

27. Jesus in Joel

December 1, 2016

In this Book of Joel, we don't find any glaring typology of Jesus or Christophany. But we see the judgment on the unbelievers that leads the prophecy directly to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ right after the Great Tribulation. Although this Book only has three chapters and is seldom read, it has one of the most in-your-face prophecies.

The prophet Joel was ministering in the southern kingdom, Judah during the time of a severe drought and locust plague that crippled the whole land. The people of Judah, like the majority of Americans now, had evidently assumed that divine blessing was their right, no matter how ungodly they were or which gods they served.

Exodus 19:5 Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine.

Isaiah 1:19 If you are willing and obedient, You shall eat the good of the land

Many Bible scholars believe that Joel's ministry took place around 835 B.C. during the early days of King Joash in 2 Kings 11 which would make him a contemporary of Elisha and perhaps Elijah. This would mean that Joel was one of the oldest prophetic Books written.

There must be revival if anyone hopes to avoid God's judgment. That truth is at the heart of Joel's message. Repentance must come before revival. If we do not repent, God will not hold back His judgment. God used Joel, His man, to bring His message to His people. Unfortunately, they didn't take it to their hearts throughout the majority of their generations.

There is something, unique about calamities. So often it has a way of softening people and making them more teachable. It can bring about a time of intense soul-searching of perhaps asking "Could God be in this?" When the citizens of a nation undergo a calamity of catastrophic proportion, often that nation is then humbled and turns to God in repentance and revival.

One thing we will notice in the Book of Joel is the "Day of the Lord" is mentioned repeatedly. "Day of the Lord" is used in Scripture to refer to different periods when God sent judgment to His people, but the main emphasis is on the future "day of the Lord" when the nations will be judged after the Great Tribulation period and Christ shall return to set up His glorious kingdom.

A. JESUS IN THE WAR

Joel 2:1-11 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: 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. 4 Their appearance is like the appearance of hors-

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

This time it was a real war. Joel commanded the watchmen to blow their trumpets and warn the people. The Jews used trumpets to call assemblies, announce special events, mark religious festivals, and warn the people that war had been declared. In this case, they blew the trumpet to announce war and to call a fast. Their weapons against the invading enemy would be repentance and prayer. The Lord would fight for them.

We have in these verses, a description that sounds like it could be of modern warfares, including nuclear attacks – “A day of clouds and thick darkness” in v2 with another description in v3 – “A fire devours before them, And behind them a flame burns”. Since the audience of this Book is Israelis, could this be the prophecy of Ezekiel 38-39?

Twice in this passage, Joel tells us that this invasion is “The Day of the Lord”, meaning a very special period that God had planned and would direct. It was God who brought the locusts to the land and God would allow the Assyrians to invade the land. Just as the locusts had destroyed everything edible before them, so the army would use a “scorched earth policy” and devastate the towns and the land.

When we are right with God, we want the Day of the Lord. We long for Him to show His strength because we know that we abide in Him. But when we are not right with God, we dread the Day of the Lord, because when God shows Himself strong, His strength may work against us. In Joel’s day, Judah was not right with God, so the Day of the Lord would be nothing but darkness and gloominess to them.

Joel predicted an invasion that didn’t happen during Joel’s time, because Judah responded to the invitation to repent and God held back this army. The 40-year godly reign of King Joash in Judah began right after the time of this Joel’s prophecy. During the reign of King Hezekiah, the invasion from Assyria took place in 701 B.C. according to Isaiah 36-37. God allowed the Assyrians to ravage the land, but He miraculously delivered Jerusalem from being taken captive.

B. A WARNING TO THE NATIONS

Joel 3:1-8 “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. 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 will deal justly with the nations of the world during the "Day of the Lord" for the way they have treated His people Israel. Currently, the Arab nations and other Muslim countries cannot wait to destroy Israel. That is what we see in the physical realm. But in the behind scene, there are the demonic forces which want to destroy Israel just to throw mud on God's face.

It's worth noting that God refers to the Jews as "My people" and to the land as "My land." The wealth is "My silver and My gold." Even though the Jews have not obeyed the covenant or sought to please the Lord, He has not abandoned them. Even when they rejected their Messiah, God was still merciful to them.

There is no place in Israel known as the Valley of Jehosphaphat. The name Jehoshaphat means, "The Lord Judges." It describes God's place of judgment against all the nations which stand against Israel. Obviously, this refers to the Valley of Megiddo where the Battle of Armageddon is going to happen.

In the judgment of the nations Jesus described in Matthew 25:31-33, the criteria is faith in Jesus Christ – being the brethren of Jesus. This judgment determines who is allowed to enter into the Millennial Earth, and who goes straight to judgment.

Matthew 25:31-33 "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. 32 All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. 33 And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left."

We need to remember that judgment is plainly logical from God's plan for humanity. The grace, mercy, love, and salvation of God are illogical. Because we don't deserve them, yet God gives them to us. However, God in His mercy withheld His judgment for those who put their trust in His Son Jesus.

C. NATIONS, PREPARE FOR WAR

Joel 3:9-13 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."

God challenges the nations to prepare for war against Him. They will do this exact thing according to Revelation 16:12-16 which is known as the Battle of Armageddon. But God will simply laugh at the puny and futile preparations by the nations.

Come to think of it, we can see why God is laughing at them. Jesus is the One who is going to fight against them. He can walk through the wall and He can hold the entire universe in the palm of His hand. It is worse than a strength fight between a single ant against an NFL linebacker.

If someone is going to go into battle against God, he should have every weapon available. But what is he going to aim at? God is spirit and invisible.

Psalm 2 clearly expresses the stupidity of the nations and the triumph of the Lord:
Psalm 2:1-6 Why do the nations rage, And the people plot a vain thing? 2 The kings of the earth set themselves, And the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying, 3 "Let us break their bonds in pieces and cast away their cords from us." 4 He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall hold them in derision. 5 Then He shall speak to them in His wrath, And distress them in His deep displeasure: 6 "Yet I have set My King On My holy hill of Zion."

God knows what the nations have done to the Jews, and He will one day settle accounts. Meanwhile, we must pray for the peace of Jerusalem and witness to the Jews in word and deed lovingly that they may know Jesus is indeed their Messiah and Lord.

D. THE VALLEY OF DECISION

Joel 3:14-17 Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision. 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."

The idea of the "Valley of Decision" has been used in countless evangelistic meetings to show people that they stand in the "Valley of Decision," and must decide for or against Jesus.

Joel's context is exactly the opposite. Man does indeed stand in the valley of decision, but it is God who does the deciding, not man. Rather, it is a valley of judgment by God against those who chose not to follow Him. People should decide for Jesus right now so they will not stand in this valley of decision.

When Solomon dedicated the temple, the glory of the Lord came down and filled the building according to 1 Kings 8. Mount Zion, on which Jerusalem was built and the temple stood, was a very special place to the Jews because it was the place God chose for His own dwelling. When the Babylonians destroyed the temple, the Jews prayed for the time when their temple would be restored and God's glory would return.

Today, the Jewish people have no temple on Mount Zion. Instead, a Muslim mosque, a.k.a., the Dome of Rock, stands there. But God promises that He will restore Zion

and dwell there in all His glory. This is the very reason the Jewish people will readily embrace the antichrist since he is going to build a temple on that Temple Mount during the first half of Tribulation time.