

The book of Joel draws attention to the hardships that have occurred because of Judah's sins and points out that grace and mercy are available to them if they would repent and seek after the LORD once again. Once they do so, the LORD will show compassion and once again fight for and defend them from oppressive enemy nations. Joel's prophesy looks both to a short-term fulfillment as well as the future fulfillment at Christ's return.

Chapter 1 describes the land of Judah under the judgment of God because of their sins. They had suffered such severe agricultural devastation because of locusts and other insects, bad weather and fire, that the prophet asks the people if they had seen anything like this before (Joel 1:2). Joel calls for the people to assemble for a time of national repentance, fasting and prayer in order to seek the LORD's mercy (Joel 1:14). Chapter 2 continues describing the future judgment of God coming in the form of an invading army. This prophesy was partially fulfilled by the Babylonian invasion (2 Kings 24:1-4) but more fully predicts the coming Day of the LORD when Israel is surrounded by their enemies immediately before Christ returns (Rev. 19:11-16).

Joel 2

12 Therefore also now, saith the LORD, turn ye *even* to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: 13 And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he *is* gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.

“Therefore also now, saith the LORD, turn ye *even* to me with all your heart” – Even in the face of His impending judgment, the LORD still graciously offers the opportunity for His people to repent. He calls on them to return to Him “with all your heart” (genuinely and not halfheartedly).

“and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning” – He asks His people to demonstrate their repentance with the evidences that they are truly broken hearted over their sins. Fasting indicates that they are prioritizing the seeking of the LORD above even satisfying the hunger of their flesh. The weeping and mourning would show that they are grieved over their sins and by the fact that their sins have separated them from the LORD.

“And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God” – The LORD was not interested in an outward show of grief if it didn't reflect what was truly in their hearts. Tearing one's garments was an expression of grief in Joel's day, but the LORD was more concerned that their grief over their sins was genuine and sincere, beginning in the heart.

“for he *is* gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth [to have compassion] him of the evil [calamity]” – Joel reminds Judah of the LORD's grace, mercy, patience (“slow to anger”), kindness and willingness to turn away from the judgment that He had planned. These things are available when we repent.

14 Who knoweth *if* he will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind him; *even* a meat offering and a drink offering unto the LORD your God?

“Who knoweth *if* he will return [to turn back] and repent [to have compassion]” – God will always forgive when we genuinely repent, but there are times when even repentance cannot stop the judgment of God. David recognized this when he was confronted for his sin with Bathsheba and the death of her husband (2 Sam. 12:10, 13 “Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife...And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die”). When the LORD declared that the illegitimate child of David and Bathsheba would die, David still prayed for mercy even though he had already been forgiven (2 Sam. 12:22 “And he said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell whether GOD will be gracious to me, that the child may live?”). David had been forgiven but the punishment for his sin still had to be carried out. Joel states here that the people's repentance might prompt the LORD to turn away from His wrath and have compassion on them instead, but there was no guarantees.

“and leave a blessing behind him; *even* a meat offering and a drink offering unto the LORD your God?” – The meat and drink offerings were offerings of thanksgiving that were offered to show gratitude for the LORD's blessings. Instead of the total devastation that they deserved, the LORD might show mercy by leaving them enough of a blessing that they would be able to make offerings of thanksgiving and gratitude to the LORD.

Verses 15-17: Joel calls for everyone in the land, young and old, to gather for a solemn assembly of national repentance so that they may seek after the LORD.

18 Then will the LORD be jealous for his land, and pity his people.

The LORD's jealousy is not the sinful emotion that we have. His jealousy can be synonymous with “zealousness.” When He sees the genuine repentance of His people, He will no longer be focused on bringing calamity upon His people in judgment. Instead, the LORD will be zealous for the well-being of His people and will show pity on them.

19 Yea, the LORD will answer and say unto his people, Behold, I will send you corn, and wine, and oil, and ye shall be satisfied therewith: and I will no more make you a reproach among the heathen:

When His people repent and seek after Him, the LORD will respond by promising to meet all their needs so that they will not want for anything. He also promises that they will no longer be “a reproach” (an object of shame or ridicule) among the nations. Instead of being hated throughout the world, they will be honored and respected.

Verses 20-31: In response to their repentance, the LORD will drive the enemy armies away from Israel and bring prosperity to their land once again. He will bless His people by pouring out His Spirit upon all flesh, a promise which looks ahead to Christ's millennial kingdom on earth. Verses 30-31 also refer to the darkening of the sun, moon and stars that will happen immediately before Christ's return at the end of the tribulation (Matt. 24:29-30; Mark 14:24-26; Luke 21:25-27; Rev. 6:12-17).

32 And it shall come to pass, *that* whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call.

“And it shall come to pass, *that* whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered” – Anyone, whether they are Jewish or not, will be able to call on the LORD for salvation and protection at Christ’s return (vs. 30-31). The Apostle Paul quotes this verse in Rom. 10:13 to support his assertion that salvation is for both Jews and Gentiles.

“for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said” – In that day people will find the salvation that Christ promised in Him as He sits on His throne on the temple mount in Jerusalem. He will provide salvation and protection to all will who call upon Him.

“and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call [to summon; to invite]” – Joel seems to utilize the Hebrew literary practice of parallelism in describing the same thing in more than one way. Those who are the “whosoever shall call on the the name of the LORD” are also described as “the remnant whom the LORD shall call.” The Hebrew word translated “call” means “to summon or invite.” The promise of salvation is to “whosoever” but only the remnant that the LORD has summoned will respond by calling on the LORD and be saved. Thus, deliverance will be “in” them because they will be the recipients of it.

Joel 3

1 For, behold, in those days, and in that time, when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem, 2 I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people and *for* my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land.

“For, behold, in those days, and in that time” – Joel is speaking of the future day when Christ has established His kingdom on earth.

“when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem” – Christ will “bring again” (return) to their land the Jews who have become captives of enemy nations. He will restore them to the land where they will once again dwell safely.

“I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat” – The name Jehoshaphat means “Jehovah judges” and it seems that this name is being used figuratively to refer to the valley where the LORD will gather all nations after His return and judge them according to their treatment of Israel.

“and will plead [to judge] with them there for my people and for my heritage Israel” – The nations will have to answer for their treatment of Israel, the LORD’s chosen people.

“whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted [divided] my land” – The context of the judgment is the fact that these nations have captured the Jews, removing them from their land so that they became scattered throughout the world. These nations had then divided the land of Israel among themselves. The LORD will hold these nations accountable for these deeds.

Verses 3-11: In verses 3-8, the LORD speaks of the sins that the heathen have committed against the people of Judah and that He will restore Judah to their land and will cause the heathen to suffer the same hardships they have inflicted against Judah. Verses 9-11 speak of the LORD’s judgment to be executed on the heathen by influencing them to go to war against Judah. However, this war will result in the heathen’s judgment and destruction.

12 Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about.

The LORD will gather the heathen nations who hate Israel to “the valley of Jehoshaphat” to be judged by the Him. This prophesy will be ultimately fulfilled in the valley of Meggido (Armageddon) at Christ’s return. Verse 13 metaphorically speaks of the sickle being used as an instrument of judgment and mirrors the declaration of God’s judgment on the world in Revelation (Rev. 14:15-16).

14 Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the LORD *is* near in the valley of decision.

It will be in this valley that the LORD will render His decision on the fate of these nations and that decision will be that they should suffer His wrath for their wickedness and sins against His people.

15 The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining. 16 The LORD also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the LORD *will be* the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel.

“The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining” – These signs are among those that Jesus said will occur immediately before His return (Matt. 24:29-30).

“The LORD also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake” – Christ will roar like a lion as He pronounces His judgment on the heathen nations that have come against His people.

“but the LORD *will be* the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel” – Israel will be able to look to Christ as their champion and redeemer as He defends them from the armies of the heathen nations that have come to destroy them.

17 So shall ye know that I *am* the LORD your God dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain: then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more. But Judah shall dwell for ever, and Jerusalem from generation to generation.

“So shall ye know that I *am* the LORD your God dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain” – Israel will no longer doubt that Jesus Christ is their Messiah, the Son of God, as He takes His place on Mt. Zion.

“then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more” – Rather than being trodden underfoot by the Gentiles (Luke 21:24), Jerusalem will once again be “holy” (set apart for the worship of God). Any Gentiles that will come to Jerusalem will be there to worship and not to conquer (Zech. 14:16).

“But Judah shall dwell for ever, and Jerusalem from generation to generation” – God’s people will safely dwell in the land forever.