

The Eschatological Day of the Lord Joel 2:28-3:21

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In Joel's book, God explained, through Joel, the sequence of events that'll happen surrounding the Day of the Lord, that great and ultimate day of God's judgment on sinners and blessing for His people.

But, what's more interesting is that Joel didn't write about the First Coming of Jesus Christ, he wrote about His Second Coming. The event known as the Day of the Lord.

In Joel 2:28-3:21, he gives us the sequence of events that will happen surrounding that day.

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First, before the Day of the Lord, the Spirit will be poured out. James Montgomery Boice writes in his commentary regarding this section of Joel's prophecy:

"It is hard to handle prophecy. This is because the prophecies often seem obscure to us; and even if their meaning is clear, we cannot always be sure to what period of history the words apply. To confuse matters further, the Bible itself sometimes takes the prophecies in more than one way. They can be applied to a current event in Israel; but they can also refer to a future Day of the Lord."

While recognizing this, we know that many Old Testament prophecies are interpreted to us by the New Testament, so that, whatever our problems may be with other passages, these at least are certain.

Of these clear passages, none is more certain than Joel 2:28–32, a passage interpreted by Peter as applying to the events at Pentecost.

Joel 2:28–32, *“And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days. I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved; for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be deliverance, as the Lord has said, even among the survivors whom the Lord calls.”*

Prior to Jesus’ ascension into heaven, He told His disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Then, on the Day of Pentecost, fifty days after Jesus’ resurrection, while the disciples were waiting together in Jerusalem, Acts 2:2–4 tells us, *“Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.”*

When the people of Jerusalem heard the sound, they came to investigate. It was at this time that Peter preached his first sermon.

The people of Jerusalem, who were *“from every nation under heaven,”* thought that the disciples were drunk because the people of Jerusalem heard them speaking to each of them in their own language.

Peter told the crowd they weren’t drunk, as they supposed, but it was the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy. Peter said, *“This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel,”* and then continued to quote Joel 2:28-32 in full.

Joel’s prophecy was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit was poured out on all believers.

When the disciples began to speak and witness to others about the person and work of Jesus Christ, a new era was inaugurated.

In each of nine cases in the book of Acts, in which it's said that the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit, the consequence of that filling was a witness to Jesus Christ.

So, the clear and distinguishing mark of a person being filled with the Holy Spirit is witnessing to the Person and work of Jesus.

It's in this sense that the words spoken by Joel that "*your sons and your daughters shall prophesy*" must be taken. Prophecy in this sense means "*to forthtell*" rather than "*to foretell*."

Forthtelling is a term used to describe the act of delivering a message to others of things that are based on inspiration.

To forthtell is to speak forth, to publicly announce in any manner the message of God since it intends to influence humanity.

Foretelling aims to foresee the future. It reveals upcoming people, events, and circumstances. Foretelling is generally a gift from God and those who possess it serve in the role of a prophet.

So, the Holy Spirit was poured out on believers on the Day of Pentecost and ever since that day, the Holy Spirit has been poured out on people who are then enabled to repent and believe in Jesus Christ.

The evidence of this pouring out of the Holy Spirit is repentance and faith, followed by witnessing to the Person and work of Jesus Christ.

So, before the Day of the Lord, the Spirit will be poured out on all those who become believers in Jesus Christ.

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Second, on the Day of the Lord, judgment will be poured out on unbelievers with two events, the setting of the judgment and the summons to the judgment.

First, the setting for the judgment. Joel 3:1-2, *“In those days and at that time, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, I will gather all nations and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat. There I will put them on trial for what they did to my inheritance, my people Israel, because they scattered my people among the nations and divided up my land.”*

At the final Day of the Lord, there will be several fulfillments: the return of the Jews after the exile; redemption brought by Jesus Christ at His coming; the curse of sin will be totally removed from God’s people; and judgment will be poured out on unbelievers.

Joel says God’s judgment on unbelievers will take place in the Valley of Jehoshaphat, which literally means, “the valley where the Lord will judge” or the “Valley of Decision.”

Now, there is no particular place in Israel known as the “Valley of Jehoshaphat.”

Though, since the 4th century AD, tradition has recognized the Kidron Valley, located between the Temple Mount and the Mount of Olives, as the site.

Yet, its exact geographical definition remains a topic of intrigue and debate.

However, it’s clear that on that great and final Day of the Lord, there will be a judgment on unbelievers where the Lord will judge them in a place known as the Valley of Jehoshaphat.

Second, look at the summons to the judgment. God issues a summons to all the unbelieving nations to come for judgment.

It comes in the form of a call for a holy war. God's mocking them by encouraging them to take up arms against Him.

Joel 3:9-11, "Proclaim this among the nations: Prepare for war! Rouse the warriors! Let all the fighting men draw near and attack. Beat your plowshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears. Let the weakling say, "I am strong!" Come quickly, all you nations from every side, and assemble there. Bring down your warriors, Lord!"

God then uses the imagery of harvesting as the setting for the final judgment. He knows when the season is ready to harvest the judgment of unbelievers.

Joel 3:12-13, "Let the nations be roused; let them advance into the Valley of Jehoshaphat, for there I will sit to judge all the nations on every side. Swing the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, trample the grapes, for the winepress is full and the vats overflow—so great is their wickedness!"

Then God says in verse 14, *"Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision."*

Many an evangelist has used this verse to urge sinners, supposedly in the "valley of decision" regarding their eternal destiny, to repent and turn to the Lord.

But that's not what God's saying! It's too late for the multitudes to turn to the Lord in repentance.

Dr. Boice says, *"This is not the decision of the evangelistic meeting. It is the decision of the court, and the one making the decision is not the one who has rejected Christ but the Christ he or she has rejected."*

This is God's decision, a decision that will determine people's destinies forever."

For those who'll experience the judgment of God on the day of the Lord, Joel tells us in verses 15-16a, *"The sun and moon will be darkened, and the stars no longer shine. The Lord will roar from Zion and thunder from Jerusalem; the earth and the heavens will tremble."*

But, for those who've repented of their sin and trusted in the person and work of Jesus Christ, God says in verse 16b, *"But the Lord will be a refuge for his people, a stronghold for the people of Israel."*

So, on the day of the Lord, judgment will be poured out on unbelievers and there will be no second chance for them to turn to Jesus in faith and repentance.

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Then, after the Day of the Lord, blessings will be poured out. Joel mentions four blessings that will be poured out on believers.

First, there will be a holy city. Verse 17, *"Then you will know that I, the Lord your God, dwell in Zion, my holy hill. Jerusalem will be holy; never again will foreigners invade her."*

After the Day of the Lord, God will inaugurate a new heaven and a new earth. It will be astonishingly splendid. Moreover, there will be a new Jerusalem.

Revelation 21:10–14, *"And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel."*

There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south and three on the west. The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.”

Second, not only will there be a new Jerusalem, but the land will also be restored to what it was like in the Garden of Eden.

Joel 3:18, “In that day the mountains will drip new wine, and the hills will flow with milk; all the ravines of Judah will run with water. A fountain will flow out of the Lord’s house and will water the valley of acacias.”

In contrast, because of the way that Egypt and Edom treated the people of God throughout the centuries, they’ll be punished for their treatment of God’s people.

Joel 3:19, “Egypt shall become a desolation and Edom a desolate wilderness, for the violence done to the people of Judah, because they have shed innocent blood in their land.”

Third, God says that He’ll put in the holy city and restored land inhabitants who shall live there forever.

Joel 3:20, “Judah will be inhabited forever and Jerusalem through all generations.”

Believers will be able to live there because they have been cleansed by the blood of Jesus. Moreover, God reiterates that He’ll deliver judgment for those believers who’ve died as a result of persecution.

Joel 3:21a, “Shall I leave their innocent blood unavenged? No, I will not.” Then Joel writes in verse 21b, *“The Lord dwells in Zion!”* What a wonderful way to close a book!

God Himself will live in the midst of His saved people in Zion, that is, in the new Jerusalem.

There will now finally be eternal peace and harmony; no more sin and suffering for the people of God. They'll now be in a vital, personal, and visible relationship with the Lord, Himself.

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Conclusion

In view of what we've learned today, we must live our lives in light of the ultimate Day of the Lord.

Joel has taken the message of the Lord full cycle. Starting now, in this life, judgement begins with the house of God,.

Repentance presents the hope of restoration for God's people. Restoration of the years the locust has eaten staggers the imagination, and is exceeded only by the outpouring of God's Spirit.

Once the Spirit has been poured out, the way is clear for the arrival of the final Day of Judgement, the last manifestation of the Day of the Lord.

On that one day, the wicked will be utterly destroyed and the righteous will stand vindicated forever in God's presence.

Joel's message presents great hope for God's people, while also sending forth a warning to all the nations of the earth, a warning that must be heeded.