 6:1; etc.). Jeremiah writes, “*The voice of tidings, behold, it comes, and a great commotion out*

*of the north country, to make the cities of Judah a desolation, ad dwelling-place of jackals”* (Jer. 10:22).

3. God would certainly judge the pride stricken Babylonians of the north. Their sin is revealed as pride (Jer. 50:29), covetous (Jer. 51:13), and filled with idolatry (Jer. 50:2; 51:40, 52). Though the Lord would use Babylon to punish His people they would not escape judgment due to their own wickedness. Babylon had striven against the Lord (Jer. 50:24). Babylon would be punished for her evil deeds (Jer. 25:12; 50:14; 50-51).
- B. *“Fear not, O land, be glad and rejoice; for Jehovah hath done great things. Be not afraid, ye beasts of the field; for the pastures of the wilderness do spring, for the tree beareth its fruit, the fig-tree and the vine do yield their strength. Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in Jehovah your God; for he gives you the former rain in just measure, and he causeth to come down for you the rain, the former rain and the latter rain, in the first month”* (2:21-23).
  1. Those who humbly submit to God in repentance and confession of sins shall have nothing to fear. The fig-tree and pastures for grazing would be restored.
  2. Rain would once again come to the land and all things shall return to the way they once were.
- C. *“And the floors shall be full of wheat, and vats shall overflow with new wine and oil. And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the canker-worm, and the caterpillar, and the palmer-worm, my great army which I sent among you. And ye shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, and shall praise the name of Jehovah your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you; and my people shall never be put to shame. And ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am Jehovah your God, and there is none else; and my people shall never be put to shame”* (2:24-27).
  1. The Lord would restore the land of plenty to the people that had been destroyed by the “*great army*” of God. This great army is termed, “*the locust, canker-worm, caterpillar, and the palmer-worm.*”
  2. The things restored would be food and the people’s integrity among the nations.
  3. When all the atrocities of Babylon through sword, famine, and pestilence is miraculously displaced by Jehovah God then all would know that, “*I am Jehovah your God, and there is none else.*”

#### IV. Future blessings through Christ (2:28-32):

- A. *“And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my Spirit”* (2:28-29).
  1. The “*pouring out of my Spirit*” is defined as sons, daughters, old and young men, servants and handmaids distributing divine revelation. Without partiality God would use male, female, young, old, slave, and free to distribute His message. Those immersed in the Holy Spirit to do the work of revealing divine revelation to the world did so through prophesy, dreams, and visions (see study # 2; Baptized by the Holy Spirit).
  2. The author of Hebrews tells us that God communicated His message to man in “*divers manners*” (Heb. 1:1). God **spoke directly** to some prophets (Gen. 12:1ff; Ex. 12:1ff. etc.). God “*moved*” (II Pet. 1:21) some men to speak divine truths by the **Holy Spirit**. The Holy Spirit “*entered into*” (Ezek. 2:1-2) and “*fell upon*” (Ezek. 11:5) the apostles and prophets in times past. Jesus said to his apostles, “*when the Spirit of truth is come, he shall guide you into all the truth: for he shall not speak from himself; but what things soever he shall hear, these shall he speak: and he shall declare unto you the things that are to come*” (Jn. 16:8ff). Nehemiah records, “*yet many years didst thou bear with them, and testified against them by thy Spirit through thy prophets*” (Neh. 9:30 / cf. Ezek. 1:3; 11:4-7).
  3. Others received “**visions**” and “**dreams**” from God to speak a divine message to the people (cf. Dan. 7:1; Obed. 1:1; Joel 2:28ff). These men, that were moved by God to speak, **confirmed** their words as being of divine origin by the signs and wonders they performed (cf. Mk. 16:20; Jn. 20:30-31; Acts 2:22; Heb. 2:2-4) (see study # 3; Divine Inspiration).

- B.** *“And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of Jehovah cometh”* (2:30-31).
1. The apostle Peter had quoted this section (i.e., Joel 2:28-32) in his speech to the Jews on Pentecost at Acts 2:17ff.
  2. The great miracles that the prophets and other inspired people did produced wonder within the minds of the witnesses. These days; however, would see unrepentant sinners just as there were during the days of Joel. Due to their hardened hearts God would bring blood upon them in judgment against their wicked deeds. Rome would eventually march on Jerusalem and utterly destroy it at 70 AD.
- C.** *“And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of Jehovah shall be delivered; for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those that escape, as Jehovah hath said, and among the remnant those whom Jehovah doth call”* (2:32-33).
1. The apostle Peter quotes from these verses at Acts 2:17ff and adds, *“And it shall be, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved”* (Acts 2:21). Clearly the salvation is from the consequences of sin rather than the destruction of Jerusalem. Paul was told by Ananias to be baptized so that his sins might be washed away and then he was instructed to *“call upon the name”* of Jesus. The idea of *“calling upon the name of God”* is to “invoke” or “appeal” to the name of God for spiritual help (LS 292) (see study # 4; Calling upon the Name of God).
  2. The following verses are examples of men calling upon the name of Jehovah (Ps. 3:1ff; Acts 2:21; 9:14, 21; 22:16; Rom. 10:12-13; I Cor. 1:2; II Tim. 2:22). God calls upon men and women to be saved through the gospel message (cf. II Thess. 2:13-14). Man calls upon God by appealing to Him for help in his time of needing forgiveness for sins.
  3. Note that salvation is found at *“mount Zion and in Jerusalem.”* Mount Zion is where the law of forgiveness would go forth (cf. Isa. 2:3). Those who come to Mount Zion through hearing and responding to the call of the gospel message have entered into the church of Jesus Christ (cf. Heb. 12:21ff) (see study # 5; The Kingdom of God).

## Chapter 3

- I. Judgment pronounced against all nations with emphasis on Tyre, Sidon, and Philistia (3:1-8):**
- A.** *“For, behold, in those days, and in that time, when I shall bring back the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem, I will gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat; and I will execute judgment upon them there for my people and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations: and they have parted my land, and have cast lots for my people, and have given a boy for a harlot, and sold a girl for wine, that they may drink”* (3:1-3).
1. Joel now looks to judgments against those of the world after the period of time when the Holy Spirit would be poured out upon men and women during the days of the apostles. We know that Joel is talking about the New Testament age due to the fact that Amos speaks of God *“bringing back the captivity of my people Israel”* at Amos 9:14 and this verse is quoted by James at Acts 15:14-18 in reference to the **spiritual** return of Judah and Jerusalem during the days after Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection.
  2. The term *“Jehoshaphat”* means “Jehovah judges.” This is not a literal place but rather a figurative term that indicates a time of judgment against the ungodly nations responsible for scattering and treating inhumanely the people of God.
- B.** *“Yea, and what are ye to me, O Tyre, and Sidon, and all the regions of Philistia? Will ye render me a recompense? And if ye recompense me, swiftly and speedily will I return your recompense upon your own head. Forasmuch as ye have taken my silver and my gold, and have carried into your temples my goodly precious things, and have sold the children of Judah and the children of Jerusalem unto the sons of the Grecians, that ye may remove them far from their border; behold, I will stir them up out of the place whither ye have sold them, and will return your recompense upon*

*your own head; and I will sell your sons and your daughters into the hand of the children of Judah, and they shall sell them to men of Sheba, to a nation far off: for Jehovah hath spoken it” (3:4-8).*

1. Tyre, Sidon, and the regions of Philistia have blamed God for their misfortunes and so attempt to get even with Him. The Lord will respond to their efforts with speed.
2. These places are guilty of stealing the precious metals from the temple of Jehovah God and bringing them to their own temples for their heathen worship. They have captured and sold the people of God for money to other nations. The Lord will return their cruelty by selling their sons and daughters that they too may feel the pain of sorrow as they have caused Israel.

## II. **A call to War and Identity of God’s People (3:9-21):**

A. *“Proclaim ye this among the nations; prepare war; stir up the mighty men; let all the men of war draw near, let them come up. Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruning hooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong. Haste ye, and come, all ye nations round about, and gather yourselves together: thither cause thy might ones to come down, O Jehovah. Let the nations bestir themselves, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat; for there will I sit to judge all the nations round about. Put ye in the sickle; for the harvest is ripe: come, tread ye; for the winepress is full, the vats overflow; for their wickedness is great” (3:9-13).*

1. The ungodly of all nations are called to the valley of Jehoshaphat to be judged.
2. Jehovah is depicted as the thrasher of grapes and the ungodly as the grapes awaiting to be smashed into juice. The wine vat is full and the time of their thrashing has come.

B. *“Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of Jehovah is near in the valley of decision. The sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining. And Jehovah will roar from Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but Jehovah will be a refuge unto his people, and a stronghold to the children of Israel. So shall ye know that I am Jehovah your God, dwelling in Zion my holy mountain: then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more” (3:14-17).*

1. The “*day of Jehovah*” is the day that the ungodly are judged for their wicked deeds. A time of desolation for the ungodly has come. God speaks with the voice of a roaring lion that comes from Jerusalem against the ungodly. To those; however, who seek the Lord’s protection and mercy He will provide refuge.
2. The ones suffering God’s wrath will be distinguished from those who are protected by Jehovah God. All will take note and all will know that Jehovah is God. The new spiritual Zion will house only those who call upon the name of Jehovah God for his mercy. No stranger will have a place in God’s kingdom (see study # 5).

C. *“And it shall come to pass in that day, that the mountains shall drop down sweet wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the brooks of Judah shall flow with waters; and a fountain shall come forth from the house of Jehovah, and shall water the valley of Shittim. Egypt shall be a desolation, and Edom shall be a desolate wilderness, for the violence done to the children of Judah, because they have shed innocent blood in their land. But Judah shall abide for ever, and Jerusalem from generation to generation. And I will cleanse their blood, that I have not cleansed: for Jehovah dwelleth in Zion” (3:18-21).*

1. Joel writes, “*in that day*” which connects these thoughts to the thoughts and time table above. The time is during the revelation of Jesus Christ being poured out upon sons, daughters, old and young men, slave and free.
2. The abundance of blessings listed must thereby have to do with the abundance and satisfying word of God that is revealed by revelation through the prophets, apostles, and inspired people of the New Testament age. Egypt and Edom stand in metonymy (see Obadiah study) for all the ungodly that reject the gospel message of salvation from the consequences of sin. Said individuals will always be desolate and places where there is no hope.
3. The cleansed blood is a representation of the state of all who would reign with God in His Zion kingdom (i.e., the church). The unity of forgiven sinners is realized in the blood of Christ and maintained through the gospel of Jesus Christ (i.e., truth or law of Christ). God dwells in Zion and thereby the true church of Jesus Christ is comprised of those sanctified and holy (cf. Lev. 11:44-45) (see study # 5).