

Joel Series (Sep 2019)
'Bring Down Your Warriors, O Lord'
Week 4: Joel 3:1-21

We have been reminded over the last 3 weeks by the prophet Joel, that God desires the attention of His people. The 'Day of the Lord' is coming, and there will be both blessing and judgment on this day. Last week we saw that Israel listened to Joel's earlier message and recommitted themselves to God. As Andrew Malone preached on Joel 2:18-31, we explored together God's response to Israel with both practical and spiritual blessing. If here we see God respond in a way that is seen relatively close to the timeline of Joel's day, now in chapter 3 we take a leap forward into the grand timeline of God's plan, to the coming 'Day of the Lord', when both final judgment and blessing shall be granted.

God's Response: Decision (3:1-8)

As Joel takes a giant leap forward within the timeline, we are painted a picture of the judgment that is to come at the end of days. God shall gather all "enemy" nations together in the valley of Jehoshaphat (= the valley where the Lord judges).

1. Read through 3:1-8, and then make a list of the criteria that the Lord is going to use to judge these enemy nations by. Why do you think God raises these things as examples worthy of judgment? What does this tell you about what God values?
2. Rom 9 speaks of the "true family of Abraham", being those that have now been grafted into God's family through Jesus. Read through Rom 9, and then discuss how we might see Joel's message being, not only about the original recipients, but us also.

God's Response: Destruction (3:9-16a)

As the pronouncement of judgment progresses, we find that God himself shall be judge, jury, and executioner. The nations are called for war, yet find on arriving that swift destruction awaits.

1. Read verses 9-13, and then read Isaiah 2:1-5. What do you notice that is both similar or different in the two passages?
2. The wickedness of the nations is so abundant, Joel compares it to grapes gathered for trampling in the winepress, overflowing with wickedness. We've seen some examples that clearly are prominent in Joel's era. What example might Joel list if he was writing to God's people today?

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3. The 'Day of the Lord' is painted with such force, that even creation itself will reverberate with the effects of God's wrath. Read through verses 14-16a, and take note of the similarity to 2:10, except that this is no longer upon Israel's pending doom, but the doom of the other nations.

God's Response: Deliverance (3:16b-21)

The doom that awaits God's enemies makes the deliverance of God's people all the greater! As the book of Joel comes to a close, we find that in the midst of such terrible destruction, God shall be a refuge for His people.

1. The example of the 1945 Nuremberg Trials¹ was used during the last Sunday's sermon, as a way in which our world has grappled with what judgment might look like. In the pursuit of justice during the Nuremberg Trials, it still seems that it falls short of the picture that is painted for us in Joel. You might like to have a conversation in your group about how/why this is the case.
2. It was mentioned on Sunday that as God's people find refuge, they are 'set apart', 'safe', and 'satisfied'. Where and how do we see these three ideas as you read the final verses in Joel?
3. Joel makes it clear that the 'decisions', 'destruction', and 'deliverance' is all for a single purpose – "Then you will know that I, the Lord your God, dwell in Zion, my holy hill." God will defend his own reputation and will not allow His name to be tarnished. How does this knowledge of the purpose of Joel reshape how we understand Joel, and also understand God's call on our own lives?

Finishing Up

As we come to the end of our series on Joel, spend some time considering the following questions...

1. What have you learnt about God?
2. What have you learnt about God's people?
3. What have you learnt about God's purpose for his people today?
4. How has God been challenging you to respond through this series?

¹ If you would like to explore further information on the Nuremberg Trails, then watch the YouTube video:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RsA6AdCRI-k>