

Mid Week • JOEL

INTRODUCTION

Though only 3 chapters long, the book of Joel is a powerful treatise on the *Day of the Lord*.

Because the theme of Joel centers on the Day of the Lord, it would be good for us to start with a quick look at just what the Bible refers to when it speaks of the Day of the Lord.

THE DAY OF THE LORD

The specific phrase, DAY OF THE LORD is used 24 times in the Bible;

19 times in the OT and 5 times in the NT.

Many other references refer to it as “day of the Lord’s anger” or just “that day” or “the Day”.

Combining all the various references to the Day of the Lord, we discover that it is the time when God *reveals* His sovereignty over human powers and existence.

It is the period of time in history when God moves to answer the prayer of the saints of every generation – “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

If you were to take a concordance and a cross-reference bible and look up all the various references to the Day of the Lord it would be a bit confusing as to just what is being described.

The reason is because some present the Day of the Lord as a time of tremendous *turmoil* and *trouble*.

Others present it as a time of supreme *blessing* and *comfort*.

The reason for the confusion comes when we try to see all of this fulfilled in one literal DAY!

The Hebrew word “Yom”, translated “day” can mean any period of time from the daylight hours of a single day, all the way to an *entire epoch*.

It is a general word simply meaning a *period of time*.

We use the word “day” in the same manner.

We say, “What day would you like to get together?” and mean, which day of the week.

But we also refer to the “day” in which we live, meaning the

current *age* and all of its attendant events and values. The *Day of the Lord* refers, *not* to a literal period of 24 hours, but to a period of time at the end of the current age, when God moves definitively in history to manifest His sovereignty over the affairs of earth.

It begins like labor!

While God Himself remains *hidden* to human eyes, He begins to move in the affairs of earth to confront evil.

Evil pushes *back*, and the result is that earth begins to see catastrophes and troubles that occur in increasing frequency and severity, just like birth-pangs.

Jesus describes it just that way in Matthew 24.

As the Day of the Lord *progresses*, God starts pouring out His fury and judgment on rebel man and his rebellious kingdoms.

We see these things presented in graphic detail in the middle chapters of the book of Revelation.

Finally, God's judgment is finally exhausted, and Jesus, as the conquering King, returns to Earth to establish the throne of God's Kingdom.

This is the point at which the *corner turns* from the Day of the Lord being a time of terrible trouble, to being a time of blessing and bliss.

Earth is renewed from the devastation of the Tribulation, and the entire planet becomes like the Garden of Eden.

Mankind is once more returned to the idyllic state of paradise under the benevolent yet just reign of King Jesus.

So really, as for length, the Day of the Lord commences with the Tribulation, lasts that 7 years and then on into the Millennium = 1007 years.

The prophecy of Joel centers on the Day of the Lord.

He uses two natural calamities that occurred in the southern kingdom of Judah during his lifetime as *pictures* of what the Day of the Lord will *LOOK* like.

Those two calamities were a locust plague and a severe drought.

He uses these as pictures of the kind of overwhelming distress the *Day of the Lord* will be for the whole earth.

Joel interprets these two catastrophes as evidences of God's *judgment* on the sins of Judah.

He sees God's intent that the nation would awaken to its peril and return to Him.

They are A *day* (small 'd') *of the Lord* and serve as *harbingers* of what is to come in **THE DAY OF THE LORD**.

The exact timing of Joel's prophecy is difficult because there aren't any time markers in the text as we have in *Hosea's* prophecy.

But from what we do find here, we can make a good guess that

Joel lived in the mid 9th Century AD and ministered during the reign of Joash, who came to the throne at the age of 7.

Because he *was* so young, his mentor, the high priest Jehoiada, was the real ruler of the nation at this time.

Jehoiada was a good man and led the nation in revival – but that was the problem against which Joel gave his message, as we'll see.

CHAPTER 1

- 1 The word of the LORD that came to Joel the son of Pethuel.**
- 2 Hear this, you elders, And give ear, all you inhabitants of the land! Has *anything like* this happened in your days, Or even in the days of your fathers?**
- 3 Tell your children about it, *Let* your children *tell* their children, And their children another generation.**
- 4 What the chewing locust left, the swarming locust has eaten; What the swarming locust left, the crawling locust has eaten; And what the crawling locust left, the consuming locust has eaten.**

A locust plague has recently descended on the nation and left it utterly barren of vegetation.

This was something that had not happened for many generations – and Joel here tells the people to tell their yet unborn children about it, and to tell them to tell *their* children about it, and then even the generation after that!

This was a catastrophe so severe, it was the kind of thing that would be spoken of for many years to come.

Joel uses four different words to describe four consecutive locust swarms that had devastated the land.

Living here in Southern CA, we're not familiar with locusts, so let me tell you a little about them.

Locusts are similar to grasshoppers, only larger and communal in nature.

[Show first picture]

They will live in a secluded area for many years, sometimes 70 or more years without much of anything happening to them.

Then, a colony will go through an explosive breeding period and will produce literally millions upon millions of eggs.

When the eggs hatch, they produce a miniature version of the locust without wings, a couple months later they've grown to adult size which is from 3 to 4 inches long with strong wings and legs for leaping.

Because they're communal in nature, when they move, the entire swarm goes.

[Show swarm picture]

They aren't able to fly very far, but if caught in the wind, they can travel for many miles.

Such was the case in 1899, when a locust swarm covering some 2000 square miles lifted off from Egypt and flew across the Red Sea to land in the Sinai.

They stripped entire acres completely bare in a matter of just a few minutes, and then moved on to another field.

People who witnessed the swarm said that when they flew, they darkened the sky.

Because locusts are bugs that *swarm*, when they lift to move to another area, they all move together.

What Joel describes in v. 4 is four *successive waves* of locusts.

The first swarm descended, but before the fields were completely stripped, they lifted and flew off to find new fields.

Then the second wave came in, and took up where the first had left off.

This happened in 4 waves that left the land nude of greenery.

As well, locust swarms are known to settle in one area and leave

neighboring fields alone, much like a tornado will cut a swath of destruction down one street and leave the surrounding blocks alone.

What happened here was that the first swarm came and left some vegetation behind.

Then the second, third, and fourth swarms came and finished off anything green.

You can imagine what this would do to the *economy* of an ancient nation.

This was a catastrophe beyond comprehension and left the people in a state of shock.

5 Awake, you drunkards, and weep; And wail, all you drinkers of wine, because of the new wine, For it has been cut off from your mouth.

The grapes were consumed – and there would be no wine for some time to come!

The vines have been dealt such a severe blow, there may not be a grape harvest for several years.

Now Joel turns to use the recent locust plague as a prophetic picture of something *even more devastating* to come – the invasion of a foreign power, the Assyrians.

6 For a nation has come up against My land, Strong, and without number; His teeth are the teeth of a lion, And he has the fangs of a fierce lion.

7 He has laid waste My vine, And ruined My fig tree; He has stripped it bare and thrown *it* away; Its branches are made white.

God often refers to the nation of Israel as His vine and fig tree.

Jesus likened the nation of Israel to a vineyard and cursed the fig tree on the Mt. of Olives for its failure to yield fruit in the right season just as Israel had failed to render the fruit of worship to Him as Messiah when He came.

Just as the locusts have swept through the land and with their teeth devoured all the plants, so a foreign power will come, covering the land with soldiers, and they will lay the land bare.

This is precisely what the Assyrians did.

Though they weren't able to capture Jerusalem itself, and only because of God's intervention, they *did* lay siege to and take the rest of the cities of Judah.

In fact, their siege of Lachish and the monument to it found in the ruins of Assyria stand as one of the hallmark testimonies to the accuracy of the historical portions of the Bible.

[Show slide]

8 Lament like a virgin girded with sackcloth For the husband of her youth.

Because of the locust plague already come, and the imminent invasion of a foreign power, Joel counsels the people to not just shrug things off and say, "Oh well," but to take stock of their situation and sincerely lament.

In fact, their sorrow ought to be like that of an engaged young woman whose husband is slain just before their wedding day.

Ladies, imagine you are head over heels in love and engaged to be married.

The date for your wedding has been set, the invitations have been sent, you've ordered the flowers and cake – the church has been secured and your dress is hanging in the closet.

Then, just a night or two before the big day the phone rings and it's the police calling to tell you your fiancé has just been killed in a terrible accident.

How great would your grief be?

The locust plague has been horrible, but Joel urges the people to awaken to the *even greater peril* that lies before them in the form of the Assyrians.

9 The grain offering and the drink offering Have been cut off from the house of the LORD; The priests mourn, who minister to the LORD.

10 The field is wasted, The land mourns; For the grain is ruined, The new wine is dried up, The oil fails.

11 Be ashamed, you farmers, Wail, you vinedressers, For the wheat and the barley; Because the harvest of the

field has perished.

**12 The vine has dried up, And the fig tree has withered;
The pomegranate tree, The palm tree also, And the
apple tree— All the trees of the field are withered;
Surely joy has withered away from the sons of men.**

**13 Gird yourselves and lament, you priests; Wail, you who
minister before the altar; Come, lie all night in
sackcloth, You who minister to my God; For the grain
offering and the drink offering Are withheld from the
house of your God.**

The throne of Judah was alternating at this time between good and wicked kings.

One king would fall away from God and encourage the worship of Baal and Asherah.

His successor would then lead the nation in *revival* and would go forth to purge the land of pagan idols and altars.

But the fact that there was *one revival after another* proved that there was something fundamentally wrong with the *heart of the people*.

Revival and reform presuppose there's been a period of *apostasy*.

Revival after revival indicated that the revivals that were occurring weren't *genuine* – they weren't going to the heart of the people; only their outward religious *forms*.

The king might be sincere in *his* devotion to the Lord, and because he *was* king, he possessed the power and authority to command the destruction of all evidence of paganism.

But political mandates don't make for genuine heart conversion on the part of the common man.

The common guy or gal goes along with the royal decree because to defy it would mean trouble.

We must be careful not to confuse *political expediency* with *genuine religious conversion*.

History is replete with stories of those who *feigned* conversion to a religion, only because it was *politically expedient*.

We know well today the damage that is done to the cause of Christ by those who *profess* His name, but *deny* His Lordship over

their lives and ambitions.

We need to be careful now that we have a president who confesses faith in Christ.

There will be literally thousands who will “discover” their religious-sensitivities, just so they can secure a political appointment.

And some advisors will whisper in the president’s ear counsel that is aimed at little more than appealing to the religiously-minded.

Against this backdrop of revival as a political tool, God calls the people to *genuine repentance* and *renewal* . . .

14 Consecrate a fast, Call a sacred assembly; Gather the elders *And* all the inhabitants of the land *Into* the house of the LORD your God, And cry out to the LORD.

15 Alas for the day! For the day of the LORD *is* at hand; It shall come as destruction from the Almighty.

16 Is not the food cut off before our eyes, Joy and gladness from the house of our God?

17 The seed shrivels under the clods, Storehouses are in shambles; Barns are broken down, for the grain has withered.

18 How the animals groan! The herds of cattle are restless, Because they have no pasture; Even the flocks of sheep suffer punishment.

19 O LORD, to You I cry out; For fire has devoured the open pastures, And a flame has burned all the trees of the field.

20 The beasts of the field also cry out to You, For the water brooks are dried up, And fire has devoured the open pastures.

The people need to wake up to the fact that as bad as the locust plague has been, it is really only a precursor to greater judgment and that it is meant by God to secure their repentance SO THAT

THEY MAY KNOW HIS MERCY RATHER THAN HIS
JUDGMENT!!!!!!!!!!

Seen that way – the locust plague is a manifestation of His
MERCY and GRACE.

If they will awaken from their spiritual insensitivity and repent,
then the Assyrian invasion will be withheld.

If they don't, then the Assyrians will come and bring destruction.

I recently heard of a man who had an accident and so was taken to the
hospital where they gave him some X-rays, only to discover that
he had cancer, which at that time was operable.

Without the accident, no X-ray, and with no X-ray, no discovery of
the cancer until it was too late and he would not have survived.

The accident saved his life!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

As bad as the locust plague was – if it brought about repentance, then
it would save their lives.

How do you respond when seemingly bad things happen to you or to
the people around you?

Some people go to pieces and start accusing God of failing in His
love.

What they don't see is that *everything* that occurs in their life is
intended by God for their benefit – even the stuff that seems at
the moment to be nothing but bad.

We only see this moment – God sees eternity and knows the end
from the beginning.

The disciples saw only Jesus hanging on a cross and counted the
prior three years as wasted time.

God saw Sunday morning and the resurrection's victory over
man's timeless foe – death.

There is a verse in Romans 8 that we need to cling to when bad things
are happening – Vs. 28.

“We know that all things work together for good to those who love
the Lord and are called according to His purpose.”

HIS PURPOSE – that's the key, you see!

It's not *our* purpose that God is working all things toward.

If it was our purpose then we would only always chose the path
of least resistance and pain.

But God has a better plan for us – to conform us to the image of

Christ, which is what the next verse says.

“For who He foreknew, He predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son.”

The path that leads to that image is often attended by what looks at the moment to be trouble and pain.

But that trouble and those pains are strengthening our character and purging the weaknesses and evil from our souls.

CHAPTER 2

1 Blow the trumpet in Zion, And sound an alarm in My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; For the day of the LORD is coming, For it is at hand:

Joel now moves from the locust plague to the even more intense day of judgment to come when the Assyrians invade.

Sound the alarm – blow the trumpet! For the Day of Judgment has come . . .

2 A day of darkness and gloominess, A day of clouds and thick darkness, Like the morning *clouds* spread over the mountains. A people *come*, great and strong, The like of whom has never been; Nor will there ever be any *such* after them, Even for many successive generations.

3 A fire devours before them, And behind them a flame burns; The land *is* like the Garden of Eden before them, And behind them a desolate wilderness; Surely nothing shall escape them.

This invading army will practice a “scorched earth” policy in which nothing will be left behind.

This is what Sherman did when he marched across the South during the Civil War.

This is what the Spartans did during their wars with the other Greeks.

In order to make sure their enemies could not re-supply, as they passed through an area, they would cut down all the trees and burn them, burn all the crops, tear down all the buildings and

leave the infrastructure of the land desolate.

4 Their appearance is like the appearance of horses; And like swift steeds, so they run.

5 With a noise like chariots Over mountaintops they leap, Like the noise of a flaming fire that devours the stubble, Like a strong people set in battle array.

The horse and chariot were the battle tank of the ancient world and only a few nations had the wealth to produce them.

Simply put, to a nation like Judah, the prospect of facing chariots and horses in battle was totally intimidating!

6 Before them the people writhe in pain; All faces are drained of color.

7 They run like mighty men, They climb the wall like men of war; Every one marches in formation, And they do not break ranks.

8 They do not push one another; Every one marches in his own column. Though they lunge between the weapons, They are not cut down.

This picture of an army so well disciplined that they don't break ranks but stay in formation when battle is joined was terrifying to armies like those in Judah because they were much less trained and disciplined.

Judah's army was made up of farmers who responded to the call to arms.

When fighting was done, they returned to their fields.

The thought of facing a professional, full-time and trained army was frightening.

The first year I went out for wrestling in high school, we faced a team in a pre-season match that had every one of us shaking in our wrestling shoes.

They came out of their ready-room and ran around the mat in a perfect line.

Their steps were synchronized as they ran.

Then they broke into lines on the mat and threw themselves down

all at the same time.

At an order from their captain, they all did pushups in perfect posture and time.

Then sit ups, then burpees.

Everything was perfectly choreographed and they made such noise and were so precise in their movements, some of us were defeated before we ever stepped on the mat to wrestle.

That's the kind of intimidation Joel is describing here – only the stakes were a lot higher!

9 They run to and fro in the city, They run on the wall; They climb into the houses, They enter at the windows like a thief.

The locusts had done this to the vegetation – the Assyrians soldiers would do this to the wealth of the land.

10 The earth quakes before them, The heavens tremble; The sun and moon grow dark, And the stars diminish their brightness.

In this verse, we see something common to prophecy.

Two separate events are blended together in the sight of the prophet.

Just as today computers will morph one object into something else, so here we have the prophecy of the coming of the Assyrians morphed in to the End of the Age.

As I mentioned earlier, *the* day of the Lord, manifest in the coming of the Assyrians, foreshadowed the final, great *last* Day of the Lord that ends history as we know it.

Look at it this way – just as the locust plague was meant to pre-figure the Assyrian invasion, the Assyrian invasion pre-figures the Tribulation when God pours out His judgment on a Christ rejecting world.

Then the heavens will tremble, the sun and moon will lose their light, and the stars will dim.

11 The LORD gives voice before His army, For His camp is very great; For strong *is the One* who executes His word. For the day of the LORD *is* great and very terrible; Who can endure it?

12 “Now, therefore,” says the LORD, “Turn to Me with all your heart, With fasting, with weeping, and with mourning.”

13 So rend your heart, and not your garments; Return to the LORD your God, For He *is* gracious and merciful, Slow to anger, and of great kindness; And He relents from doing harm.

14 Who knows *if* He will turn and relent, And leave a blessing behind Him—A grain offering and a drink offering For the LORD your God?

Here’s God’s appeal to the people to repent *sincerely* and not just so as to go along with the political flow.

They need to tear their hard hearts, not their garments.

God had been waiting patiently for their repentance. Generations came and went and God delayed his wrath.

But wrath would not be delayed forever if there was no genuine repentance.

15 Blow the trumpet in Zion, Consecrate a fast, Call a sacred assembly;

16 Gather the people, Sanctify the congregation, Assemble the elders, Gather the children and nursing babes; Let the bridegroom go out from his chamber, And the bride from her dressing room.

Things were serious and desperate! And God said that the people needed to suspend their normal activities and lifestyles for a season of corporate repentance.

I found it interesting that the first thing Bush did when taking office was to call a special day of national prayer for the very next day!

17 Let the priests, who minister to the LORD, Weep between the porch and the altar; Let them say, “Spare Your people, O LORD, And do not give Your heritage to reproach, That the nations should rule over them. Why should they say among the peoples, ‘Where *is* their

God?””

- 18** Then the LORD will be zealous for His land, And pity His people.
- 19** The LORD will answer and say to His people, “Behold, I will send you grain and new wine and oil, And you will be satisfied by them; I will no longer make you a reproach among the nations.
- 20** “But I will remove far from you the northern *army*, And will drive him away into a barren and desolate land, With his face toward the eastern sea And his back toward the western sea; His stench will come up, And his foul odor will rise, Because he has done monstrous things.”

If the people will sincerely repent and seek the Lord, then He will intervene and the invading army which was even then preparing to come would be turned back and leave their corpses in the wilderness.

- 21** Fear not, O land; Be glad and rejoice, For the LORD has done marvelous things!
- 22** Do not be afraid, you beasts of the field; For the open pastures are springing up, And the tree bears its fruit; The fig tree and the vine yield their strength.
- 23** Be glad then, you children of Zion, And rejoice in the LORD your God; For He has given you the former rain faithfully, And He will cause the rain to come down for you—The former rain, And the latter rain in the first *month*.
- 24** The threshing floors shall be full of wheat, And the vats shall overflow with new wine and oil.
- Joel looks ahead now to all the blessing God will bestow when they return to Him with all their hearts.
- 25** “So I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten, The crawling locust, The consuming locust, And the chewing locust, My great army which I

sent among you.

26 You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, And praise the name of the LORD your God, Who has dealt wondrously with you; And My people shall never be put to shame.

27 Then you shall know that I *am* in the midst of Israel: I *am* the LORD your God And there is no other. My people shall never be put to shame.

What great promises!

God is the *Redeemer* and *Restorer*.

He will restore what was lost in the judgments.

He will turn and make their end *greater* than their beginning or middle – just as he did with Job.

But the key, just as it was for Job, is that they believe in Him.

This promise, so eloquently spoken in v. 25 is one that we can lay claim to today because it speaks of God's favor bestowed on those who look in simple faith to Him.

Whatever you've lost to sin, God wants to restore to you – and more!

Sin brings pain and death – but God is a Restorer.

28 “And it shall come to pass afterward That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your old men shall dream dreams, Your young men shall see visions.

29 And also on *My* menservants and on *My* maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days.

God now speaks about a time “afterward” meaning a time *following* their restoration to their land and their national deliverance from the sin of idolatry.

In this *afterward* time, God will pour out His Spirit on *all* His people, not just a select few.

Up till that time, God only poured out His spirit on those who were specifically gifted to fill some special office or accomplish a set task.

God put his Spirit on Moses and Joshua because they were called to lead the nation.

Saul was given God's Spirit to be the *king* of Israel, then David was anointed.

Bezaleel was given the Spirit to be the lead craftsman in the construction of the tabernacle.

And so it went for hundreds of years.

Here God foretells a time when *everyone* who looks in faith to Him would know the presence and power of the Holy Spirit anointing them, not to fill some office, but to live the life of a believer.

In that day, prophecy would not be limited to a handful of the select, but would be the common ground of the young.

Dreams and visions would not be doled out only in rare circumstances, but they would be the regular experience of common, everyday people who knew God.

It wasn't just kings and leaders who would know God's anointing – even servants would know the anointing!

When did this come to pass?

Peter said that it was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came upon the 120 disciples who had gathered and were waiting in Jerusalem, as Jesus had instructed them.

You and I live in that “afterward” that God refers to in v. 28.

Today, you and I enjoy a relationship with God the OT saints could not experience because the Cross, the Resurrection, and the Ascension hadn't taken place yet.

But now, the Holy Spirit indwells believers, and empowers us to live a life that is on the same order as the heroes of the OT - Doing the same kind of miraculous things they did because each and everyone of us is anointed with the very same Spirit.

Joel now goes on to prophecy what else will happen in this “afterward” period.

30 “And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: Blood and fire and pillars of smoke.

31 The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD.

32 And it shall come to pass *That* whoever calls on the

name of the LORD Shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance, As the LORD has said, Among the remnant whom the LORD call

Though the ‘afterward’ began 2000 years ago, it will continue right up till the Return of Christ.

What we read about here will take place during the Great Tribulation.

But even during that period of time when God sends forth His judgments on a Christ rejecting world, any who look to Christ in faith will be saved.

CHAPTER 3

- 1 “For behold, in those days and at that time, When I bring back the captives of Judah and Jerusalem,**
- 2 I will also gather all nations, And bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; And I will enter into judgment with them there On account of My people, My heritage Israel, Whom they have scattered among the nations; They have also divided up My land.**
- 3 They have cast lots for My people, Have given a boy as *payment* for a harlot, And sold a girl for wine, that they may drink.**

This now looks to the beginning of the Millennium when Christ comes to judge the nations.

One of the first things that Jesus does when He returns is gather all the Jews who are scattered in various locations around the world, and restores them to the Land of Israel.

Once that is done, then the nations of the world will be brought before Him for judgment.

The location of this judgment is the *Valley of Jehoshaphat*, which is a place-name lost to us today.

Some think it refers to the Valley mentioned in Zechariah made by Christ when He returns and His foot touches the Mt. of Olives on the east of Jerusalem.

Zechariah tells us that the Mt. of Olives will split in two and

form a vast new valley that will act as a gateway to the Jordan River.

What's more important than the location of this judgment is the basis for *how* Christ will judge the nations.

It will be based on *how* they've treated the Jews and the nation of Israel.

The reference to the way they have "divided up the land" at the end of v. 2 is extremely provocative, for that is precisely what the British did in the early part of the last century and recently it seems the US has been trying to do; dividing the land up between the Palestinians and the Israelis.

But notice – God said it is HIS land! And He has given it as the home of the Jews.

V. 3 amply describes the low value many nations have placed on the Jews as a people.

A prostitute was paid with a Jewish slave boy and Jewish slave girls were counted as so worthless they were used to pay wine bills.

- 4 "Indeed, what have you to do with Me, O Tyre and Sidon, and all the coasts of Philistia? Will you retaliate against Me? But if you retaliate against Me, Swiftly and speedily I will return your retaliation upon your own head;**
- 5 Because you have taken My silver and My gold, And have carried into your temples My prized possessions.**
- 6 Also the people of Judah and the people of Jerusalem You have sold to the Greeks, That you may remove them far from their borders.**
- 7 "Behold, I will raise them Out of the place to which you have sold them, And will return your retaliation upon your own head.**
- 8 I will sell your sons and your daughters Into the hand of the people of Judah, And they will sell them to the Sabeans, To a people far off; For the LORD has spoken."**

God is saying that He is keeping a close account for how the nations

treat His people and He will return to them their treatment.

- 9 Proclaim this among the nations: “Prepare for war! Wake up the mighty men, Let all the men of war draw near, Let them come up.**
- 10 Beat your plowshares into swords And your pruning hooks into spears; Let the weak say, ‘I am strong.’”**
- 11 Assemble and come, all you nations, And gather together all around. Cause Your mighty ones to go down there, O LORD.**
- 12 “Let the nations be wakened, 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, go down; For the winepress 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.**

Precisely what this is referring to is a bit obscure.

Either this is the judgment of the nations of the first verse of the chapter, or this is the Battle of Armageddon, in which case the Valley of Jehoshaphat is the Plain of Esdraelon where Armageddon takes place.

Whatever the exact meaning, the point is clear enough – God will make the guilty *pay* for their brutal treatment of His people.

They may think that they can fashion weapons for defense but they are no match for God who will execute perfect justice.

- 15 The sun and moon will grow dark, And the stars will diminish their brightness.**
- 16 The LORD also will roar from Zion, And utter His voice from Jerusalem; The heavens and earth will shake; But the LORD will be a shelter for His people, And the strength of the children of Israel.**

- 17** “So you shall know that I *am* the LORD your God,
Dwelling in Zion My holy mountain. Then Jerusalem
shall be holy, And no aliens shall ever pass through her
again.”
- 18** And it will come to pass in that day *That* the mountains
shall drip with new wine, The hills shall flow with milk,
And all the brooks of Judah shall be flooded with water;
A fountain shall flow from the house of the LORD And
water the Valley of Acacias.
- 19** “Egypt shall be a desolation, And Edom a desolate
wilderness, Because of violence *against* the people of
Judah, For they have shed innocent blood in their land.
- 20** But Judah shall abide forever, And Jerusalem from
generation to generation.
- 21** For I will acquit them of the guilt of bloodshed, whom I
had not acquitted; For the LORD dwells in Zion.”

God will judge the wicked, but the righteous, who have been made
righteous through faith in Him, He will protect, defend, and
reward.

CONCLUSION

Joel’s appeal to the people of His day was, “Look around and realize
that God is sending you messages about the seriousness of your
sin.

“Locusts are a warning. Repent or something worse is coming.”
They didn’t repent – not really! And so, the worse came in the
form of the Assyrians.

Oh sure, the king presided over an official revival.

Altars and idols were torn down – but only by politically
appointed task forces who scoured the countryside.

If the common people had been genuinely repentant, then they
would have torn down the idols and altars long before the
kings’ officials got there.

We can be thankful that we have a new President who confesses
Christ and seems to be living consistently with that confession.

Already he's made some decisions and taken some actions which seem like the tearing down of ungodly policies.

But the real test for our nation will be if the common man and woman begin to reform their own behavior and turn once again to the Only True and Living God.