

Joel 3 – The Nations are Judged!

Dr. Harley Ihm

What was it that made the Rocky movies so successful? It was the reality that you knew no matter how much it looked like he was beat, it was only a matter of time before he said, “Is that all you got?” When it looked hopeless, Rocky ended the match. He won and the bad guy was finished. We love it when the bad guys get what is coming to them!

God has the prophet Joel tell the people of a time that is coming when the great fight is gonna end and it will not end well for those who think they have it won. The bad guys will get what is coming to them.

In prophetic writing, when God had the prophet say, “In those days and at that time” always referred to the Messianic age when God will finish what evil man started. In fact, if we get the context starting in 2:28, we realize that this was the prophecy of the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came down from heaven and fell miraculously on the Apostles. Jesus had defeated evil by living the perfect life, becoming the Lamb of God that would take away the sins of the world and rise from the dead removing the power of death and the power of Satan over man. Evil empires have fought against God and His people throughout history but God will step in the ring and finish the fight forever.

Read Joel 3:1-3

1. **Who will God restore?** (*Judah and Jerusalem. It refers to all those who belong to God through Christ. However, it also has a very significant truth in it as well. In 586 BC Judah was captured and taken to Babylon. The Israelites were treated by their enemies as property to be traded off for the pleasures of prostitution and wine. God misses nothing and everyone will be called to account.*)
2. **What specific actions does God say He will take?** (*He will gather ALL nations and bring them to the Valley of Jehoshaphat. The Valley of Jehoshaphat was a place where all God's people knew God empowered His people to defeat an overwhelming army. God would not allow these evil nations to abuse His people any longer. God said, “Enough.”*)

Read 2 Chronicles 20:1-30

Joel was using the great battle in the Valley of Jehoshaphat to picture what the battle would be like in the future when God calls His people together to defeat everyone who has oppressed them once and for all. That battle was fought and won at the cross! Nothing can ever defeat God's holy people again. As Jesus said, “It is finished!” Amen!

The judgment God will enter against those who persecuted His people refers to the Messiah's return to judge the living and the dead and usher in the time of final and complete condemnation or the era of complete grace God upon all people. Those who have accepted the grace of God poured out in Christ have gathered together in the Valley of Jehoshaphat and God gives the victory. Those who gather to fight in Christ's name belong to God and He gives them complete victory. This passage is pointing to the church, when all God's people Jew and Gentile are gathered as one by the one name that is above all names, Jesus.

Read Joel 3:4-8

3. **When God's people are attacked, then God Himself is attacked. Who is God confronting?** (*Tyre, Sidon and all the regions of Philistia. Tyre and Philistia were longtime enemies of Israel. They had plundered God's temple and carried off silver and gold and desecrated it in their pagan temples. They carried God's people away as sold them as slaves to Greece. So, people were attacking God's people and His temple even before the destruction in 722 B.C. when Israel was taken to Assyria. Joel tells them that God would punish them by allowing Sidon to be destroyed and many of its people to be enslaved which did happen by Artaxerxes III in about 345 B.C. which was about 500 years after this was written. Artaxerxes III, king of Persia. He sold the Sidonians as slaves. Tyre was also captured by the Greeks under Alexander the Great in 332 B.C. When God says you are going down; you ARE going down. It is not up for debate.*)

4. **What prophecies are yet to be fulfilled concerning those who have attacked God's people and His church?** (*The trumpet call of God and Jesus instant return. Every knee will bow... The devil, the fallen angels, all who follow them cast out of God's presence along with death and Hades. See Matthew 24:36ff*)

Read Joel 3:9-13 (*God is calling His people to an all-out war on the enemies of God. There is an interesting prophetic emphasis here I don't want us to miss.*)

5. Have someone read Isaiah 2:4. **How is this call from God concerning their swords and spears different?** (*This is the prophecy of the last days when the Prince of Peace comes to establish His reign forever. It begins in the church where His Word is the final truth. It goes on into eternity and the New Heavens and Earth where complete peace will be established. However, Joel is turning this prophecy around. God is called His people to war on His enemies. God will give them the victory. Isaiah's prophecy was also about 150 years after Joel. It is actually Isaiah who is turning this prophecy around. There is a time for peace and a time for war as Solomon wrote.*)
6. **How is there peace in the church now, even when we are still living in a war zone?** (*The Lord's ways that He has established in the church will never be replaced. He has finished all we need for a life of peace. We are God's family restored. The final judgment of God on mankind is coming just as sure as it was on Tyre, Sidon and Philistia.*)
7. Have someone read Micah 4:3. Notice God gives the same prophecy to Micah that He gave to Isaiah concerning the age of the Messiah. Notice that nations will walk in the name of their gods, but we who believe God will walk only in the name of the Lord our God forever and ever! This begins in the church but continues through all eternity. Praise God!

Read Joel 3:14-21

8. **What day is near in the Valley of Decision?** (*The Day of the Lord. Great multitudes are joined for a bloody battle. But notice what happens to the people of the Lord. They are sheltered by God. The Lord will roar from Zion and thunder from Jerusalem and He will be a refuge, a safe place for His people. He will be their stronghold. They are called into battle, to fight for God and then God surrounds and protects them.*)

9. How is that a picture of you and me who are living for the Lord in the last days, the church age? (*Nothing can harm us if we are in Jesus. He gives us peace and an impenetrable sanctuary.*)

10. Notice this promise. Who will invade Jerusalem in the future? (*No one, ever. Did Jerusalem remain safe forever after this was written around 845 B.C. Yes, by Assyria, Babylon, Islam, Palestinians. It keeps getting attacked. Hmm, since the Word of God cannot be wrong, what is the solution? The prophecy is about the final war to end all wars. God will never again allow foreigners to attack His holy city. The reference is to church. This is a prophecy about the final outcome of God's people. No one has ever been able to overthrow the church of God built upon Christ which would stand throughout time. Paul says, "...No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor principalities, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord....(Romans 8:37-39.)*)

11. How does Joel explain the future of the Lord's house? (*Mountains will drip with new wine, hills will follow with milk, ravines running with water. It will be inhabited forever. God's people will dwell with God and He will be their God and they will be His people forever when the New Jerusalem comes down from Heaven as shown in Revelation 21.*)

12. What will happen to the land of the enemies of God? (*Desolate to be inhabited no more.*)

13. How is Joel's message from God a blessing to your life?