

Joel 1-3

Good evening, Church.

Thank you for coming out tonight.

We are going to continue our journey through the Old Testament here on Wednesday Nights.

Our study has come to the Book of Joel.

The prophet Joel's writings consist of 3 Chapters.

So we should have no problem getting through the entire book tonight.

Let's go ahead and pray... and we will get into our study...

Years ago, a small coastal town installed a new emergency warning system.

These massive sirens were installed to alert people whenever a dangerous storm or tsunami approached.

At first, when the testing happened weekly, everyone paid attention.

People would pause their conversations, the kids would stop playing their games, and the storekeepers would step outside.

The sound was so loud that it mattered to the people.

But over time, after over a dozen tests and no real storms came, the people stopped listening, and the noise became more of an annoyance than anything.

However, weeks later, one afternoon, the sky grew strangely dark, the winds began to howl, and a real warning rang out from those giant sirens.

It was not a test.

But the people ignored the noise; the people were caught up in their busy lives... many assumed it was another test.

And when the storm finally hit, it was too late for them to react... only the few who heeded the warning made it to safety.

Later, one devastated town official said, “The warning only saves you if you believe it matters.”

Well, as we come into the Prophet Joel’s writings, we will see that he is God’s warning siren.

He speaks in the middle of devastation – a locust plague, ruined fields, empty barns – but his message is more than a description of disaster... it is a call for people to wake up, to pay attention, to return to the Lord.

God will speak through him, saying, “Don’t ignore My warnings, don’t miss My mercy... the Day of the Lord is coming – turn to Me now.”

Look at verse 1 with me of Chapter 1...

The Locust Plague in Judah

1:1 The word of the LORD that came to Joel the son of Pethuel.

Now, the interesting thing about Joel is that this is all we know about Joel.

The other prophets give us so much more about themselves.

There is no mention of when he wrote, who he was, or what he did.

All we know is that Joel was the son of Pethuel.

Joel means that Yahweh is God, and we will see that this is actually the central theme of his prophecy.

Pethuel means enlarged by God.

Maybe it could be said that when we learn that Yahweh is God, no matter what trials we face, our faith is enlarged by God.

From what I gathered, most scholars place Joel among the earliest prophets, dating to the reign of King Joash, around 830 B.C.

He ministered in the Southern Kingdom of Judah and served alongside the prophets Elisha and Obadiah.

He begins his message with this in verse 2...

The Land Laid Waste

(Ex 10:1-20)

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.

The people of Judah were in the midst of an
incredible crisis.

Terrible pestilence had come upon the people,
coupled with a plague of locusts.

One year, when Jess and I lived in Lake Havasu, there
was what seemed to be a plague of Grasshoppers
that descended upon that hot desert.

Millions upon millions of those jumping and flying
critters were everywhere.

Women would be coming out of the grocery store,
and they would be screaming, because they would be
in their hair...

I know some summers we had a couple here in our desert... my kids hate them...

My wife, who I think has raised my kids to be pretty tough, has shared one weakness with my children, and it is critters... flying and jumping critters especially, and all my kids hate them.

Just in Africa this Summer... There is my daughter Sofia... and we literally just saw two lions, a leopard, and we are 15 feet standing outside from giant hippos, and a Grasshopper flies by her head, and she goes running for her life...

And the African guide just taught us how to stand up to an Apex Predator, and he starts laughing at Sofia. He says, "Sofia, it is a Grasshopper, over there is an Apex Predator, and over there, and you have no fear, even with a Grasshopper, just be Big, act Big, and it will leave you alone!"

But people are afraid of these creatures; no doubt, locusts are a dull-yellow grasshopper, but much bigger, 3 inches in length.

Massive insects...

They have two antennas about 1 inch long... their faces look like a horse's, and they travel fast.

A swarm of locusts can reach 100 feet high, and can be up to 5 miles long...

They will eat up anything green... nothing, I mean nothing gets spared.....

Even bark and small branches will get devoured...

When you come over the top of a place and get a picture or video of it, it looks like the land was hit by fire.

Joel mentions four types of locusts... first would be the infant locust, the chewing locust, then the swarming locust, which would be the mothers, multiplying in large numbers, then he talks about the crawling locust that still have small wings, but only allow them to hop, but not yet fly...

Lastly, the consuming locusts, which are the full-grown adults, cause the most damage.

This plague of locusts was crippling the nation... it was a wake-up call... an alarm for the people to wake up, to turn to their God...

In the middle of the crisis, the people needed to learn what the prophet Joel's name meant: "Yahweh is God."

Here in verse 5, we see the only sin mentioned in his prophecy...

**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.**

It seems in the days of the prophet Joel, idolatry had not yet taken hold of God's people.

The significant corrupting factor in their hearts was drunkenness.

If your life has ever been in close contact with an alcoholic or you yourself have been impacted by the destructiveness of alcohol... You know that this liquid fire is a gateway straight to hell.

Alcohol clouds our judgment, impairs decision-making, and lowers normal inhibitions.

Intoxication lowers the bar even on our own conscience, and we find ourselves making excuses for things God would have us address in our lives.

I know that there are great defenders of drinking alcohol in the Church today.

And I am not looking for a debate...

But I can offer this simple observation... although a Christian is free to drink in moderation, and not get drunk... it really is more complicated than that.

I don't know anyone's life that has benefited well from their desire to drink alcohol as a believer... it is never done as something to help the cause of Christ...

But the person does it in a more defensive attitude: "It is my liberty!"

Anything done in our lives with me considered first is always a dangerous road to travel...

Joel continues now in verse 6...

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.

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

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.

Joel here uses the locust as a metaphor for a military invasion, a springboard for describing the devastation to come.

He is telling them not to trivialize the hard times they have endured but to take heed.

God is trying to teach them a greater lesson here about the losses they have suffered through this trial.

The Jews were down and despaired. Their joy had been taken like the leaves from the trees.

They were no doubt facing a crisis, but they needed to see that, in the midst of this crisis, there was an opportunity for them to drink deeply from God, not their mind-numbing alcohol.

Verse 13...

Mourning for the Land

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.

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 .

Sackcloth was a very rough, coarse, uncomfortable cloth.

It would rub against your skin, causing severe irritation.

The exhortation here from the prophet was for the priests to put away all their earthly and worldly comforts and the things that we humans are naturally drawn to.

They needed to get the things out of their way that distracted them from their walk with the Lord, so they could be prepared to mourn over their sin.

They were called to a sacred fast...

It is interesting here to see what Joel tells God's people to do when a crisis comes to their lives.

Maybe there is an application for us tonight.

It could be that some of us are going through a trial or crisis right now.

Look at what the prophet instructs here.

He tells them to pull back from the crisis... make space between you and the problem... get some objectivity...

Go to Church... get God's perspective on it all...

Before you face the problem, hear God's voice...

The second thing we see here, pull it together, get the brethren together, and pray.... Call together the people of the faith, and seek encouragement from them.

Don't seek worldly counsel or wisdom, don't look to a vice or a crutch...

Then the prophet tells them to consecrate a fast... cut off your regular intake of food, maybe your entertainment and social media, and change your routine, so that you can hear from God.

Make Him your sole priority...

In times of trouble, pull away from the problem, get yourself together, and then seek the Lord.

Look now at verse 15...

15 Alas for the day!

For the day of the LORD *is* at hand;

It shall come as destruction from the Almighty.

I believe it is crucial to mention here that we see the book's theme in this verse.

The Day of the Lord.

This term will be mentioned five times and is a common term used throughout the Bible to speak of the End Times.

It speaks of a specific time when God will dramatically intervene in human history, bringing this reality to a surprising conclusion with Jesus sitting on a throne, ruling with a rod of iron.

God will judge the nations and establish His promised Kingdom.

All the disorder and chaos brought to this world by sin and rebellion will be brought into order and sustained by the Creator.

We believe the Day of the Lord will begin when the Rapture of the Church takes place; that will be the start of a series of events laid out for us in Scripture, a seven-year timeline referred to as the Day of the Lord, a time of terrible Judgments.

That Seven Year Period will end with Jesus descending upon the Mount of Olives, coming the same way He left this world, and ruling for 1000 years in His glorious Kingdom...

The Jews look forward to this day as well, but what they fail to see is that before this new day of the Messiah reigning, judgment is promised.

Their prophet Joel calls them to repent, put on sackcloth, and cry out to the Lord.

Verse 16...

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.

Again, events during the significant tribulation period will be terrible judgments.

These events that will come upon the earth are going to destroy fresh water supplies, food supplies, and there is going to be famine so great that just a little bit of wheat will be sold for a considerable price.

It will be a day of great desolation.

And here in Chapter 2 now...

The Day of the LORD

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:

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.

Blow the trumpet in Zion... Remember, Moses made two silver trumpets that were to be blown when the Hebrews were to break camp...

Also, when they were to prepare for battle...

They were also to blow the trumpets when it was time to worship.

But here we see judgment is coming, and the trumpets were to be blown.

In Revelation 8-9, during the Great Tribulation, there will be Seven Trumpet blasts that bring terrible judgments upon this earth.

They will alert the Jews to flee into the wilderness... also to raise a battle cry... and to turn back to the Lord their God.

So we see even in the end times, the Trumpets serve the exact cause.

Here in verse 2, we see locust swarms had covered Israel with thick darkness, but they were a picture of the people, an army that would blanket the land the same way.

Joel is seeing physical locust here, but also he is seeing that in 100 years from that day, the Assyrians would swarm the land of Israel in the north, but not only that, he considers the Battle of Armageddon, at the end of time, the last battle of man, where the armies of the world will be gathered.

Jesus will destroy His enemies there with the sword that comes from His mouth.

Verse 3...

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 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.

There is this immediate sense here that this plague of locusts is giving this picture... in the front windshield, as you look out, you see a dense, lush green forest, but in the rearview mirror, it is all desert, nothing but a burnt landscape.

He is using the locust to describe this future army.

The locusts have the face of a horse, moving fast, leaping like steeds.

They are foreshadowing the futuristic army that's destined to come against Israel at the end of the age.

Some have tried to make the case here that Joel is seeing a vision of helicopters or Blackhawks, or some modern military machines devastating the landscape, and he is trying to use what he knows to describe the images.

It is interesting when you get to the Book of Revelation, there is a mention of a plague of locust that rises up from the bottomless pit, from hell.

But they are not ordinary insects; they are not locusts that feed on vegetation like we saw in Chapter 1.

They are ordered in

Rev 9:4-6 ... not to harm the grass of the earth, or any green thing, or any tree, but only those men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. **5** And they were not given *authority* to kill them, but to torment them *for* five months. Their torment *was* like the torment of a scorpion when it strikes a man. **6** In those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will desire to die, and death will flee from them.

Maybe you want to know how they looked, check this out...

Rev. 9:7-11 The shape of the locusts was like horses prepared for battle. On their heads were crowns of something like gold, and their faces *were* like the faces of men. **8** They had hair like women's hair, and their teeth were like lions' *teeth*. **9** And they had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings *was* like the sound of chariots with many horses running into battle. **10** They had tails like scorpions, and there were stings in their tails. Their power *was* to hurt men five months. **11** And they had as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in Hebrew *is* Abaddon, but in Greek he has the name Apollyon.

Maybe a little similar to what Joel is looking at, a demon-like locust that harms those who are not committed to God.

They are such terrible creatures and torment humanity so severely that people will seek suicide, but death will not be found...

There will be no reprieve....

Look at verse 6...

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?

Again, this sounds all too much like the demonic hordes that John saw in Revelation... they cannot be stopped or cut down, or kept out.

Here, Joel talks about similar judgments to that of the seventh bowl judgment when it is poured out, and a massive earthquake is felt on the earth.

When the sixth seal is broken, the sky rolls up like a scroll.

When the fourth trumpet is blown, a third of the sun, the moon, and the stars will not shine.

The catastrophic impact of all of this on the earth will be huge.

Jesus said of those days...

Matt 24:22 And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened.

Joel knows that those days will be so terrible, so difficult, that there is only one message to preach now...

Verse 12...

A Call to Repentance

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?

Many come crying and weeping, often and with many tears...

But it is not sincere... their hearts are not changed....

It is one thing to tear your garment and put on a show... it is another to repent and relent from your sin...

Joel is saying, "Enough of the show." God wants a genuine repentance... He is tired of remorse and feeling bad...

A person can feel sorry they got caught, but have no desire to change. God wants so much more... He desires sincerity...

We see here, He is slow to anger... He is so patient with us. He has enduring kindness...

Just turn to Him in sincerity and He will turn to you and do the work in you necessary...

But when you come with a show... no lasting change can happen... He needs you to be real... for it to be real and lasting....

Verse 15 now...

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.

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?'"

The Land Refreshed

(Acts 2:17)

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."

God is calling them to a sacred assembly that should take precedence over their everyday lives.

The people needed to come together and pray for God's deliverance.

And there is a very important purpose for crisis and trouble in the life of believers and even the church as a whole...

The Crisis becomes an opportunity to snap God's people to attention, and calls us together in unity to cry out to our God for help and direction.

It shifts our focus to where it needs to be and aligns our hearts.

God gives this promise here that one day a northern army will be camped in the land, and by His own hand it will be driven from them.

A stench will arise from its slaughter.

This northern army refers to the Assyrian army in the short-term view of the prophecy, but it also has last-day implications.

He says in verse 21 Now...

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.

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.

So, the Lord there in verse 21 goes from a monstrous thing to a marvelous thing....

He speaks now, after the judgment of a blessing, if the people repent, God will bring both rainy seasons, the former and the latter rains.

God would cause the ground to prosper again, producing their olive oil.

God wanted to restore them.

Restore the years which the locusts had eaten.

The years that lust, greed, addiction, and pride had taken from them, God wanted to restore.

You know, God can do that in your life as well.

He can overcome the terrible consequences that sin has caused in your life.

He can restore to you the wasted years, all those lost opportunities, all the squandered blessings....

Charles Spurgeon wrote, “Lost years can never be restored literally. Time once past is gone forever... but there is a strange and wonderful way in which God can give back to you the un-ripened fruits over which you mourned. The fruits of wasted years may yet be yours.”¹

Listen, we have all made terrible mistakes, we all live with bad regrets, but our God can restore the years the worm has eaten.

¹ <https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/sermons/truth-stranger-than-fiction/#flipbook/>

The man standing behind the pulpit tonight... is a picture of Grace... a man who had too many wasted years... so many regrets and woes to list before you tonight...

But by the Grace of God... the blessings that have come, the restoration that He continues to give, the life that He is building in me, it is overwhelming to consider...

Your life is not too far gone... There is nothing you have done... I can tell you that confidently... nothing that His Grace cannot touch...

Repent and trust God, He will restore your life and your wasted years... and the toll that sin has taken...

He has a track record to look upon, starting here in the Word... story after story... then century after century of Christians since, until today, then here in this room... life after life... touched by His marvelous grace...

You can be another trophy of Grace on His shelf... Repent and Trust God...

Look how He will do it, verse 28...

God's Spirit Poured Out

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.

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 calls.

These verses are often quoted in the New Testament.

Peter quoted them on the Day of Pentecost to explain the miracle that took place in the upper room.

Regardless of gender or age, God promises to pour out His Spirit on all who come to Jesus.

Joel is speaking all this in the context of the end of the age... when Jesus comes to institute His Kingdom.

But Peter used this to describe what was happening in the Upper Room...

And Paul used verse 32 in explaining how we Gentiles have entered into God's family.

Whoever calls on the Lord will be saved.

Salvation is not limited to a select few, or the Chosen, but whoever calls on the Lord, Jew or Gentile...

Chapter 3 now... Verse 1...

God Judges the Nations

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.

After the Great Tribulation, when Jesus returns, the Bible tells us that Jesus will regather the Jews and replant them in the Promised Land.

There will be a specific Judgment at that time.

It is referred to as the Judgment of the Nations in Matthew 25.

Here, Joel sees the nations gathered in the Valley of Jehoshaphat, which means “Yahweh has judged.”

Traditionally, this place is east of Jerusalem...

But Jesus spoke of this judgment...

Many times, ministries quote how we treat the least of these...

But the proper context of the Matthew 25 verses is how the nations treated the persecuted Jews during the Tribulation Period...

Matt 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.

Understand, the Church, during this time, will have been raptured... and God will have turned His attention back to the Jews, where the Bible tells us their eyes at that time will be opened to see Jesus as their Messiah.

When that happens, the Antichrist will unleash persecution upon them that is satanic and unlike anything they have felt before.

And that is why this blessing goes out to the nations from Jesus, to those who care for the persecuted believing Jews at that time...

Matt 25:34-40 Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: **35** for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I

was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; **36** I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.' **37** "Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed *You*, or thirsty and give *You* drink? **38** When did we see You a stranger and take *You* in, or naked and clothe *You*? **39** Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' **40** And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did *it* to one of the least of these My brethren, you did *it* to Me.'

We often see these verses misplaced... the context is Last Days ministry...

Look at verse 3 now... as Joel sees the last days persecution of the Jews as well...

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."

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 .

All the neighboring nations were guilty of coming against the nation of Israel, which would lead them to be ripe for judgment themselves.

God challenges them to come against Him.

He looks at the nations in anger, and He will ultimately assemble them in the Valley of Megiddo for one final battle.

Here, the prophet says something in verse 10 similar to what the prophet Isaiah...

Isa 2:4 They shall beat their swords into plowshares,
And their spears into pruning hooks;

And there will be a day when man's weapons of warfare are made obsolete, when Jesus, the Prince of Peace, takes His throne...

What a day that will be... War is the worst thing man does to each other... and the more time goes on... the better we get at it...

Jesus will change it all...

Verse 12...

12 "Let the nations be awakened, 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.

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."

We see the Valley of Jehoshaphat will also be the
Valley of Decisions...

A place where many judgments will be made.

Decisions are tough to make at times. We make a
decision, and soon find out our decisions make us or
break us...

There in the Valley of Decision, God will decide and
judge on humanity...

The Books will be open... All will see Him... no more
will be declared, "I am an atheist" so proudly and
smugly... There will be the judge of all the earth...

Not only will He be seen, but we will be seen, our
lives laid bare... the book of our life opened... nothing
hidden... nothing behind those religious masks we
kept up so pretty for everyone...

All will be exposed... all will be before those flaming eyes... and either our name will be in the Book of Life... and we will know irresistible love for all eternity...

Or page one of our life will begin to be read... every deed done outside the cross of Christ... to the last page... the Light will expose all the works and detestable things we have done...

Irresistible horror will be felt there in the Valley of Decisions for those not written in the Book of Life...

You will look back at your life... all the times you missed... when Jesus was there to take your sin upon Himself... He was there with open arms... through the preacher's pleading... your Grandmother's tearful conversations, you brushed off... that time your co-worker invited you to Church...

It will all be there in your Book...

And there in the Valley of Decision, your side will be determined for all eternity... There will be no chance ever again to choose the right side...

But today, you are not there... Today, Your Name can still be written in the Lamb's Book of Life...

Today... you can confess Jesus as your Lord and Savior, turn from your sin... and believe in the Son of God.

The decision is yours...

Let's finish this out, starting in verse 18...

God Blesses His People

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 is promising a day when He will forgive His people and wipe away their guilt. He foresees a day when they will turn to Him and seek Him again...

When the Jews turn to Jesus... and that Day is Coming, they shall abide forever with the Lord.

There are such wonderful promises in God's Word, not only for the Jewish people, but for all who call upon the Name of Jesus.

If you have not done this yet, what are you waiting for? No one is promised tomorrow...

Make sure your name is written in the Book of Life.

Allow God's Spirit to indwell you tonight...

Let God wipe away your guilt and shame....

And allow Him to restore the years which the locust have devoured...

He is a God who restores... I have seen Him do it in my own life...

Today, my bride and I have been married 21 years...
two lost meth addicts... they told us we would never
make it...

We should have never made it....

But all those wasted years... God has given us 21
years... blessed years... not easy... but full... and blessed
years...

I know He can do the same for you... I know what He is
capable of...

Let's pray...